



James
Marston
Fitch
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Foundation

HBCU Preservation Catalyst Grant
to Support Faculty/Student Partnership Research
offered by the James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation

The Fitch Foundation will soon be launching a grant initiative to provide funding for historic preservation projects undertaken during summer by joint faculty-student teams from architecture or Historic Preservation programs offered by Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The dual purpose of the **HBCU Preservation Catalyst Grant** is to foster the development of strong preservation practitioners and educators at HBCUs, and to create learning and professional growth opportunities for students at HBCUs in the historic preservation field. In fall 2026, the Fitch Foundation will launch a grant application to support joint proposals from faculty-student pairs to pursue a summer 2027 research project that contributes to historic preservation, or exemplifies a preservation ethic in its research topic or approach. Any faculty member teaching within an HBCU architecture or historic preservation program is eligible to apply; the student partner must be enrolled in a graduate or undergraduate program at an HBCU and show a demonstrated interest in historic preservation. The student is expected to participate in the project in a meaningful way as a research assistant or intern.

About the Fitch Foundation: The James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation seeks to strengthen and expand the field of historic preservation. The foundation supports professionals in the field of historic preservation by awarding mid-career grants to those working in preservation, landscape architecture, urban design, environmental planning, decorative arts, architectural design and architectural history. By funding innovative research projects that will make meaningful contributions to the historic preservation field, and by cultivating the next generation of historic preservation professionals, the Fitch Foundation is an incubator for preservation's future.

The Fitch Foundation recently completed a pilot partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide scholarship funding and mentorship to students at HBCUs with a demonstrated interest in preservation careers. Through this program, the Foundation awarded \$5,000 scholarships and ongoing mentorship to seven students from Tuskegee University, Stillman College, Rust College, and Jackson State University, respectively. Several student scholars participated in a capstone learning and networking trip to New York City funded by the Foundation. The HBCU Preservation Catalyst Grant represents the Fitch Foundation's continued commitment to expanding pathways for students and faculty working in the field of historic preservation at HBCUs and beyond.

Eligibility: Eligible student/faculty pairs must be affiliated with one of the seven HBCUs with architecture programs accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB).¹ Faculty from those institutions may apply jointly with either an undergraduate or graduate student partner who is prepared to contribute substantively to the project during the summer as a research assistant or intern. Proposals should be developed jointly with the faculty member as lead applicant and the student as a research assistant.

¹Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Howard University, Morgan State University, Prairie View A&M University, Tuskegee University, and University of the District of Columbia.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Trustees of the Fitch Foundation. Preference will be given to projects aligned with the ethos of historic preservation, including cultural heritage and materials conservation, and to students with demonstrated career objectives in preservation and other design-oriented fields. Selections will be based partly on financial need and evaluated on the following criteria:

- The project will make a meaningful contribution to the academic and/or professional field of historic preservation;
- It will be steered by the lead faculty's research interests and goals in a way that provides a significant professional experience for the student partner;
- The project is realistic and viable to complete within the short summer work period, including demonstration of any necessary outside partnerships already established;
- Within six months of completion of the summer grant period, the team will produce a report on the research project and student partnership experience for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Student contribution to this report may take the form of co-authorship, preparation of visual information or graphics, or other academic credits.
- Publication of the report and/or completion of the research project will help to advance both the lead faculty's professional goals and the student's professional development and career objectives.

Award: Up \$15,000 total grant value; \$10,000 would support summer compensation for the faculty member and \$5,000 would be reserved as stipend for student compensation (may be structured as a stipend or based on hourly rate of \$20).²

Application process: Proposals will be accepted annually beginning Fall 2026, with a deadline in December of the same year. Final selection will be made in January and announced in early spring. In this pilot year, one grant to a faculty-student team is expected to be awarded.

Applications shall entail individual faculty and student sections with a joint cover letter submitted by the team. Faculty section to include project description, curriculum vitae, two letters of recommendation (including, if applicable, a letter from organization or entity at the focus of the project to demonstrate viability within the short summer timeframe). Student section to include resume, academic transcripts for college and/or graduate school if applicable, and one letter of recommendation from someone other than the faculty partner.

For more information about the Fitch Foundation, please visit www.fitchfoundation.org. For additional information about the HBCU Preservation Catalyst Grant or to be added to the distribution list regarding specific application details, please contact Rachel Levy, Executive Director, via email at director@fitchfoundation.org.

² Student contribution of roughly 250 hours - may be spread over 6-10 weeks of summer as schedules require. For example, if the internship is 8 weeks, student commitment will be roughly 31 hours per week. Hourly rates are subject to periodic review for adjustment to inflation.