

BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE GRADUATE SCHOLARS OVERVIEW

Summary

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute offers fellowships for advanced doctoral students conducting research concerning the development, education, and well-being of young children, prenatal to 8 years old. The overriding goal of the program is to increase the skills of doctoral scholars conducting innovative research with implications for early childhood, with particular attention to children placed at risk as a consequence of economic, social, physical, and environmental circumstances. The program provides financial support for doctoral students admitted to candidacy in the University of Nebraska System. Up to four students will receive \$25,000 awards to explore issues relevant to early childhood.

The Buffett Institute Graduate Scholars program grows out of the work of the Buffett Institute's four-campus mission focused on applied research, professional development, outreach, and policy. The Institute is cross-disciplinary and cross-campus, and the fellowship program is intended to reach across traditional higher education boundaries to include those who may have an impact on the lives of young children. The Institute encourages a wide variety of research perspectives and interests and seeks to support high-quality research from fields such as health, education, social work, public health, music, art, psychology, and others. Multidisciplinary research and new methodologies are encouraged.

Full applications are due by Friday, April 24, 2026. The award winners will be notified by the end of June 2026.

Program Goals

The goals of the Graduate Scholars program are to:

- Support advanced doctoral students who are in the dissertation phase in a variety of fields across the NU system.
- Foster the growth of exceptional graduate students by providing mentoring by experts within the NU system and creating opportunities for graduate students within the program to communicate, network, and collaborate.
- Encourage multidisciplinary research and the application of new methodologies.
- Promote an early childhood research agenda across disciplines and campuses by engaging students and faculty in in-depth exploration of issues within the field.
- Increase the quantity and quality of research projects that are consistent with the mission and goals of the Buffett Institute.

Award Information

- The Buffett Institute will fund up to four awards this year.
- Applicants are funded for up to 12 months.

Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants must be full-time, doctoral-level graduate students who have been admitted to candidacy within a department on one of the NU campuses. Candidacy is defined, for the purposes of this fellowship, as having completed all scholarly activities required for the doctorate, except for the dissertation (ABD). *An exception to this criterion will be considered should the student's dissertation advisor assure that the dissertation project will be approved by the student's committee by July 1, 2026.*
- Faculty mentors are expected to be actively involved with the student's research and related Buffett Institute activities. They must be employed full-time at one of the NU campuses.
- Applicants may not be employed simultaneously as a graduate research assistant for the Buffett Institute and receive the award.

Project Requirements

- Scholars will complete an original research project consistent with the mission and goals of the Buffett Institute.
- The student and faculty mentor are required to attend two events (in person) sponsored by the Institute on one of the NU campuses during their funded year. Scholars are expected to present their proposed research at a fall reception and project results at a seminar in late spring of the academic year. Scholars also participate in a midyear check-in with Buffett Institute staff.

Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of cross-campus, multidisciplinary NU faculty, and Buffett Institute senior staff. The criteria and application process are detailed in the RFP. Applications are highly encouraged from fields not typically associated with early childhood, that use innovative methodology, and/or take a multidisciplinary approach.

About the Buffett Early Childhood Institute

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska is devoted to improving the development and learning of children from birth through age 8 through research, practice, policy, and outreach. We partner with colleagues across the University of Nebraska, the state, and the nation to ensure that all children and families have access to the quality early learning experiences they need to grow and thrive.

For more information about the Buffett Institute, visit <http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu>