

Aspiring Leaders

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Application Close Date:
April 6, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Selection Announcement:
May 19, 2026

Leadership Forum Program Dates:
October 14 at 6 PM -
October 16 at 3:30 PM, 2026

ELIGIBILITY DETAILS

- Applicants should have an aspiration to serve as president of a federally-designated [Minority Serving Institution](#).
- Applicants should be mid to senior career level candidates and approximately 5-8 years from pursuing a college presidency.
- Ideal candidates will have some upper level administrative experience and/or have experience in supervision of staff and/or managing of budgets.

[ONLINE APPLICATION
AVAILABLE HERE](#)

Supported by The Kresge Foundation and the ECMC Foundation, MSI Aspiring Leaders is a program developed by the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) that brings together prominent leaders from Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) to engage with mid-career aspiring leaders from the education, non-profit, and business sectors in an effort to prepare the next generation of MSI presidents.

MSI Aspiring Leaders includes both a leadership forum and mentorship program and has been designed to help promote diversity among higher education leadership, where nearly 60% of sitting university presidents are over the age of 60 and where many see a lack of opportunity for women and people of color.

By providing professional development workshops focused on 21st-century skills as well as 1.5 years of post-forum mentorship, MSI Aspiring Leaders hopes to cultivate future MSI presidents by strengthening pathways to leadership and building connections between peers with similar aspirations and abilities. The forum will include discussions and workshops on topics such as the managing board of trustee relationships, using data to make decisions, crisis management, strategic fundraising, work-life balance, and navigating media engagement.

After the forum, mentors and their mentees will participate in a one-on-one mentoring relationship through in-person meetings, conference calls, and email over 1.5 years. CMSI will facilitate these relationships and provide benchmarks to be completed at various points throughout the 1.5 years.

The MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum starts with a dinner at 6PM on October 14th and ends on October 16 at 3:30 PM. All meals, lodging for 2 nights, and materials will be provided by CMSI. Participants must cover the cost of their personal travel. **The overall program cost is \$750 and is due upon selection and confirmation of program participation.**



PROGRAM OUTLINE AND BENEFITS

- 1.5 year program including a forum that brings together a cohort of Aspiring Leaders as well as MSI presidential mentors.
- Forum workshops focus on topics including but not limited to:
 - Retention
 - Degree Attainment
 - Fundraising for Presidents
 - Budgeting and Finance
 - Balancing Athletics and Academics
 - Crisis Management
 - Free Speech and Academic Freedom
 - Academic Politics
 - Salary Negotiations
 - Working with Search Firms
 - Presidential CVs
 - Student Mental Health
 - Working with Boards of Trustees
- One-on-one Presidential Mentorship
- A CV Review Service
- A Presidential and Executive Job Bank
- A Nominating Letter Service
- Individual Coaching Provided by Search Firms
- Interview Preparation provided by Mentors and Search Firms
- Monthly Webinars Focused on Skill Building

APPLICATION DETAILS

- Application will be available beginning March 10, 2026 [here](#).
- Components of a Completed Online Application:
 - Personal Information
 - 3-minute Personal Narrative Video
 - Completed Leadership Inventory
 - Contact Information for 3 individuals serving as Recommenders
 - Submitted Recommenders' Materials
- Ideal Applicants Are:
 - Someone who envisions a presidency in 5-8 years
 - Someone who has held an upper-level management or upper-level administrative position (E.g. Vice President, Provost, Dean, Department Chair, Senior Level Faculty, Non-Profit Leader, Senior Advisor of Tribal or Indigenous Council, etc.)
 - Someone who has demonstrated experience managing systems, processes, budgets, and people
 - Someone with the goal of being president of a Minority Serving Institution

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

Below we have included a few guiding tips on things to consider when working on the various portions of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program application. Following these guiding tips does not guarantee selection into the program but will ensure you put forth a strong application for consideration.

- Personal Narrative Video
 - Use Hi-definition video for best quality
 - Use bright lighting
 - Ensure good sound quality
 - Maintain professionalism
 - Provide a response to all the questions in the prompt
 - Do not go over the 3-minute limit for the video
 - Avoid having a script that is visible to the viewer and/or from which you are clearly reading
- Recommenders
 - Follow instructions when providing full information for three recommenders. We require one recommendation from each of these categories:
 - A current/past supervisor
 - A current/past supervisee
 - A mentor who can comment on your leadership potential
- Inform recommenders in advance of your intent to apply to this program
 - Provide sufficient time for recommenders to submit their portion of your application
- Recommenders will not receive the link to submit their materials about the applicant until an applicant submits their completed application. Strong applicants should not apply for this opportunity at the last minute as recommenders will not have enough time to complete and submit their materials.
- Applications are only considered complete when an applicant and their three recommenders have successfully completed all relevant materials.
- Timely Submission
 - Under no circumstances will late applications be accepted. This application will not be extended beyond the April 6, 2026 deadline.
 - **Selected applicants will be required to attend the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum from October 14 at 6PM - October 16, 2026. The program starts with a dinner at 6PM on October 14 and ends on October 16 at 3:30 PM. Please make sure you will be available during these dates before submitting an application.**