

2026-2027 Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Program

The Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Program is a grants program for UNC Charlotte faculty sponsored by the [UNC Charlotte Urban Institute](#) and funded by [The Gambrell Foundation](#). Now in its eighth year, the Fellowship Program seeds and catalyzes quality of life scholarship that is attentive to the Foundation's priorities and advances the mission of the Institute. The deadline for proposals for 2026-27 is **5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 9, 2026**.

The Gambrell Faculty Fellowship includes:

- A \$25,000 award to complete proposed short-term scholarly projects (up to 18 months) including original research, thought pieces and theoretical contributions, as well as creative projects and performances. Applicants may apply individually or in collaboration with other faculty at UNC Charlotte;
- Cohort learning and skill-building seminars and experiences focused on effectively translating scholarship to the broader community so that people living in the greater Charlotte region benefit from the learning;
- Access to Gambrell Visiting Scholar(s) to explore, cross-pollinate, and co-create ideas and solutions.

Toward a Great Quality of Life for Everyone in the Charlotte Region:

The Gambrell Foundation was created in 1988 with a primary focus to help bridge inequities in society and transform Charlotte-Mecklenburg into a beacon of economic mobility, human flourishing and equitable living. In 2014, after [research by Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline and Emmanuel Saez](#) found that Charlotte ranked 50th in economic mobility out of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, The Gambrell Foundation invested early and was a strategic leader in our community's response.

Recognizing that economic mobility is one part of and a path to human flourishing, The Gambrell Foundation has recently expanded its investments to address the question, [What does it mean to live a great life?](#) To support the urgent need to connect the complex realities of our growing and urbanizing region to the flourishing of its people, the Great Life Lab at UNC Charlotte recognizes that awe, connection and collective well-being are essential to public life, and will work to create capacity for innovation at the intersection of the academy and the community. This work will be accomplished by leveraging the expertise of faculty from diverse disciplines, individuals with polarized identities and unexpected partners. In addition to investment in faculty and student fellowships, the Gambrell Foundation will support research related to regional well-being and sponsor related programming on campus.

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is our region's applied research and community outreach center. We engage expertise across a diverse set of disciplines and life experiences to curate data and conduct actionable research and policy analysis. We equip change agents with the information and tools they need to ensure that everyone in our city and region thrives.

The Institute works across the complex arenas that can create or hinder our shared quality of life in the greater Charlotte Region, including arts and culture, the economy, education, the environment, health and mental health, housing, justice and safety, civic engagement and belonging and transportation.

Drawing from the missions of both the Foundation and the Institute, the Gambrell Faculty

Fellowship seeks to support innovative scholarship - including research, thinking and doing - that leads to a great quality of life for everyone in the Charlotte region and beyond.

We are particularly interested in questions exploring:

- Quality of life arenas (like housing and civic engagement/belonging);
- Diverse disciplines (like science and humanities, engineering and social sciences, health and art, etc.);
- The individual and meso or macro structures (like belonging and the built environment, or meaning and economic mobility);
- Different and polarized identities and experiences (like the urban-rural or generational divides);
- The real, the probable and the hopeful.

The Fellowship is open to diverse methods, including:

- Original qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research.
- Original art or performance.
- New and innovative uses of existing data, including administrative data held in the Charlotte Regional Data Trust and publicly available data.
- Thought work that develops theory or synthesizes research and thinking at new intersections and could lead to research, a book, or art/performance.

Since 2019, the Gambrell Faculty Fellowship has named 59 unique Faculty Fellows and supported 36 research and creative projects that represent seven Colleges (Arts + Architecture, Business, Computing & Informatics, Education, Engineering, Health & Human Services, Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences) and 22 academic disciplines. You can read about previous [Faculty Fellows](#) here.

Application Details and Requirements

Summary of Requirements and Key Dates:

- Completed application, budget and biosketch for all applicants.
- Proposed projects can have a maximum budget of \$25,000.
- The deadline for proposals is **5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 9, 2026**.
- Awardees will be notified by December 7, 2026 and the grant period will begin January 15, 2027.

