

Board Fellowship Program

Information for Students

The Board Fellowship Program prepares University of Michigan graduate students in the Ross School of Business, Ford School of Public Policy, and School of Social Work for responsible community leadership, while developing a cadre of young professionals to become future nonprofit board members.

Since 2003, NPM has successfully placed over 305 Board Fellows in 132 nonprofit organizations. These students have assisted with various projects, from marketing plans to performance measurement. Through the Board Fellowship Program, organizations benefit from fresh perspectives and talents and develop a lasting affiliation with the University of Michigan. In return, students gain practical board experience, a familiarity with the nonprofit sector, and development of skills.

Board Fellows serve as *non-voting* board members of nonprofit organizations in Southeast Michigan for an academic year (from mid-October through April), gaining insight into the challenges facing their organization and the complexities of nonprofit management. Students work closely with the board and executive director of their assigned organization, attend board meetings, serve on committees, and learn about the issues facing the board and staff. In addition, Board Fellows are expected to complete a board-level project for the board over the course of their placement.

How to Apply

Graduate students in the Ross School of Business, Ford School of Public Policy, and School of Social Work are invited to apply in the fall. Board Fellows must possess:

- A record of academic and professional excellence
- Knowledge and skills relevant to particular nonprofits and their boards
- Sensitivity to issues of community needs, financial concerns, and confidentiality
- A commitment to the nonprofit sector

To apply for the Board Fellowship Program, students must attend one of the Board Fellowship kickoffs in September. Following the kickoff, attendees will be provided access to the application form and nonprofit partner descriptions.

Completed applications must be submitted via email to nonprofit@umich.edu by mid-September. Select students will then be invited to interview with NPM staff. NPM will recommend students to nonprofit organizations and provide them the opportunity to review and approve the match. Selected Board Fellows will be matched with organizations based on student skills and interests, as well as the needs of the nonprofits.

Nonprofit and Public Management Center

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*A collaboration of the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy,
and Stephen M. Ross School of Business*

Frequently Asked Questions

What types of projects do Board Fellows undertake?

Projects assigned are board-level projects, not staff-level work, and are designed to be manageable in light of the student's other academic demands. Examples of student projects include:

- Performance measurement (developing a balanced scorecard or creating an evaluation system)
- Strategic plans (developing a strategic plan for growth, fund development or web development)
- Marketing plans (developing a strategy for public relations or branding)
- Fund development (analyzing current fundraising efforts to increase donations)
- Finance (conducting a cost/benefit analysis)

What type of training and support does NPM provide Board Fellows and organizations?

At the beginning of the fellowship, students and nonprofit partners participate in an orientation of the program. In addition, students receive training on the responsibilities of board leadership, conducted by the NEW Center. Throughout the program, NPM provides further training on topics relevant to board governance and provides avenues for students to compare learning, issues, and experiences. Nonprofits and students also receive ongoing support from NPM as needed. Support may include additional resources relevant to the board fellow project or working with the nonprofit and student to establish clear expectations.

What is the time commitment for Board Fellows?

Board Fellows voluntarily commit a similar amount of time per month as a full board member (typically 4-8 hours a month), including attending board meetings, committee meetings, and completing their project. NPM strongly encourages the Board Fellow and their organization to discuss expectations at the beginning of their term.

What is expected from Board Fellows?

- Attend most, if not all, board meetings and serve on one board committee
- Complete a project within the board and committee work that leverages your graduate-level skills
- Help with and attend special events
- Seek support and mentoring from a sponsoring board mentor and staff mentor
- Maintain consistent communication with mentors and the organization

What are the benefits of serving as a Board Fellow?

- Meaningful participation in the management of a nonprofit organization
- Professional knowledge and skills in board governance
- Skills for effective collaboration with community leaders
- Opportunities to integrate tools learned in the classroom with the board fellowship experience

Important Dates

- **September** - Students must attend one of the two Board Fellow kickoff events.
- **September** - Applications are due.
- **Late September** - Select applicants are invited for interviews.
- **Early to mid October** - Board Fellows are announced.
- **October** - Mandatory orientation for selected Board Fellows and nonprofit partners.
- **Mid-October – April**: Students serve as Board Fellows.

Who should I contact with questions or concerns?

Please contact NPM staff at (734) 647-0279 or email nonprofit@umich.edu.