

AN INSTITUTION FOR THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

THE
CONTINENTAL
FELLOWSHIP

A Case for Support



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

*To those who will hold the offices on which the Republic depends — and to those
who will form them.*

*It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this
country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether
societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection
and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political
constitutions on accident and force.*

HAMILTON · THE FEDERALIST NO. I

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*Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays,
instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.*

BURKE · TO THE ELECTORS OF BRISTOL

THE THESIS

THE QUESTION HAMILTON PUT at the opening of *The Federalist* is still ours. It is whether a free people can deliberately produce its political class, or whether it must take whatever the contest of offices happens to return. Nothing that has happened in the two hundred and thirty-nine years since he asked the question has settled it. Every generation settles it again, in its own idiom, by what it is willing to require of those who will govern it.

It is the claim of this Fellowship that a republic which takes trouble to form its officeholders will be served by officeholders worth the trouble; that a republic which does not will not. The trouble can be taken at any of several moments in a political life — the campaign, the first term of office, the years in which a seasoned staff takes the younger member in hand — but it is most economical, and most consequential, when it is taken early. The undergraduate who has read Hamilton and Madison with a tutor at twenty, stood in a mock debate at twenty-one, learned the discipline of the drafted memorandum at twenty-two, and sat with a former Secretary of Defense at twenty-three is, at thirty, a different person than the one who has done none of these things. He is a different candidate at thirty-six. He is a different member of Congress at forty-two. The cost of forming him is trivial against the cost of not.

*A republic is not preserved by those who seek office; the offices are preserved by
those whom the republic has formed.*

THE PROBLEM

THERE IS NO AMERICAN INSTITUTION whose single purpose is the formation of undergraduates for federal elected office, and the absence shows. The men and women who reach the House and the Senate today arrive by four routes: the state legislature, the law-and-prosecutor path, the military, and — most rarely, and most variably — the avenue of substitute credential, whether wealth or celebrity or prior staff distinction. Each of these routes selects; none of them forms. Selection under campaign duress is a coarse instrument. A ballot is a blunt test of a human being, and the candidate who survives it has often survived it not because he was the most fit for the office but because he was the least unsuited to the apparatus through which the office is reached.

The political class of the present moment is not the political class the Republic was producing in the third quarter of the twentieth century, and nearly every honest observer regards the decline as real. The instruments once responsible for the quality of American federal office have either disappeared or been converted to other ends.

The specific deficit

The peer institutions that most resemble what a Fellowship of this kind would become — the Rhodes, the Marshall, the Truman, the White House Fellows — are postgraduate and broadly civic in mission; none of them forms undergraduates, and none of them is organized around the specific vocation of federal elected office. The undergraduate institutions that approach the civic register — the service academies, a handful of honors programs, the classical-civic centers now appearing at a few universities — form soldiers, scholars, and citizens, not candidates. The gap the Continental Fellowship addresses is narrow and specific: an undergraduate program at an American public university whose singular output is men and women prepared to hold federal elected office and the offices that depend on them.

The aphoristic close

A republic that does not form its officeholders will be formed by them.

THE TRADITION

THE DELIBERATE FORMATION OF AMERICANS for consequential public responsibility is an old practice, and it has been done well. It was done by the Virginia bar that made Madison, by the New England parsonage that made the Adamses, by the Lincoln law office that made Herndon and Lamon, by the Wisconsin of La Follette and the Progressive school that made McCarthy and Nelson and Proxmire, by the land-grant college that made the farm-state senators of the twentieth century, by West Point and Annapolis and the service academies that have formed, since the founding, nearly every serious American soldier and a surprising number of serious American statesmen, and by the great foundation fellowships — the Rhodes, the Marshall, the Truman, the White House Fellows — which have produced a measurable share of the federal officeholders the Republic has been glad of.

