

What the Admissions Committee Wants You to Know

Personal Statement · Fellowship Deadlines · Letters of Recommendation

Department of Speech and Hearing Science



Full details and links: <https://www.shs.illinois.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/>

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Application Requirements at a Glance



Minimum Requirements

Meet the Graduate College's minimum GPA and degree requirements.



Transcripts

From all schools attended — unofficial copies accepted if clear and legible.



GRE

Not required for the clinical MA program.



Letters of Recommendation

Three letters - faculty familiar with your academic background strongly encouraged.



Academic Statement

1,000 words or less — your background, program fit, and academic interests.



Personal Statement

Four 250-word prompts — the first two required, the last two optional.



Resume

Work, volunteer, clinical, teaching, and research experience — no page limit.



International Applicants

TOEFL or IELTS scores required.



Know Your Options

CLINICAL MA (SLP)

What most of you are here for. Leads to clinical certification and direct patient care.

NON-CLINICAL MA

No clinical certification. Build a research- or coursework-focused program around your interests. Good prep for PhD or non-clinical careers in healthcare, education, government, accessibility, and more.

PHD

The research and academic doctorate. If you're passionate about research, this is absolutely within reach — apply straight from undergrad or after an MA, depending on what fits you.

AND SHS BACKGROUND CAN ALSO OPEN DOORS IN:

- Healthcare programs & administration
- Public health & community programs
- Industry & product development (AAC, hearing aids, etc)
- Accessibility & disability services
- Research coordination & lab management
- Nonprofit & program leadership
- Policy, advocacy & government



Know Both Dates

DEC 15

Dean's Master's Fellowship consideration

- Replaces the earlier Equity Master's Fellowship
- Submit a complete graduate application
- Eligibility details:
<https://www.shs.illinois.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions>
- Email shs-grad-admissions@ahs.illinois.edu with "Dean's Fellowship" in the subject line

JAN 5

General program deadline

Standard application deadline for all applicants, fellowship or not.

FIRST REQUIRED ESSAY

Academic Statement of Purpose

Scored on four things — here's how to hit each one.

GRADUATE COLLEGE GUIDANCE ON AI:

You can use it to organize or polish, not to write your statement for you. Your application should sound like you.

ONE ESSAY · 1,000 WORDS

-  **Your Background**

Academic & professional experience that prepared you for grad study. This is also where your “why SLP” story belongs. What lead you to this field? Skip the generic opener (“I’ve always wanted to help people”).
-  **Your Career Goals**

Your academic interests and reasons for pursuing this MA, and where it's taking you.
-  **Why Illinois and SHS Specifically**

What drew you to this program in particular? Identify specific aspects of the program that fit your interests and goals. Avoid generic “great program” language. Why UIUC over other programs?
-  **Writing Quality**

Grammar & spelling are explicitly scored here. Proofread and have someone else read it for you!



SECOND REQUIRED ESSAY

Personal Statement

The big picture first — also scored on four things.

4

PROMPTS · 250 WORDS EACH

2 + 2

REQUIRED + OPTIONAL

(Prompts 1 & 2 required, 3 & 4 optional)

- **Writing Quality** — scored throughout; proofread before you submit
- **Background & Experience** (Prompt #1) — the pivotal experiences and barriers that shaped your path
- **Community & Belonging** (Prompt #2) — a specific example of contributing to an inclusive, collaborative environment
- **Explaining Gaps** (Prompt #3, optional) — only if your record doesn't reflect your true capabilities; explain the discrepancy, not another chance to retell your story
- Prompt #4, optional — your catch-all: anything else you want us to know, and where you'd highlight fellowship candidacy



Read It Closely



“Please describe pivotal experiences, opportunities, and/or challenges (including any financial or access barriers) that have influenced your educational and professional development.”

Let's discuss how to use this well.

What We're Actually Asking For

NOT: “Tell us your saddest story.”

YES: “Help us understand your path — including what shaped it.”

If any of these apply to you, this prompt is where they belong:

- Financial barriers — working through school, family contributions, cost of prerequisites
- First-generation college student status
- Disadvantaged background or limited access to educational opportunities
- Not discovering the field until later in your undergraduate program
- Other significant challenges that shaped your educational path

This prompt is also how we assess eligibility for the Dean’s Fellowship



How to Write About It Well



Be concrete – share the struggle and where it led

Name the actual barrier and a specific moment or example, not just a category label. Be honest about the impact without feeling like you need to minimize the challenge.



Show the “so what”

Connect it to the skills, resilience, or perspective you bring to graduate study. Say what you did with the struggle: how you worked through it, and where you are now. That combination is also exactly what the Equity Fellowship looks for.



Keep the focus forward

Link it to your readiness for this program, not only what happened to you.

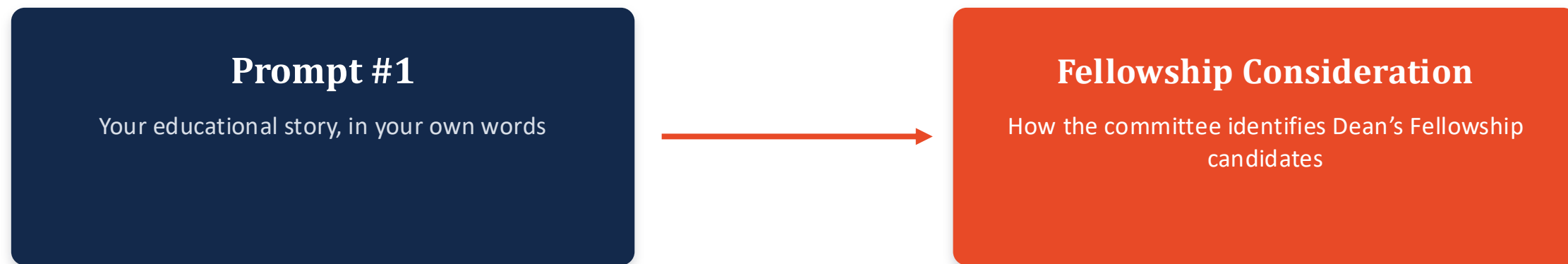


It doesn't need to be dramatic

Meaningful and specific beats extreme. Small, real details carry more weight than sweeping statements.

WHY THIS PROMPT MATTERS TWICE

One Prompt, Two Purposes



WHAT THE COMMITTEE ACTUALLY LOOKS FOR

- ✓ **Academic achievement & potential for graduate success** — *Assessed through transcripts, honors, & other academic accomplishments*
- ✓ **Hardship, first-gen status, or barriers to educational access** — *Or a nontraditional path to graduate school (Prompt #1)*
- ✓ **Contributions to an inclusive and collaborative community** — *Demonstrated through experiences and examples (Prompt #2/Resume)*



Suggestions for Who to Ask



At least 2 letters

PhD Faculty

Someone who has taught, mentored, or supervised your academic or research work. They can speak to your critical thinking, coursework performance, and readiness for graduate-level study.



Remaining letter

Clinical or Professional Contact

A clinician, supervisor, or other professional who knows your work well. They can speak to your interpersonal skills, professionalism, and potential to succeed in a clinical training program.

These are only suggestions, not requirements!



We'd Love to See Your Application!

Full instructions: grad.illinois.edu

Questions: shs-grad-admissions@ahs.illinois.edu

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