

The Susan R. Meisinger Graduate Study Fellowship—Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is Susan R. Meisinger?

Susan R. Meisinger, SPHR, held numerous positions throughout her tenure with SHRM, beginning in 1987. She served as vice president of Government and Public Affairs in 1987-1997, as senior vice president in 1997-1999 and as executive vice president and chief operating officer in 1999-2002. Most recently, she served as president and chief executive officer of SHRM and as member of the HR Certification Institute Board of Directors from March 2002 until her retirement in July 2008. Sue has a passion for HR and strongly believes HR professionals must prepare for a career in HR not only by gaining experience but specifically by pursuing a solid, meaningful and stringent education in the field of HR at the university and graduate levels. During her six-year term as president and CEO, she led the Society and its affiliates to new heights—the Society’s membership increased 29% from 175,000 to 225,000 professionals. The number of professionals certified through the HR Certification Institute increased from 62,000 to more than 97,000, and the HR Certification Institute added both the GPHR and the California-specific certifications. The SHRM Foundation’s endowment grew from \$6.9 million to \$13.9 million, and research grants increased from less than \$100,000 to more than \$700,000 awarded annually. Today, SHRM serves more than 250,000 members worldwide.

2. Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible to apply, any HR professional *in the world* must be a first-time master’s student seeking a degree in HR and must meet at least one of the following criteria: 1) be a member of SHRM *or* 2) hold a professional certification (e.g., PHR, SPHR or GPHR certification from the HR Certification Institute).

Note: If an individual has already earned a masters degree, that individual is not eligible to apply for this fellowship. The fellowship is for individuals who are seeking their first master’s degree, in HR, who are starting studies this year, or who have at least two years of study left in the masters program. Ph.D. candidates are also not eligible to apply for the fellowship.

Current SHRM, SHRM Foundation, HR Certification Institute staff and board members and current members of the Membership Advisory Council (MAC) are not eligible to apply or receive the Meisinger Fellowship award. In addition, the candidate must meet all of the following eligibility requirements:

- a. Earned a minimum GPA of 3.5 overall in his or her undergraduate major based on a 4-point grading scale or any scale analogous to a 4-point grading scale.
- b. Has a minimum of 10 years of work experience, with a minimum of five years in HR.

- c. Has been accepted into a qualified masters program within or outside of the United States seeking an HR-related masters for the first time (see question 15 for definition of a qualified program).

3. How do I apply?

Submit your application form and packet via mail or e-mail to the address shown on the application form. The application packet must include *only* the following materials:

- a) Transcript showing a minimum GPA of 3.5 overall in your undergraduate major based on a 4-point grading scale or any scale analogous to a 4-point grading scale.
- b) Current CV or résumé showing a minimum of 10 years of work experience, with a minimum of five years in HR.
- c) Proof of acceptance into an HR masters program within or outside of the United States. Preference will be given to candidates who have been accepted into masters programs at universities that have adopted the SHRM HR Curriculum Guidelines (the list of universities is available at <http://www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/universities.aspx>).
- d) Proof of professional certification(s), if applicable (strong preference will be given to candidates with professional certification(s), e.g., the PHR, SPHR or GPHR certification awarded through the HR Certification Institute).
- e) At least two but no more than four professional references that attest to the applicant's dedication to and passion for HR.
- f) Information about other fellowships applied for or received.
- g) An original essay of no more than two pages, single-spaced, written by the applicant, that responds to these following points:
 - What do you see as the future of HR? Why is business acumen critical to an HR professional's effectiveness/success?
 - Tell us why you are interested in HR as a profession.
 - Describe what you will accomplish in terms of career (or other) goals as a result of getting a graduate degree in HR.
 - How will you use this degree to advance and further your HR career?

4. Do I need to submit transcripts from all of the colleges I attended, even if it was many years ago?

Official transcripts from the applicant's graduating undergraduate institution must be provided in order to verify GPA, course work and degree obtained. A transcript that shows credit obtained outside of a degree program or credit transferred to the graduating undergraduate institution does not need to be provided as part of the application. If an applicant has already started graduate work in HR and is applying for the fellowship to support at least two years of study, the applicant should submit a transcript for graduate work completed at the time of application.

