

NLM/AAHSL LEADERSHIP FELLOWS PROGRAM

2025 / 2026

INFORMATION and APPLICATION June 2025



2024-2025 Class

From left (1st row): Shalu Gillum (Fellow), Faith Steele (Fellow), Lindsay Blake (Fellow); From left (2nd row): Judy Cohn (Program Director), Shannon Jones (FLC Chair), Joy Summers-Ables (Mentor), Anne Seymour (Mentor); From left (3rd row): Amy Allison (Mentor), Melissa Rethlefsen (Mentor), Francisco Fajardo (Fellow); From left (Top Row): Brian Leaf (Fellow), Michelle Kraft (Mentor), Janice Jaguszewski (Program Faculty), Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros (Program Faculty)

Contact information:

AAHSL office@aahsl.org Phone: 908-313-3232
NLM/AAHSL Leadership Program Director: Judy Cohn
judith.s.cohn@gmail.com
<https://www.aahsl.org/leadershipfellowsprogram>

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OVERVIEW

Announcing: The 2025/2026 Leadership Program of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL)

For the past 22 years, the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) have sponsored the NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program. This leadership program identifies and brings together emerging health sciences library leaders and assists them in gaining the skills and knowledge to lead today's and tomorrow's academic health sciences libraries.

The Leadership Fellows Program began in 2003, when the leadership of the AAHSL recognized there was a looming shortage of well-trained, qualified, and forward-thinking emerging leaders ready to become the next generation of academic health sciences library directors. To address this challenge and to ensure the vitality and influence of libraries far into the future, AAHSL undertook its Future Leadership Initiative. The Leadership Fellows Program, co-sponsored by NLM and AAHSL, was established and remains a highly visible and high priority program within AAHSL.

In addition to learning leadership models and competencies, as a fellow you will explore how to become an effective and inclusive leader. Working with a mentor who is an academic health sciences library director, you will observe and experience a variety of leadership styles and institutional cultures. Through this mentoring relationship, you will gain firsthand an unfiltered exposure to leadership through a site visit to your mentor's institution, as well as participate in candid conversations with your mentor, facilitated discussions among the learning community on various topics, and attend an intensive mid-year, multi-day leadership institute. As part of the program, you will be introduced to and become part of a larger community and network of health sciences library leaders through interactions with mentors, prior fellows, and other AAHSL library directors.

Leaders must value, create, and sustain a work environment where community and belonging thrives. The NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program recognizes the importance of such an environment to enrich and support the mission of academic health sciences libraries. The program actively seeks applications from individuals with varying identities and experiences. NLM and AAHSL are committed to building strong candidate pools and ensuring broad participation to enrich academic health sciences library leadership. Each year the program selects a small class of fellows (about five) for the incoming class.

To date, one hundred and twelve (112) fellows and eighty-eight (88) different mentors have participated in the program. Fifty-three (53) fellows (52% of prior graduates) have received permanent director appointments. Twenty-five (25) prior fellows have now joined the program as mentors.



The most valuable part of the program was the people - facilitators, mentors, and fellows. We were able to share our experiences and hold open discussions about the challenges and rewards that come with being a leader. In addition, as a fellow, my site visit gave me firsthand experience with another academic health sciences library and the high level leaders both inside and outside of the library.

Amy Blevins, Fellow 2018-2019
Associate Director for Public Services
Ruth Lilly Medical Library
Indiana University School of Medicine

The Leadership Fellows Program seeks applicants with progressive leadership experience or traditional management/administrative experience. Your leadership experience can be both within and outside the library community, such as prior work-related experience in a business or organization, or acting as a leader within a community, regional, or national organization over the course of several years. Leadership experiences can be from non-library environments that may include serving as project coordinator, grant PI, chair of a large or complex committee, or officer of a community, regional or national organization. It can be several years within the same position, or more than one leadership role over the course of several years. Your experience should demonstrate a sustained and progressive leadership path. You are not required to have direct supervisory responsibility or administer a large library unit, but your experience should involve working with a variety of people in accomplishing a specific project, initiative, or goal.

