Texas A&M Institute of Data Science

Data Science Ambassador Scholarship Program

2024–2025

The Texas A&M Institute of Data Science (TAMIDS) is soliciting applications to its Data Science Student Ambassador Scholarship Program for the 2024–2025 academic year. The program is open to all Texas A&M Ph.D. students who wish to serve as representatives for TAMIDS and champions for Data Science literacy in their departments. The competitive program will provide ambassadors with a $2,000 scholarship and opportunities to develop their leadership, technical, and training skills, which they will practice through engagement in their home departments. Ambassadors will also act as a point of contact for TAMIDS and students in their departments. Scholarship applicants must have completed at least one (1) year of a Texas A&M Ph.D. program at the time of application. The Data Science Ambassador Scholarship Program aims to help ambassadors become “agents for change” who will catalyze the adoption of Data Science, both at Texas A&M and in their subsequent careers.

Ambassador Activities

- **Engagements & Outreach:** Ambassadors will plan, develop, and deliver engagements for Data Science literacy in their departments (see below for examples) under the mentorship of the TAMIDS organizers. Ambassadors are highly encouraged to collaborate with TAMIDS staff, researchers, and Thematic Labs in outreach activities (online, on campus, and in the surrounding community), including students and teachers from K-12 grades.
- **Monthly Cohort Meetings:** Ambassadors will participate in monthly group meetings with the TAMIDS team and fellow Ambassadors to discuss progress, get advice, and support each other’s activities. The first few meetings will include training materials and event guidance.
- **Faculty Mentors:** In their application, each Ambassador will identify a faculty mentor in their department with whom they will consult on the design and implementation of their proposed engagements. The faculty mentors will also provide a brief assessment of the operation of the engagements to the TAMIDS mentors at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters.
- **TAMIDS Representation:** Ambassadors will learn about TAMIDS capabilities for training and research support and refer departmental members to these as needed. Ambassadors will share information about upcoming TAMIDS activities and opportunities through their individual networks.

Engagements for Data Science Literacy

The program allows ambassadors flexibility to align their engagement plans to activities that leverage what they are already doing or would like to pursue within their program department. An ambassador’s plan for supporting Data Science literacy over the academic year could include (but not limited to) elements from the following list (not all are needed), but applicants may propose other engagements not listed below:

1. Identify Data Science needs within their department and develop strategies to address them through engagement activities, capacity building, or partnerships.
2. Develop learning materials adapted to the needs of their departments based on TAMIDS materials or other resources.
3. Become qualified to deliver relevant external training resources, e.g., the Carpentries.
4. Deliver Data Science training and workshops based on items 1 and 2 above.
5. Hold regular in-person or online drop-in consulting sessions for departmental students and researchers.
6. Hold coaching sessions for students seeking data science careers.
7. Join TAMIDS Bring-Your-Own-Data Online Consultancy sessions for participants within the Department or College and follow up with those participants.
8. Design and deliver TAMIDS training events or workshops as an instructor or co-instructor.

Expected Time Commitment: Ambassadors’ total activities in the program should average about 3–5 hours per week.

The Student Ambassador program prioritizes promoting Data Science literacy in communities of students and researchers (specified, e.g., by subject domain and/or level of experience) in which Data Science skills and expertise are not currently strongly represented. After admission to the program, ambassadors may choose to collaborate on engagements with other ambassadors and TAMIDS affiliates (Note: collaborative engagements with other applicants should not be proposed in applications to the program because applications will be assessed individually). Materials and programs created by ambassadors will form resources that ambassadors may use or extend in future years. To this end, ambassadors will create archives of materials developed and an accompanying report on their activities by the end of the Spring 2024 semester.

Scholarship Award: Each ambassador will receive a scholarship award of $2,000 for the 2024-2025 academic year, payable in two $1,000 installments (August 2024 and January 2025). This award qualifies ambassadors for the Non-resident Tuition Waiver for Competitive Scholarship Recipients.

Application Process
Each applicant must submit an application package as detailed below. Some applicants may be invited for an interview with the program organizers as part of the review process.

Eligibility: At the submission deadline, applicants must:
- Have completed at least one year enrolled in a Ph.D. program in a College or School of Texas A&M University or its branch campuses in Galveston or Qatar.
- Expect to maintain Full-Time enrollment in their Ph.D. program for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher in their program at the application deadline.
- Have completed at least two methodological and/or domain-focused graduate or advanced undergraduate courses involving significant Data Science content.
- Possess computer programming skills in Python / R / MATLAB / C / C++ / Fortran or other relevant programming language, demonstrated through course and/or project work.

The application package must be submitted online as a single PDF file comprising the items listed below. The deadline to submit is 11:59 pm, May 12, 2024. Awards will be communicated by June 1, 2024.

1. Cover Page listing
   a. Title: Application to TAMIDS Ambassador Scholarship Program
   b. Applicant summary: name, email address, department, college or school, degree program
   c. Faculty mentor summary: name, email address, department
2. Applicant Materials
   a. Applicant's Resume (two pages maximum). The resume should list all graduate courses completed and in progress at Texas A&M and any other courses, training, or activities that the applicant wishes to be considered as preparation for the *Student Ambassador* program.
   b. Applicant Texas A&M Transcript; an unofficial transcript printed from Howdy is acceptable
   c. Applicant Statement (one page maximum) including:
      i. Their interest in Data Science and motivation to become a Data Science Ambassador
      ii. Their background and prior relevant experiences such as applications of Data Science and activities promoting Data Science literacy
      iii. The proposed engagements undertaken within their department to promote Data Science literacy. Particular weight will be given to activities that extend knowledge in Data Science to communities of students in which it is currently not strongly represented.
   d. [Optional] Letter of support (one page maximum) from a writer other than the faculty mentor commenting on any previous applicant experience similar to the ambassador role.

3. Faculty Mentor Materials
   a. Faculty Mentor Statement (one page maximum) including:
      i. Assessment of the applicant's preparation to act as a Data Science Ambassador
      ii. Assessment of the fit of proposed engagement with College or Departmental programs and goals
      iii. Commitment to advise and facilitate the applicant's proposed engagements, if awarded
      iv. Commitment to provide two brief assessments (at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters) of outcomes applicant's engagements, if awarded.

Renewals: Ambassadors may apply for renewal of their scholarship for one further year under the following conditions:

- Ambassadors must have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher at the end of the Spring 2024 Semester
- Ambassadors must have completed at least one substantive engagement proposed in or derived from their original application and assisted TAMIDS in at least one outreach activity.
- Ambassadors must have completed their activity report and archived the developed materials.
- Ambassadors must submit to the Program Director a one-page statement of their planned engagement for the second year by June 1, 2024, accompanied by a statement of continued support from their faculty mentor.

Program Contact Information
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