



NEW MS Summer Institute 2026

APPLICATION

NEW Leadership® Mississippi (NEW MS) is a statewide public leadership training program at the Center for Women's Research and Public Policy (CWRPP)—a unit of Mississippi

University for Women (The W)—that furthers The W's mission to advance women's education and leadership development. The non-partisan, six-day program is designed to educate, empower, and encourage the state's undergraduate students to become politically active and to lead in public service.

During the NEW MS Summer Institute, students will meet women working in politics in the state (including many elected officials), learn about women in politics and Mississippi politics, and develop and practice leadership skills through panel discussions, workshops, and hands-on projects. Participants earn two college credits in women's studies or political science (POL/ WS 365 Mississippi Women in Politics) that may be transferred to the institution they attend. After the summer institute, participants become part of NEW Leadership's national network of distinguished alumni.

Important Dates

- Applications are due by midnight on **April 1**.
- The 2026 Institute will take place **May 17-22** on The W's Columbus campus, with an overnight trip to the state capital.
- Students will receive notice of their acceptance or rejection by Monday, **April 13**.
- Acceptance packets will be emailed to admitted students and must be returned by Monday, **April 20**.

Cost

Students are responsible for arranging transportation to Columbus, MS on the first day of the program (Sunday) and for their departure at the end of the program (Friday). Housing, meals, instructional materials, and mid-week transportation to and from Jackson, MS are provided at no cost to participants. In addition, a full tuition scholarship covers the cost of each student's enrollment in two hours of college credit at The W. NEW MS is free to students thanks to the generous financial support of The W, the Ascend Fund (a collaborative fund dedicated to accelerating the pace of change toward gender parity in U.S. politics), and private donors.

Eligibility Requirements

NEW Leadership® Mississippi is open to undergraduate students enrolled in any Mississippi college or university and Mississippi residents enrolled out-of-state. We are committed to diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, political ideology, and sexual orientation. We strongly encourage applications from any student who is committed to women's political participation and leadership.

Selection Criteria

The application process is competitive and all applications received by April 1 will be given full consideration by the NEW MS Admissions Committee, which is composed of the program director and faculty advisors. Each year, the Committee selects students with the intent of creating a class of individuals who represent diverse backgrounds and experiences and who demonstrate both leadership potential and a passion for increasing women's political representation in the state.

Four primary criteria guide the competitive selection process:

- Individual leadership potential;
- Special interests, unique characteristics and/or diverse experiences which contribute to NEW MS program objectives and learning goals;
- Interest in politics, public service, or public policy; and
- Articulated or demonstrated commitment to the goal of increasing women's political representation and leadership.

Student Commitment

Each year, the Admissions Committee is forced to reject applicants because of limited space. In completing this application, you are making a commitment to attend the Summer Institute if accepted. In the event of an emergency that prevents your attendance, you should notify the program director, Dr. Chanley Rainey (newleadership@muw.edu) as soon as possible to increase the chances that someone on the waitlist can be invited.

All NEW Leadership® Mississippi participants must reside in the residence halls during the entire program and participate fully in all scheduled activities in order to receive credit in the associated course, POL/ WS 365 Mississippi Women in Politics.

In completing this application, you acknowledge that you are aware of these requirements and agree, if accepted, to make every effort to meet this commitment.

Contact Information

Name _____
First Middle Last

Mailing Address _____
Street City State Postal Code

Permanent Address _____
(if different) Street City State Postal Code

Home Phone _____ Mobile Phone _____

Email _____ Preferred Contact Method _____

Academic Information

College/ University: _____

Program of Study: _____
Major(s) Minor(s)

Additional Areas of Interest: _____

Standing: _____
GPA Classification (Fresh., Soph., Junior, or Senior)

Relevant Experiences & Qualifications

Please attach your resume to this application in addition to answering the following questions. List any courses you've taken in political science or women's/gender studies (or any related classes or trainings):

List any leadership positions attained and indicate which, if any, were elected positions:

List any experiences that you feel demonstrate your interest in leadership or women's representation that are not addressed elsewhere on this application:

Describe the political or community activities and/or organizations with which you have been involved. Which is most important to you and why? Have you worked with any political groups, campaigns, or advocacy organizations? (150-250 words)

Why do you wish to participate in the NEW MS Summer Institute? What do you hope to gain from your participation in this program, and how would the experience fit into your personal and professional goals? (150-250 words)

Women's policy issues and experiences are diverse and include the experiences and interests of pro-life women and pro-choice women, Muslim women and Zionist women, trans/gender nonbinary individuals, religious conservatives, and women of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Why is women's political representation important to you? What issues and ideas would you focus on in your work to expand women's representation? Please draw on your own experiences and aspirations in your response. We want to hear your authentic voice. (150-250 words)

Demographic Information

Note: The CWRPP is committed to diversity in the broadest sense. Your voluntary responses to the questions in this section—when considered alongside the experiences and interests you describe in other sections of the application—help the Admissions Committee assess your potential to contribute to cohort diversity. No applicant is ever admitted or excluded solely on the basis of their demographic profile; rather, all are considered holistically.

Age: _____

Thinking about the household in which you were raised, what is your best estimate of your family's annual income?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Below \$12,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$69,000 to \$91,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$12,000 to \$22,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$92,000 to \$122,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$23,000 to \$45,999 | <input type="radio"/> Above \$122,00 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$46,000 to \$68,999 | |

What is the highest level of education attained by your parents or guardians?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> No diploma | <input type="radio"/> High school diploma/ GED/ equivalency |
| <input type="radio"/> Some college, no degree | <input type="radio"/> Associate degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree | <input type="radio"/> Master's degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Professional degree (beyond bachelor's) | <input type="radio"/> Doctorate degree |

If there anything about your identity and personal background that you would like for us to know about you and your personal background that is not reflected in any of the other questions, please let us know here:

End of Survey

To help us improve program outreach, please tell us where you heard about NEW Leadership Mississippi:

NEW Leadership® participants are expected to attend all summer institute sessions during the entire summer institute. In submitting this application, you acknowledge that you are aware of these requirements and agree, if accepted, to make every effort to meet this commitment.

**Email your completed application and resume to Dr. Chanley Rainey at
newleadership@muw.edu**