The tradition is not obscure. It is simply not, at present, practiced in the place where it would now do the most good, which is at the undergraduate stage, on an American public university campus, for the specific vocation of American federal elected office. Every institution the Fellowship means to learn from has had a specific object, a specific location, and a specific method. The specific object of this Fellowship is federal elected office — in the House, in the Senate, in the governorships whose holders reach the Presidency, and at last in the Presidency itself. The specific location is Austin, Texas, a capital of a state whose delegation to the Congress is second in size only to California's, whose flagship public university has the scholarly depth, the geographic position, and the institutional ambition to host a civic formation program of national consequence. The specific method is the subject of what follows.

THE FOUR PILLARS

FORMATION RESTS ON FOUR INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLINES, none of them the taxonomy of a graduate policy school, each of them a discipline the federal office actually requires of the officeholder on the first morning of the first term. Every Fellow applies to, and is admitted into, one pillar, and achieves working fluency in the other three across the four years of formation.

Political Economy

Fiscal and monetary policy, public finance, tax and budget, entitlements, trade, labor, industrial organization, and the political economy of governance. Designed to produce the fluency a member of Congress needs to conduct a committee hearing on a budget resolution, a tax bill, or a Federal Reserve nomination without briefing support.

Statecraft

Diplomacy, alliance management, defense policy, intelligence, cybersecurity, strategic competition, regional studies, and the instruments of American power from the Marshall Plan forward. Draws on the LBJ School, the Clements Center for National Security, and the Strauss Center.

Constitutional Government

The constitutional foundations of federal power, congressional procedure, administrative law, federalism, campaign finance, redistricting, primary dynamics, and the applied political-science literature on congressional elections. The intellectual spine of the program.

Rhetoric and Command

Classical rhetoric from Aristotle through Lincoln, debate, media training, narrative construction, crisis response, constituent communication, and the discipline of sustained public speaking under adversarial conditions. The distinctive fourth pillar, absent from every peer program.

THE FOUR YEARS

THE FELLOWSHIP IS A FOUR-YEAR FORMATION, entered in the freshman year at The University of Texas at Austin and integrated with the Fellow's undergraduate degree. The architecture is modeled on Plan II Honors and follows the classical sequence of foundation, discipline, application, and culmination. The Fellowship's commitment to each Fellow continues after graduation through the career counsel office, the alumni register, and the Sponsorship Obligation.

Year One — Foundation

The common intellectual ground on which the cohort stands. All sixty Fellows, in their declared pillars, take a two-semester Fellowship seminar, *The American Political Tradition*, and a foundational course, *The Discipline of Argument*, alongside UT major coursework. Pillar-specific reading tutorials with an assigned Senior Fellow commence in the first semester. Monthly cohort convenings. A four-week Summer Intensive at year's end consolidates pillar formation and introduces the sophomore sequence.

Year Two — Discipline

Depth in the declared pillar. A two-semester pillar-specific sequence, cross-listed with the relevant UT department. Formal mentorship with an assigned Senior Fellow. Four Weekend Seminars. A Junior Transition Project of 25–40 pages, defended orally. A pillar-domain summer practicum.

Year Three — Application

Original work at the level of serious graduate scholarship. A Fellowship capstone course, *The Political Vocation*, synthesizes the pillars. An advanced graduate seminar within the Fellow's pillar. A Junior Thesis of 60–80 pages, defended before a committee of three. A senior summer practicum on Capitol Hill, in a federal campaign, or at a major policy institution.

Year Four — Culmination

The Senior Thesis (100–150 pages) and the Candidate Readiness Trials. A Cohort Synthesis seminar reconstitutes the sixty Fellows as a community of political argument across all four pillars. At graduation, the Fellow enters the alumni register under the Sponsorship Obligation — the formal structure by which alumni support subsequent cohorts through mentorship, placement, and reference.

THE TRIALS

THE CANDIDATE READINESS TRIALS are the Fellowship's signature instrument and the feature no peer program possesses. They are conducted across one week in late spring of senior year, in the great auditoria of The University of Texas at Austin, before an audience of faculty, practitioners, donors, alumni, and the public. The Trials are four instruments, graded against a published rubric, aggregated into a single Candidate Readiness assessment retained in the alumni register.