Fellows selected to be part of the program receive funding from AAHSL for travel and other program-related expenses. The only commitment from you and your library is that you will be given release time to participate fully in all program elements.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

As a fellow participating in the NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program, you will:

- Explore leadership through a variety of lenses and program components.
- Understand the importance of community and belonging as it applies to leadership development and to the benefit of the profession, institution, and community.
- Gain valuable insight on leading across organizational, institutional, and geographic boundaries.
- Establish a network of colleagues to draw upon throughout your career.
- Consider concepts in leadership theory and develop practical skills for implementing change at organizational and professional levels.
- Develop a clear understanding of the contemporary role of academic health sciences library directors.

- Exercise and hone strategic thinking skills.
- Discuss self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and its impact on leadership confidence.
- Practice interview skills for director level positions.
- Gather career guidance from your mentor and other health sciences library leaders.
- Be recognized as an emerging leader with a competitive standing when pursuing director positions.

Eligibility Requirements



The AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program was an incredible opportunity to see what successful leadership of health sciences libraries looks like in practice. It gave me a deeper appreciation of the range of challenges leaders in our field face, and the creative ways they find to improvise and respond. I also came away with a new group of colleagues and friends that I know I can always reach out to for personal advice. I highly recommend this program for aspiring leaders.

Stephen Kiyoi, Fellow 2016-2017
Head of Researcher Services, Shields Library
University of California Davis

The NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program is designed for librarians with prior management experience. In most cases, the baseline for candidates to be considered for selection is a minimum of three to five years of experience that demonstrates a career track in administrative positions or progressive leadership responsibilities. The application process is open to U.S. and Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Final candidates for fellows must be from or become an AAHSL member institution for *full travel support*. As noted in the Program and Travel Support section, candidates not from AAHSL member institutions will need to pay their own program travel expenses (estimated to be \$7,000 - \$7,500). Please visit the [AAHSL website](#) for [membership information](#).

The purpose of this program is to generate a pool of new candidates for open AAHSL director positions. As a result, current directors of AAHSL member libraries are not eligible to apply for this program. A fellow will be ineligible to participate if the selected fellow accepts a position as director of an AAHSL Library prior to the start of the program.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE & DESIGN

The NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program balances leadership development training with personal interaction and practical experience. The program combines a group curriculum with individually based events designed to build a “community of learners.” As a fellow, you will engage in face-to-face interactions, virtual sessions, and firsthand experiences through a site visit. In addition to a one-year fellow/mentor relationship, there are in-person leadership events and an opportunity to attend the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Annual Meeting, as well as the AAHSL Annual Meeting.

As a fellow, you will participate in seven components over a one-year timeframe, with each step building upon the previous learning experience:

- Orientation
- Multi-day Leadership Institute that focuses on leadership models and theory
- Site-visit to the mentor’s institution
- Ongoing mentoring relationship
- Mock interview for a director position
- Monthly webinars and online discussions
- Capstone event at the end of the program

The program is specifically designed to capitalize on the knowledge, wisdom, and training of mentors and program faculty by offering you experiences to observe, interact, role-play, discuss, and absorb a wide variety of topics. This approach leads to rich and long-lasting relationships with a larger leadership community made up of mentors and fellows from current and prior years.

Orientation

The Orientation, held in conjunction with the AAHSL and AAMC Annual Meetings, is the first opportunity for you to meet the members of your learning community (fellows, mentors, and faculty), get to know each other, and develop initial learning plans for the year. The Orientation includes a program overview and explores intentional leadership, creates a personal vision of leadership, and reflects on your leadership style. After completing leadership instruments, faculty guide you through a review of your individual leadership profile to assist you in identifying your strengths and preferences. This leadership assessment informs the work you will do individually and with your mentor. Because the Orientation is scheduled in concert with annual meetings, the program supports your attendance at AAMC (1-day registration) and the AAHSL Annual Meeting, exposing you to the issues and leaders of the academic health sciences community.