Fellowship Eligibility

- The Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Program is available to all full-time faculty with the title of assistant professor or higher whose job description includes professional expectations for research. In addition to tenure-track and tenured faculty, this includes faculty on research or clinical appointments.
- Faculty members are eligible with either 9-month or 12-month appointments. Faculty with 12-month appointments may not receive faculty summer pay; however, they may still apply for the entire \$25,000 and use the funding for other allowable research expenses.
- One or more faculty members can participate, but the grant is limited to \$25,000.
- A faculty member may participate in only one proposal.
- Previous recipients of the Gambrell Faculty Fellowship are eligible to apply again after 3 fellowship cycles and all requirements from their previous fellowships are completed.

Use of Funds

Funds from these programs may be used for research expenses (see budget guidelines), but **not** for the following:

- Any expenses prior to the grant period (expenses prior to 1/15/2027).
- Academic-year release time if the approval letter by department chair/director is not included in the application packet.
- Preparation of textbooks.
- Projects conducted primarily to produce financial reward for the investigator.
- Travel to conferences for disseminating research results.
- Computers or analytic software and equipment.

Please note that any changes to project parameters during the 18 month funding period may result in revocation of the award. If you find that you need to make significant changes to the project during its execution, please reach out to Liz Morrell (liz.morrell@charlotte.edu) at your earliest convenience to discuss.

Proposal Review and Criteria for Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated by a Fellowship Review Committee, which consists of faculty and community members.

Applicants are urged to write their proposals with non-experts in mind. Because the committee is composed of faculty and community members across a number of disciplines and experiences, successful proposals are those that are easily understood by individuals outside the applicant's discipline.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Impact

- Can this work produce an experience, learning, or findings that can improve people's lives, particularly for those who are vulnerable or routinely lack access to a good quality of life in the Charlotte region?
- Are the proposed activities related to a specific question, problem, or hypothesis that enhance a person or a group's ability to "flourish" and lead a good life?
- How well does this project address needs and opportunities within the Charlotte region?

Relevance

- Has the author documented the significance of the project?
- Has the applicant placed the project within the existing scholarship or other works of this nature?
- Does the applicant show sufficient familiarity with recent developments in the field and/or provide a context for the proposed work?

Approach and Methods

- Are the project goals and design clearly and adequately stated?
- Does the applicant clearly explain the methodology or approach?
- Does the applicant demonstrate ability to implement and complete the project?
- Is the budget cost-effective and feasible within the proposed time frame?
- If the applicant references local partnerships, are letters of support from community partners included in the application packet?

Submission Instructions

- The deadline for submissions is **5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 9, 2026**.
- Complete application packages include 1) Application Cover Page, 2) Proposal Narrative, 3) Proposal Budget, 4) Investigator(s) Biographical Sketch and 5) Department Chair/Director's Letter of Approval for Course Buyout (if applicable) and 6) Community Partner Support Letters (if applicable).
- Convert your completed application package to PDF format and merge into a single file in the order (1-6) listed above. Please only submit one PDF file.
- Name your file in the following manner: **Last name_fellows**. Proposals that include multiple faculty investigators should use the last names of all faculty members engaged. The subject line of the email message should read "Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Proposal".
- Faculty should email the proposal (in PDF format) to uiresearch@charlotte.edu.
- If you have questions about this process, contact Elaine Jacobs at ejacobs3@charlotte.edu or Liz Morrell at liz.morrell@charlotte.edu.

Proposal Format

Each proposal should include the following components in the order listed. These items constitute a complete application. ***If any required item is missing, the application will be considered incomplete and will be returned without review.*** Unless otherwise specified, all pages should be **double spaced with 1" margins. Use 12- point type.**

1. A completed **Application Cover Page**.
2. A **brief Abstract** that summarizes the project and indicates its relevance for the local community (maximum 300 words).
3. A **Proposal Narrative** that includes the following in this order (Sections a-e limited to 5 double-spaced pages):
 - a. An **introduction** that is clearly written and understandable to a person outside the applicant's discipline and includes a clear explanation of how their project connects to a great quality of life.
 - b. The **significance** of the project - why this work matters, including why it matters in the fields of the faculty applicants
 - c. Clear **objectives** of the proposed project - what you will accomplish in clear and concise terms.
 - d. The **methods** or **steps** to achieve the objectives, including
 - i. Your data collection and analysis plan if you are conducting research.
 - ii. Your inquiry decisions and processes if you are developing a theoretical argument, research synthesis, or other thought piece.
 - iii. Your creative decisions and processes if you are developing a performance or creative project.
 - e. **Implications** of the project for the Charlotte metropolitan region, including short term and long term impacts.
 - f. **References**. (Limited to two pages, single-spaced).
4. A detailed **budget request** and budget justification (see Budget Guidelines below).
5. **Biographical Sketch**: Use the form in the application package. Please note the **two-page limit**. An 11-point type size and single-spaced is acceptable for this section.
6. **Letter from Department Chair/Director** if budget request includes academic year course release time.
7. **Letter(s) of Support** from community partner(s) if partners are referenced in the narrative or are a key part of the proposed project.

