

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FELLOWSHIPS ADVISORS CODE OF ETHICS

## **Introduction**

The National Association of Fellowships Advisors (NAFA) is a professional organization comprised of individuals engaged in the practice of advising college and university students who apply for competitive scholarships and fellowships; institutions of higher education that promote and celebrate the process of applying for competitive scholarships and fellowships as an educational enterprise; and foundations and organizations that administer competitive scholarship and fellowship programs.

The individuals and institutions that participate in and administer competitive scholarships and fellowships have responsibilities and ethical obligations to their students, university communities, foundations, sponsors, funding agencies, and to society as a whole. Inevitably, misunderstandings and conflicts of interest will arise. The membership of NAFA believes that, in order to minimize misunderstandings and conflicts as well as make the experience of applying for scholarships more valuable for students' development, advisors, institutions, and students should value the process above the result. The principles and guidelines stated in the following code of ethics are aspirational, providing a framework for participating in and administering competitive scholarship and fellowship programs.

## **Mission**

The mission of the National Association of Fellowships Advisors (NAFA) is to promote the full potential of fellowship candidates through the application process, and to foster the continued growth and professionalization of fellowship advising in higher education.

## **Vision**

The National Association of Fellowships Advisors (NAFA) envisions the highest quality fellowship advising for every applicant.

## **Core values that all members of NAFA subscribe to**

*Integrity.* We agree to conduct ourselves responsibly and ethically in our relationships with students, colleagues at our institutions, and each other. We will approach all candidates and scholarships with the goal to maintain integrity in both our relationships and our approach to the scholarship process.

*Collaboration.* The effectiveness of all individual members and organizations is enhanced when we work together to promote our programs and protect our candidates' best interests.

*Respect.* The profession and practice of advising for and administering competitive scholarships and fellowships is based on mutual respect and trust for each other and our candidates.

*Fairness.* We have an obligation to treat candidates and each other fairly, equitably, and in a non-discriminatory manner.

## **Expectations of Advisors**

Every candidate who prepares an application for a nationally competitive fellowship will be mentored and evaluated in accordance with the stated criteria of the fellowship.

### **Fellowship Advisors will**

- Balance the wants, needs and requirements of applicants, fellowship foundations and home institutions. Advisors' overriding concern must be for student well-being, the integrity of their home academic institution, and the value of the process of applying for fellowships;
- Encourage the intellectual autonomy and passion of character of each student with whom they interact;
- Encourage students to self assess their qualifications for individual fellowships and to be realistic in their expectations of the process and the outcome;
- Support a campus culture around fellowships that emphasizes consistent and fair promotion of fellowships, as well as awareness of the connections between campus strengths and specific fellowships;
- Understand and effectively represent the specific selection criteria and goals of each fellowship as described in foundation materials, and convey them with fidelity to candidates;
- Announce and promote scholarship and fellowship opportunities broadly, with adherence to the foundations' stated criteria;
- Educate the home institution's administration and faculty about fellowship opportunities and ethical practices, including the campus role in student preparation and realistic expectations for fellowship results;
- Respect foundation practices and maintain professionalism in all correspondence;
- Avoid the appearance or an actual conflict of interest.
- Ensure fairness and non-bias in interactions with candidates in fellowship processes;
- Not accept gifts from students, faculty, foundations or administrators where there might be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
- Insist upon applicants' adherence to the highest ethical standards in preparing and submitting applications and supporting materials.

### **Advisor Expectations of Applicants:**

Prior to applications candidates will

- Engage in self-reflection, assess long-term goals, and search for appropriate programs and funding;
- Pursue fellowships that support those goals, not fellowships that they must bend their goals to fit;
- Be aware of the high level of competition and respect the value of the process.

During the applications process, candidates should

- Ensure that all application materials, including but not limited to personal statements, resumes, proposals, essays, shall be the sole and original work of the applicant. Cite any sources quoted or paraphrased;
- Respond to campus and foundation communications in an honest and timely fashion;
- Apply only to those fellowships in which they have a genuine interest;
- Provide adequate and accurate information to recommenders in a timely fashion;

- Neither compose their own letters for faculty to sign (even at the request of faculty) nor ask faculty members to show them their own letters of recommendation;
- Make clear what information revealed to an advisor or recommender should remain confidential;
- Include resume and application response items that reflect an accurate and substantive contribution;  
Provide honest responses to questions in all practice and real interviews without aggrandizing accomplishments or providing deliberately misleading information to committee members;
- Treat other applicants with respect and courtesy.

### **Guidelines for Institutions**

Colleges and universities with students participating in or likely to participate in competitions for major fellowships bear certain ethical responsibilities both to the students and to the foundations/programs.

Those institutions will

- Support procedures whose aims are to provide a means of distinguishing merit among applicants for nomination or rating;
- Supply accurate and thorough letters of endorsement and actively encourage writers of letters of recommendation to do the same;
- Understand fellowship nomination criteria and advise and nominate students appropriately;
- Maintain records of the institution's participation in major fellowship competitions and protect those records, in accordance with federal guidelines;
- Emphasize, through publicity and infrastructure, the value of students' intellectual and personal development through the fellowship process.
- When evaluating scholarship programs, use techniques that attempt to measure the value of the process of applying for fellowships, and take into account the highly competitive nature of fellowship competitions.

### **Guidelines for Foundations**

Foundations and organizations that administer scholarship and fellowship programs have certain ethical responsibilities and obligations to applicants, faculty representatives, university administrators, institutions, and their funding agencies.

Foundations should

- Accurately represent the goals, mission and requirements of the fellowship and of the foundations;
- Convey information on eligibility, selection criteria, and application processes in a clear and timely manner;
- Select scholars and fellows based on previously published selection criteria, selection procedures, and program goals;
- Conduct fair and transparent selection processes, evaluating applicants on the basis of individual qualifications;
- Respond quickly, courteously, and professionally to inquiries from faculty representatives and potential applicants;
- Respond to advisor feedback as time and relevant policy and law allows;

- Refrain from involvement in personal relationships with students, faculty representatives, or other university personnel when such relationships might result in either the appearance of or an actual conflict of interest
- Not accept gifts from students, faculty or administrators where there might be an appearance of a conflict of interest;
- Observe all relevant foundation policies and national and international laws as they relate to the scholarship process;
- Endeavor to maintain the faculty representative as the primary point of contact in all matters relating to the award.

*Adopted July, 2009 by vote of the membership.*