5. Where can I obtain an application?

Applications can be downloaded from the fellowship web site at <http://www.shrm.org/about/awards/Pages/meisinger.aspx>, where you can also find a list of the other necessary application materials required to be considered for the fellowship.

6. What are the key dates in the fellowship application and selection process?

- January 1: Application materials are made available (for the following academic school year)
- April 1 : Fellowship applications due
- June 15: Fellowship recipient(s) notified
- June 30: Fellowship award sent to recipient(s) upon receipt of an invoice showing tuition, fees, expenses, etc.

*If you have not yet received an acceptance letter from your masters program when you submit your Meisinger Fellowship application, you may still apply and send your acceptance information separately as long as you do so by April 30th. Additionally, we will require proof of program acceptance and tuition and fees due before sending payment.

7. What are the criteria used to select fellows?

The fellowship is geared toward HR professionals who have demonstrated leadership in human resources and have potential as future leaders in the field of HR. Therefore, selection criteria will include the applicant's relevant work and leadership experience, clarity and efficacy of goals and needs, undergraduate achievements, and community involvement. Criteria for selecting fellows mirror the eligibility and application requirements.

8. Who selects the fellowship recipients?

SHRM's Membership Advisory Council (MAC) representatives will screen qualified applicants from their geographic region and select the top candidate from each region. The recommended candidates will then be evaluated by the selection committee comprised of SHRM staff. Applicants who live or who attend a university outside of the United States are also eligible to apply and will be considered in the same applicant pool as those living in or attending a university in the United States.

9. How many fellowships are awarded each year?

At least one new fellowship of up to \$10,000 annually will be granted each year if qualified applications are received. Additional fellowships may be awarded, depending on funding available, quantity and quality of applicants, and the discretion of SHRM. Each fellowship is renewable for one additional year for a total of two years of graduate study and up to \$20,000 total for the fellowship.

10. How do fellows renew their appointments?

Fellows must renew their appointments by submitting their transcripts after each semester (or the school's equivalent grading period) during which fellowship

study occurred to confirm that they have met the minimum academic standards. In addition, fellows must renew their annual membership with SHRM or maintain their professional certification(s).

11. Are fellows obligated to pay back their award?

Fellows who withdraw from their academic program before completing the academic year are required to return any unused portion of the award and will be ineligible for further award fund distributions. However, fellows who complete the program supported by the fellowship award are not obligated to pay back the funds granted to them through the fellowship program. Instead, fellows are obligated to contribute to the HR community by a variety of means after graduation. For example:

- Become a mentor through the SHRM Volunteer Center for a year after graduating.
- Agree to participate in a longitudinal study that tracks Meisinger Fellows through their career.
- Serve as a judge for internship sponsorships offered by SHRM.
- If not already certified, become certified—for example, as PHR, SPHR or GPHR through the HR Certification Institute.
- If already certified, volunteer to join an input panel or item-writing panel through the HR Certification Institute or for SHRM’s Assurance Learning Assessment for graduating HR students.
- Be interviewed for a SHRM magazine or online article.
- Serve as a reviewer for the SHRM Foundation’s Effective Practice Guidelines series.
- Remain in touch with SHRM so that we can track you as you progress through your career and participate in surveys geared toward collecting this information.

12. What other obligations does a fellow have after his or her graduate education is completed?

Upon attaining the graduate degree, the fellow is obligated to work in the HR field for a minimum of one year for every year awarded through the fellowship and is expected to retain SHRM membership or professional certification (for example PHR, SPHR or GPHR through the HR Certification Institute) during this period. Failure to satisfy these requirements will result in a forfeiture of the fellowship award, and the recipient will be required to pay back all funding awarded. All requirements will be included in the Fellowship Agreement that will be signed by both the fellowship recipient and SHRM.