Leadership Institute

This multi-day event, scheduled in the spring, delves into leadership topics affecting academic health sciences libraries and the larger professional community, as well as your individual career development goals. Program faculty discuss case studies and facilitate interactive exercises. This mid-program event brings everyone together to further strengthen the learning community,

introduces additional leadership topics, further develops leadership skills, and ensures that the program is addressing the needs of your cohort of emerging leaders. These topics may be delivered virtually or through in-person activities.



The NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program was an invaluable and timely experience for me as a recently appointed Interim Director. It provided me with multiple opportunities to meet other directors and leaders with a wide range of experience and expertise and from a variety of disciplines. As a new director, I must give credit to my mentor, in particular, but also everyone involved with the program for their practical advice and philosophical wisdom.

Philip Walker, Fellow 2017-2018
Currently Director, Eskin Biomedical
Vanderbilt University Library

Mock Interview

You will participate in a mock interview for a director's position and be provided with guidance and feedback based on your performance. The mock interview simulates applying for a senior level leadership position in an academic health sciences library. Fellows, mentors, and faculty engage in informal discussions about the recruiting process, negotiating a salary and the other demands of starting a new, senior level leadership position.

Mentor Relationship and Site Visit

Your relationship with your mentor is the thread that ties the program components together. You will be paired with a mentor based on your expressed professional development goals and the mentor's fields of interest and areas of expertise, as well as characteristics of the mentor's institution.

With your mentor, you will establish mutual expectations for your newly developed working relationship. You will be expected to communicate on a regular and frequent basis to discuss topics of your choosing, such as challenges faced by you, issues in your home library, and the profession, as well as progress on learning goals. During this time, you will continue to build your relationship with your mentor who can support you as you consider your next career decisions.

The individual site visit to the mentor's home library fulfills the program's goal of exposing you to diverse leadership styles and organizational developments. The site visit gives you first-hand experience under the tutelage of a highly committed and knowledgeable mentor representing the leaders of the academic health sciences library community. The design of the site visit will ensure a meaningful and instructive experience—it will be coordinated to meet you and your mentor's expectations. Virtual meetings with key institutional leaders may be used to augment the site visit.



Having served as a mentor twice, I have seen transformations – new thoughts and ideas, “aha” moments, confidence building, and lifelong learning at the highest level. That happens not only for the Fellows, but for the Mentors as well, proving a growth mindset that can strengthen at any experiential level or age. The NLM/AAHSL Fellows Program functions at the highest level, building future leaders for our profession.

M.J. Tooley, MLS, AHIP, FMLA, Mentor 2016-2017, 2018-2019
Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs
Executive Director, Health Sciences and Human Services Library
Director, National Network of Libraries of Medicine,
Southeastern/Atlantic Region
University of Maryland Baltimore

Virtual Learning Community

A Virtual Learning Community is created to encourage the online exchange of information about program components and the discussion of issues and ideas that surface during the program. Prior to the Orientation, you will be connected electronically to the learning community (fellows, mentors, and faculty) to ensure continued interaction throughout the year. As a fellow, you and your mentor will be involved in developing and facilitating a monthly virtual session on a topic of importance to academic health sciences library leadership. These online topics and discussions comprise the major online component of the curriculum. The virtual curriculum has covered these topics: New and Emerging Leadership Models; Mentoring; Building Relationships and Forming Partnerships; IPE and Library Collaboration; and Cultural Humility.

Capstone

The Capstone brings together program participants, faculty, and national leaders in the library and academic health professions to discuss key issues. This intensive curriculum focuses on environmental forces helping to shape academic health sciences libraries. It will merge concepts raised throughout the year as well as recognize participants' completion of the program. The Capstone will reinforce your community of learners and will serve as a powerful networking opportunity with other leaders. Organizations represented in prior Capstone programs include the National Library of Medicine, Association of American Medical Colleges, Association of Research Libraries, Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), and the Interprofessional Education Collaborative, and other health professional and information organizations.