Budget Guidelines

Please use the attached budget and budget narrative forms.

- The grant period will begin **January 15, 2027** and will end **May 31, 2028**.
- The **maximum amount of funding** you may request is \$25,000.
- If **IRB approval** is required to complete the proposed research, no funding will be disbursed until IRB approval is granted.
- **Summer faculty pay** will be included in the grantee's paychecks between May 16, 2027 and August 15, 2027, depending on the allowable amounts for each fiscal year. *Please note: Requested Summer Pay amounts are inclusive of fringe, meaning the actual amount received will be reduced by the applicable fringe benefit rates.*
- **Allowable expenses include the following**:
 - **Summer Pay**: Faculty with 12-month appointments may not receive faculty

summer pay (they may still apply for the entire \$25,000.) For those faculty with 9-month appointments who receive summer pay, the payment is treated as salary and is subject to state and federal income tax, as well as social security tax and retirement deductions. You are not required to request summer pay.

- **Graduate (or Undergraduate) Research Assistant:** All investigators who propose hiring students should specify what duties the students will carry out in the budget justification. Program funds cannot be used to pay student tuition.
- **Special Pay to Faculty other than Grantee:** Budgets may include summer pay allocated to UNC Charlotte faculty other than the proposers, but such allocations must be specifically justified in the budget narrative section in terms of “specialized expertise.” *Please note: Requested Summer Pay amounts are inclusive of fringe, meaning the actual amount received will be reduced by the applicable fringe benefit rates.*
- **Non-Student Temporary Wages:** If you employ someone who is not currently enrolled at UNC Charlotte, including a recent graduate, that employment assignment is subject to policies relating to non-student temporary wage employment (PIM-8). Hourly pay rates are determined by the type of work performed and the candidate’s experience, based on the current N.C. state grade and salary schedule. Non-student temporary wage employees are typically paid at the minimum of the grade level considered by Human Resources to best match the level of the duties performed. A rate above the minimum of the salary grade level may be approved providing the rate is justified, does not create salary inequity with other current employees doing similar work and the candidate qualifies for the rate requested. Investigators needing assistance on estimating hourly rates for temporary employees should contact the staff employment manager in Human Resources.
- **Other Contracted Services:** Outside Vendors, (i.e. meeting facilitators/consultants) may also be included, if justified and if the expertise/service is not available at UNC Charlotte. A professional services agreement will need to be completed prior to contracting with an outside vendor.
- **Subject Incentive Fees:** Incentives may be used for payments to research participants.
- **Domestic Travel:** The Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Program does not fund travel to conferences to disseminate the results of your research. Mileage and subsistence expenses are normally allowed up to the state guidelines for in-state and out-of-state travel; requests for subsistence expenses in excess of these limits must be fully documented.
- **Other Purchased Services:** Communication and/or Printing (and photocopying).
- **Supplies and materials:** Since this is not funded through a state program, food is allowable if it is related to the research project. For example, funds to cover snacks for focus groups are allowable.

Progress & Final Reports

Verbal and/or written reports on project progress will be required at Faculty Fellow meetings and via email. A final report or project brief, including a non-technical executive summary, will be required one month following the end of the grant period.

Acknowledgments for Dissemination

Any research, article, or original art/performance presented or published that has received support from a Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Grant must include a citation as follows:

This work was supported by the Gambrell Faculty Fellowship Program at the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. The Fellowship is funded by The Gambrell Foundation.

Questions?

Join us for an upcoming information session to learn more about the fellowship on September 23, 2026 in Sycamore Room 306, or via Zoom, from 10 to 11 a.m. Please email us at uiresearch@charlotte.edu to RSVP.