I. The Annual Debate

Four-against-four modified Oxford-style tournament over four days; group stage into a two-leg Grand Final; Fellows prepare both sides of every motion. Judged by debate coaches, legal scholars, former public officials, and senior journalists. Educational awards: Champion \$50,000 (\$12,500 per Fellow); Runner-up \$25,000 (\$6,250 per Fellow). *The educational award pool is the largest in the history of American collegiate debate.*

II. The Simulated Federal Primary

Over the spring semester, each graduating Fellow builds a primary campaign apparatus for a fictionalized federal district — manager, communications, finance, field, pollster — and delivers an announcement speech, peer forum, and closing argument live. Judged by veteran campaign managers, finance directors, and political journalists. Educational awards: \$20,000 / \$10,000 / \$5,000.

III. The Donor Call-Time Trial

Live call-time against a simulated list of one hundred prospective donors, across a supervised day. No actual solicitation occurs; roles are played by alumni and trained volunteers. Judged by a panel of former federal finance directors. Educational awards: \$15,000 / \$7,500 / \$3,750.

IV. The District Brief

A thirty- to fifty-page substantive analysis of a real federal district, Senate electorate, or gubernatorial state the Fellow may one day contest, with demography, primary electorate mapping, issue salience, and a path-to-victory memo. Judged for analytical depth, strategic realism, and the credibility of the memo as a document a professional strategist would recognize as serious. Educational awards: \$20,000 / \$10,000 / \$5,000.

ADMISSIONS, GOVERNANCE, AND THE ASK

The Plan II precedent

Admission to the Fellowship is admission to The University of Texas at Austin, on the Plan II Honors model. Candidates apply to UT and to the Fellowship simultaneously: they apply to a specific pillar — Political Economy, Statecraft, Constitutional Government, or Rhetoric and Command — indicate Fellowship interest on the UT application, complete pillar-specific essays, and are reviewed jointly by UT Admissions and a Fellowship Selection Committee under shared authority. Admitted Fellows matriculate at UT and at the Fellowship simultaneously, in their declared pillars. Pillar reassignment is treated as an institutional exception rather than a programmatic feature: a Fellow may raise pillar concerns with his Senior Fellow mentor or the Executive Director's office but may not solicit reassignment counterparts among his peers. When, through ordinary observation, the office identifies two Fellows whose reassignment in opposite directions would serve both Fellows' formation, the office informs each and, if both independently consent, approves the swap. Sixty Fellows per cohort; Fellowship support is provided to admitted Fellows as a demonstration of institutional commitment rather than as a mechanism for financial aid.

Independence and compliance

The Fellowship is a standalone Texas nonprofit corporation, to be filed for tax exemption under IRC § 501(c)(3) with a § 501(h) election on the first Form 990. The founder, a non-United-States citizen, serves only as Founder and Board Chair; all programmatic authority rests with a U.S.-citizen Executive Director. The bylaws codify the founder's recusal from every decision touching candidate selection, endorsement, or electoral activity in any form — a firewall stronger than 52 U.S.C. § 30121 strictly requires. The Fellowship is strictly nonpartisan under IRC § 501(c)(3) and Rev. Rul. 2007-41. A published § 509(a)(1) donor-concentration schedule; audited financials published within thirty days of filing.

The Ask

Aggregate philanthropic commitments across the first five years are in the range of \$10–13 million, supporting four years of integrated formation for sixty Fellows per cohort: Fellowship faculty and Senior Fellow honoraria, the four-pillar curriculum, the Candidate Readiness Trials, summer practica, and the operational infrastructure. In Year Three the Fellowship opens a twenty-year endowment campaign with a target corpus of \$75–100 million in nominal dollars, sufficient to cover full steady-state operating costs under a 4.5 per cent distribution policy. Named-gift opportunities — a pillar, a Senior Fellowship, an instrument of the Trials, the endowed Executive Directorship — are available from Year Three forward. The complete prospectus is available on request.



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