CURRICULUM TIMELINE

An important part of the program is the interaction and shared learning among your community of fellows and mentors. While some unexpected scheduling conflicts may occur, the program expects full participation in all major events. *See a sample program schedule on next page...*

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

July 18, 2025	Completed application packets due
By August 30, 2025	Successful candidates notified Participant confirmations due Notification letters sent to all applicants
September-October 2025	Log into Basecamp Completion of leadership assessment tools Online video introductions Introduction to the Learning Community Debrief of MBTI (Individual & Group)
October 27-30, 2025 San Antonio, TX (AAHSL)	The Orientation is held in conjunction with the AAHSL and AAMC Annual Meetings October 27: Arrival Day: 6:00-8:00 PM (No scheduled activity) October 28: Orientation: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM (Group dinner to follow) October 29: AAHSL Annual Meeting: 8:00 AM-5:00 PM (AAHSL Reception to follow) October 30: AAHSL Annual Meeting: 8:00-12:00
Nov. 1-5, 2025 (AAMC)	AAMC meeting Fellows receive funding for registration for <i>one-day</i> of the AAMC conference (in-person or virtually) and an additional night hotel stay
December 30, 2025	Learning Plans due Fellows/Mentors finalize site visit schedules
January – March 2026	Site visits
January – August 2026	Facilitated monthly webinars and discussions
April 2026 – Dates / location TBD	Leadership Institute – multi-day program – in-person 3-day immersive program hosted at AAHSL member institution
April – June 2026	Mock Interviews
Fall 2026 – Dates / Location TBD	Capstone and Graduation Hosted at AAHSL member institution

FELLOWS

Time Commitment

As an applicant, you should carefully review the sample program schedule before applying (previous page). Attendance at the program's major events (Orientation, Leadership Institute, and Capstone), is required in addition to participation in the monthly online discussions, routine communications with your mentor.

Program and Travel Support

Fellows from AAHSL member libraries have their travel, lodging and per diem expenses covered for all in-person events, according to [AAHSL travel policy](#), including one-day registration for the AAMC meeting.

- Attendance at the Orientation, AAHSL Annual Meeting, and one additional day at AAMC Annual Meeting in November 2025 in San Antonio, TX. Expenses include meeting registration, air and ground transportation, lodging and meals. Attendance at the AAHSL meeting is free.
- Travel to site visit library. Expenses include air and ground transportation, lodging and meals.
- Travel to the Leadership Institute (in-person) in the spring of 2026 including air and ground transportation, lodging and meals.
- Travel to the Capstone event (in-person) in the fall 2026. Expenses for an in-person event include air and ground transportation as well as lodging and meals.

If selected, you may use the allotment for travel expenses in accordance with the AAHSL Travel Policy and guidelines provided by the program. The [policy and travel expense form](#) will govern reimbursement of expenses. Please note the use of rental cars must be approved in advance by the program director.

Fellows NOT from AAHSL member institutions will need to pay their own travel expenses for the following (estimated at \$7,000 to 7,500). This includes:

- Travel, meals and other expenses on the days of travel to the in-person events such as Orientation, Leadership Institute, Capstone event and the site visit to the mentor's institution
- Registration, travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for the AAMC meeting

AAHSL supports lodging expenses and meals during the Orientation, Leadership Institute, and Capstone event, and provides free registration to the AAHSL Annual Meeting and educational program for all participants. Information for becoming an [AAHSL member](#) is available on the association's website.

Criteria for Application Evaluation

1. Strong interest in pursuing a **directorship in academic health sciences libraries** regardless of type of library background or current setting.
2. Demonstrated record of leadership initiative and strong potential for future leadership contributions.
3. Clearly articulated personal and professional goals.
4. Commitment to the time and dedication required for full participation.
5. Diversity of experience, background, or perspective, particularly those underrepresented in the profession and library leadership positions.
6. A master's in library/information science or comparable graduate degree.
7. Currently working in academic health sciences libraries, hospital libraries, or other libraries or library-related environments.

