



Advice and Guidance for Pursuing an Administrative Fellowship

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Administrative Fellowship application, interviewing, and decision-making season typically occurs in the fall. It is never too early to map out a plan to submit applications and interview for this important role.

The American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) are proud to join together to provide a resource guide noting key points to consider while pursuing an administrative fellowship. We hope you use this tool as you advance your career as a healthcare leader.

An administrative fellowship, also known as a postgraduate fellowship, is a preceptor-directed program designed to nurture independence and experiential learning for an individual who has recently obtained a master's degree. This program is a way to assist new entrants to the profession in their transition from academically acquired competencies to the actual management of healthcare organizations. The best fellowships are typically well structured, last between one and two years, involve a mix of rotations in specific departments and general assignments as well as exposure to senior leadership and strategic thinking. While the sponsoring organization may offer the fellow permanent employment, it is not required nor is the fellow obliged to accept any offers.

Here are key points to consider in your journey to seek an administrative fellowship.

Five Key Points:

- Be strategic.
- Stay organized.
- Be your authentic self.
- Develop communication skills.
- Replenish yourself.

#1: Be Strategic

Being strategic early on in the process will help you choose what fellowship would fit you best and ensure you focus on organizations where you are certain you want to work.

- Do your homework about fellowships/organizations. An Administrative Fellowship is not just an experience, it's an employment relationship and being happy, having a sense of well-being and a feeling a sense of belonging in a community should be important. Is this a place you want to launch your career and grow for a few years? Is this a place or location where you want to live? Are the mission, vision, values, and organizational culture aligned with your

personal values and ethics? Are you energized with how the organization shapes, structures, and operates the fellowship? Be prepared to ask thoughtful, important questions and avoid basic questions where the answers are easily found.

- Be realistic about the competitiveness (and number) of sites when applying; some sites receive over 200 applications! Likewise, students who apply to too many sites can be challenged managing the logistics, considering the period between first-round telephone interviews and onsite visits is usually only a few weeks (during which time you'll be managing emails, telephone calls, and voicemails from your applications). If you're set on completing a fellowship, identify both highly and moderately competitive sites but if you're comfortable not receiving a fellowship offer, go for your "dream" sites but be prepared to search for another role. If you only apply to organizations where you're certain you would say yes, your decision will be easier.
- Talk to others about your application: your preceptor, faculty advisor, practitioner mentor, program director, executive-in-residence, past fellows, and people who have had experience where you're applying. What were their experiences in applying for fellowships? What are their experiences with organizations as an employer?
- Speak with those from whom you may be requesting recommendations earlier in the application process. They may be asked by others to also write recommendations and you don't want them to be pressured by a deadline. Prepare information for these leaders, including information about the organization, the fellowship structure and why you are interested and aligned with each opportunity.
- Think about a plan for financial and other resources you may need as this process can be expensive. Generally, applications processed directly through an employer do not require application fees. Some sites may not reimburse travel expenses until after the trip has concluded and all receipts have been submitted and processed, which can take several weeks or longer.

Many candidates go in thinking they will get matched with their top pick when that isn't always the case. Be sure to think through each application and how your professional goals align with what the fellowship is offering.

#2: Stay Organized

Organize yourself and your application process early. Maintain your system for organizing as the process proceeds; organization, efficiency, and frugality are key to managing the process. The more organized you are, the less likely you are to make mistakes regarding contacts and information, timelines, deadlines, managing recommendation letters, and other items.

- All communications should be timely throughout the application process.
- Communicate with sites you are interested in early and follow up when appropriate; it is important to get to know the current fellows and other key contacts. Don't count on central application systems, online application sites, or electronic communication to make yourself known to the current fellows or others involved in an organization's recruitment process. Try to make personal connections within the organization. So much about the job search is about the relationships made along your career journey.
- The more organized you are, the more prompt and smooth your response will be when taking a call or responding to an email from the organizations to which you are applying. Only

answer the phone if you are ready to have a conversation, including having access to files/materials for that particular site.

- Timing can be challenging. If you're offered a fellowship early in the application cycle, be prepared to decide within 48-72 hours.

If you put a system in place at the beginning of your planning and application process and update it throughout the process, it will save you time, money and other resources, and lessen the likelihood you will make mistakes and will lessen stress and anxiety.

#3: Be Your Authentic Self

You're representing yourself and your graduate program; be your *best* authentic self before, during, and after site visits.

- Be honest, transparent, and genuine in your communication. Try to show your personality through your communications while remaining professional.
- Stay true to your values.
- Carefully consider each organization's mission and vision, values, organizational culture, and inclusiveness for alignment with your own.
- Treat everyone you meet in a manner consistent with your own values as well as the field of healthcare management's. Be collegial, respectful, and kind.
- Be kind to your fellow student colleagues, your graduate program director, faculty and staff, other colleagues, and the people who care about you.
- After the offer has been extended and accepted, consider this a formal commitment for employment. Immediately reach out to other sites still pending and inform them you are no longer available. This timely and respectful communication supports your professional and personal reputation and the reputation of your graduate program/university.
- Congratulate and support others in your cohort when they land telephone interviews, on-sites, or fellowship offers. Practicing the art of "raising up others" now will make you a better mentor and leader in the future.
- After you've secured your fellowship, think about how you can support others in your cohort and network of colleagues still pursuing fellowships or jobs.
- Send a thank you email or letter to the organization and note what you are looking forward to in the time ahead.

Every organization has challenges and room for improvement; bear in mind community is ideal. The hope is that you find a sense of belonging while also being your authentic self; that you have joy in your work, where you work, and your colleagues. Being happy professionally and personally is important, healthy, and sustaining.

#4: Develop Communication Skills

Develop and polish your communication and other professional skills leading up to the application and during the selection process.

- Practice, practice, practice for every kind of interview. Participate in mock telephone calls, in-person interviews, and video interviews. Some sites have started using automated, screen-based interviews without anyone on the other side of the screen.

- Be prepared for behaviorally based interview questions such as ones that start with “Describe a time when...”, “Give us an example of...”, “Describe a situation where... and what did you do?” When asked these and any other questions, it is acceptable to take time to think before you begin your answer, as this can demonstrate your thought process.
- Be aware of your professional presence. You’re establishing your style as well as your own professional brand.
- Be aware that all work environments are different.
- Take advantage of opportunities to improve your communication and other professional skills; that includes observing and learning from others you meet during the application and interview process and asking for feedback if/when appropriate.
- Treat the entire application process as a learning, professional developmental, and relationship-building opportunity for your career. Build and nurture relationships versus just building “a network.”

#5: Replenish Yourself

Taking care of yourself is important and will keep you resilient.

- Take care of yourself!
- Be well rested, nourished, and hydrated. You want to feel at your very best for any type of interview and all interactions.
- Try to stay positive, enthusiastic and have a “glass half-full” vs “glass half-empty” outlook every day; the opposite is not healthy for you or helpful to your search.

Be kind to yourself and ensure your mental and physical well-being is replenished during this process.

Wherever the fellowship journey takes you, we wish you well in your future endeavors. We hope this tool was helpful and that you are excited for your career advancements within the healthcare management industry.

Should you have any questions, please use the following resources provided below:

- Refer to the Student Resources Page on the AUPHA website where you will find helpful tools to guide you on your academic journey in healthcare management.
<https://www.aupha.org/resourcecenter>
- Graduate students and administrative fellowship program hosts may also find resources, including a national Postgraduate Fellowship Directory on the ACHE website under the Learning Center.
<https://www.ache.org/career-resource-center/seek-new-opportunities/postgraduate-fellowships>

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