13. What are a fellow’s obligations to SHRM *during* his or her graduate education?

During the first year of the fellowship, fellows must maintain their certification or their status as a SHRM member *and* maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5 and university enrollment status in order to be eligible for a second year of funding. During the second year of the fellowship, fellows are expected to maintain their

status as a SHRM member or professional certification and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5 while continuing their graduate degree study. They may be asked to provide written feedback upon completion of the fellowship program and/or masters degree. GPA is based on a 4-point grading scale or any scale analogous to a 4-point grading scale.

14. Will I be liable for taxes on the fellowship?

Under U.S. Tax Code, the Meisinger Fellowship is not included in an individual's adjusted gross income *as long as* the funds are used for qualified tuition and related expenses such as fees, books, supplies and equipment required for courses of instruction at a qualified educational organization. However, it is the recipient's responsibility to determine tax liability for the award by the IRS and report it appropriately; we strongly encourage fellowship recipients to consult with their tax advisor. For example, if a recipient uses the fellowship to cover room and board expenses, those expenses may be subject to taxes. Fellowship funds are disbursed in U.S. dollars from a U.S. bank.

15. What is a 'qualifying master's degree' program? Are there limits on the types of master's degrees or universities the fellowship can support?

Yes, there are limits on the types of master's degrees or universities the fellowship can support. The qualifying degree program must be offered by a university with a commitment to both teaching and research. An institution with a robust research faculty and scholarly research program provides the strongest environment for fellowship study. Results of faculty's scholarly research efforts should be published in A-level scholarly journals, for example. The fellowship supports study in a business or human resources master's program accredited through a reputable accrediting organization.

If you have questions about whether a particular master's program would be acceptable, guidance is available to you through two online sources. First, the HR Certification Institute Body of Knowledge, available online at <http://www.hrci.org/certification/bok/>, outlines the topics covered by the practice of HR as reflected in the certification exams. Second, SHRM's *HR Curriculum Guidebook and Templates*, available online at <http://www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/overview.aspx>, provides details on the multi-year, multi-method research methodology used to determine the minimum HR content areas to be studied by HR students. You can also contact us at fellowship@shrm.org to inquire if your degree program meets the dual requirements for teaching and research. Applicants who live or attend a university outside of the United States are also eligible to apply, and the same criteria regarding university accreditation and equal commitment to both teaching and research are applicable.

In addition, as noted above, during the selection process, preference will be given to candidates who have been accepted into graduate programs at universities that

have adopted the SHRM HR Curriculum Guidelines (the list of universities is available at <http://www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/universities.aspx>).

16. Does the fellowship support study in non-degree or non-accredited programs?

No. The purpose of the fellowship program is to further the educational credentials of HR professionals. To be aligned with that goal, the student must be pursuing a master's degree through a business or human resources master's program with an equal commitment to teaching and research and accredited through a reputable accrediting organization. If you have questions about whether a particular master's program would be acceptable, you can contact us at fellowship@shrm.org to make sure.

17. Are fellows allowed to receive other grants or fellowships and still qualify for the Meisinger Fellowship program?

The Meisinger Fellowship is meant to cover the costs of tuition, fees, books, and room and board (if applicable) up to an amount of \$10,000. Should the total cost exceed the \$10,000 amount, the fellowship recipient may seek additional grants, fellowships or other aid elsewhere in an attempt to cover the difference. However, the fellowship may not be awarded to cover expenses already covered by other financial aid. Recipients are required to notify SHRM if their financial status changes or additional funding becomes available to them that would affect the amount of the fellowship award.

18. Can I be a full-time student or must I be working?

You can be a part-time student if the funding helps you complete your graduate education rather than start it. If you are a full-time student, the fellowship could possibly help defray living expenses via a stipend. In these cases, however, your fellowship may be subject to taxes, and recipients are strongly encouraged to consult with their tax advisor.

19. When will the awards be announced?

Awards will be announced annually in conjunction with SHRM's Annual Conference and Exposition in June.