Prospective applicants who do not yet meet these requirements may benefit from taking part in other leadership programs (including a short course, institutional leadership training, professional development in leadership, etc.) prior to applying for the fellowship.



The Leadership Fellows program was incredibly important to my professional development and the growth of my organization. I've found myself going back to my notes from our presentations and discussions more than once, and in a year of turmoil, when the operative words were "pivot and adapt," the support from my cohort of fellows and mentors was invaluable. My skills and confidence in myself as a leader grew throughout the year, and the experience ultimately was invaluable in helping me build the case for organizational change to strengthen health and biomedical sciences support at my institution.

Erika Sevetson, MS, Fellow 2019/2020
Currently Director of Health and Biomedical Library Services,
Brown University Library

Application

As a candidate for the fellowship, you are asked to include in your application a statement reflecting why you should be chosen as a candidate and why you want to be a director of an academic health sciences library. The statement does not need to be lengthy but must present a strong case as to why you should be selected. This information will also facilitate the process of matching fellows with mentors and will be used to focus your individual learning plan.

You must submit your application materials electronically to AAHSL by July 18, 2025. Application submission requires completing an online information sheet available at: <https://aahsl.memberclicks.net/fellows-class-2025-2026-application> and uploading the other required documents or sending them directly to Office@AAHSL.org.

AAHSL will acknowledge receipt of your application and prepare it for review by the AAHSL Future Leadership Committee. Please contact Judy Cohn (Judith.s.cohn@gmail.com) if you do not receive an acknowledgement.

Timeline

July 18, 2025	Completed application packets due
August 2025	Invited candidates notified of selection decision
August 2025	Commitment to program participation due

Fellow application packets should include the following. Note: It is preferred, but not mandatory, that components be submitted as a single PDF or Word file (or two if the letter of reference and support is submitted at a different time).

1. Online Fellow Information Sheet – the fellows information sheet is an online form that can be found on the AAHSL Website at: <https://aahsl.memberclicks.net/fellows-class-2025-2026-application>.

As an applicant you will be asked to provide the following: name, current position title, library, institution, mailing address, email, telephone numbers, graduate degrees, and years of management experience.

Providing information on race/ethnicity is optional. NLM and AAHSL are committed to building broad candidate pools and building a strong community of participants in the program. Over the past 15 years, more than 24.7% of the fellow applicants have indicated a minority status and 30.5% of fellows have self-identified as having a variety of backgrounds. We ask for demographic information to help us collect data and make appropriate enhancements to our future outreach efforts.

2. Current CV

3. Statement of Interest (1 page)

Your Statement of Interest should support your application to the program. When developing your statement, consider the following:

- Why you are interested in the NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program.
- Your career goals in 3 to 5 years.

- How your background and experience has prepared you for an academic health sciences library director position.
- Other relevant academic or administrative experiences (e.g., leadership initiatives).
- Your vision of the role of the academic health sciences library director now and in the future.
- Areas of professional development and knowledge that you would like to pursue as a part of the site-visit at your mentor's institution.
- An example of how you have contributed to building community within the profession or in your workplace.

4. Letters of Reference – up to three letters of reference will be accepted. The letters can be from the library director, other direct supervisor or administrator, or a colleague who has directly observed and is knowledgeable about your leadership ability, your potential and level of readiness to be an academic health sciences library director, and how the fellowship program will contribute to your development. The letters should focus on leadership level skills within the library, institution, or profession and not on management abilities.

5. Letter of Support from home institution for the following:

*The Letter of Support from the home institution is strongly encouraged but is **not** mandatory for consideration. Candidates who apply without an institutional Letter of Support are asked to supply a written statement that they understand, agree to, and can support the financial and time commitments required for participation in all aspects of the program.*

- Support (time and other non-financial) for fellow's full participation in all programmatic activities (One-week site visit to mentor's home institution, webinars and discussions, Orientation, multi-day Leadership Institute, and 2-day Capstone).
- For candidates from non-AAHSL libraries:
 - Statement that the institution is becoming a member of AAHSL, or
 - Statement that travel expenses (including meals and incidental expenses) for participation in the Orientation, Leadership Institute, and Capstone, and all expenses (travel, lodging, per diem) for the site visit will be supported by you or your institution.

The letters mentioned in items #4 and #5 may be combined.

For questions about the application process, or to nominate a candidate for consideration, please contact Judy Cohn, Program Director, AAHSL Future Leadership Program, at Judith.s.cohn@gmail.com or 908-313-3232.

MENTORS

Travel Support

NLM/AAHSL will financially support the following for mentors:

- Two days lodging and meals to attend the Orientation at the AAHSL and AAMC Annual Meetings, usually in October/November.
- Air and ground transportation, lodging, and additional meals to attend the multi-day Leadership Institute.
- Air and ground transportation as well as lodging and meals to attend the Capstone.

Mentors Application

The NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program seeks academic health sciences library directors to serve as mentors for program fellows. The program accepts a small class of fellows (about five) and each fellow is matched with a mentor. Mentors actively participate in the program's success by contributing to the leadership development components.

Mentors are selected based on their interest in the leadership program and their ability to commit time to the program. The time commitment involves participating in the in-person meetings, communicating regularly with their fellow, hosting a site visit for the fellow, and participating in the online discussions and virtual learning sessions. During in-person activities, you will participate in all discussions and exercises and share your knowledge and experiences with the fellows. Mentors will be asked to assist their fellow in facilitating a virtual (online) session and contributing to the Institute content through the development of case studies or other learning exercises.

As with fellows, the program is committed recruiting a broad community of mentors and seeks applications from individuals with varying identities and backgrounds.

If selected, you will be paired with a fellow based on the fellow's expressed professional development areas and your fields of interest and areas of expertise, as well as characteristics of the institution.

As a mentor you should meet the following criteria:

- Five years' experience at director level (exceptions may be made for fewer years).
- Membership in AAHSL.
- U.S. or Canadian citizenship or permanent residency.
- Interest in and ability to commit time from September 2025 to October 2026 to the program components outlined in the program schedule (SEE page 7), including mentors' orientation, program Orientation, Leadership Institute, Virtual Learning

Community, Capstone, one-week Site Visit and regular communication with your fellow.

You may contact the Committee Chair, Shannon D. Jones (joneshan@musc.edu) or Program Director, Judy Cohn (Judith.s.cohn@gmail.com) with questions about the program or serving as a mentor.



As a fellow, the program supported me in building a strong foundation for navigating the challenges of leading in today's educational, research, and clinical environments. As a mentor, the program guided me in learning how to support others in their development. I attribute my professional success, in great part, to the experiences I had. I recommend this to anyone who wants to be an effective and transformative leader.

Rose L. Bland, MPA, MA, AHIP, Fellow 2012/2013, Mentor 2019/2020
Currently Assistant Vice President, USF Health Libraries and Assistant Dean,
Morsani College of Medicine (MCOM)
University of South Florida

Preliminary Mentor Application

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, you should send a preliminary email message to Judy Cohn (Judith.s.cohn@gmail.com) by the deadline date below.

The preliminary email should include:

- **A brief statement of your interest** in participating in the NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program as a mentor, including what you and your institution could offer a fellow and the cohort in terms of professional development, your own experience, your unique areas of expertise, and/or institutional areas of focus.

Please include a brief paragraph about your library/institution:

- The type of institution (private, public, government)
- The reporting structure for the library, i.e., to whom the director reports
- The schools or areas served by the library, including any relationships to hospitals or health systems

- **A current CV.**

The selection committee evaluates fellow candidates and determines the types of institutions needed for appropriate matches. Input from fellow candidates may be sought about their preferences for a match. After initial decisions about potential matches for fellows and mentors are made, each selected mentor is asked to confirm commitment to the program.

Timeline

July 18, 2025	Indicate preliminary interest in being in the mentor Pool
August 2025	Mentor acceptance for the 2025-2026 class
August 2025	Mentors are asked to confirm participation and are notified of pairing decisions