

MCKEON CENTER

MCKEON FELLOWS PROGRAM

The McKeon Fellows Program is a competitive research fellowship for advanced undergraduates in the College, administered by the McKeon Center. The program provides an immersive setting for the close study of the liberal arts — their fundamental concepts, methods, and application across disciplines — in a manner that honors the pedagogical legacy of Richard McKeon, one of the University of Chicago's most influential intellectual figures.

The inaugural cohort of McKeon Fellows will participate in an intensive two-week program in September from September 10-26, 2026 at the John W. Boyer Center in Paris. Places are strictly limited, and selection is highly competitive. The program is taught primarily by McKeon Center faculty and includes guest sessions from scholars, guided visits to sites of intellectual and cultural significance.

Paris is a fitting home for this program. Richard McKeon spent formative years there as a graduate student, studying with leading French philosophers including Étienne Gilson, and the city played a central role in shaping the intellectual commitments he brought to his decades of teaching at Chicago. Paris was also the home of UNESCO during the years when McKeon served as one of its central intellectual figures, applying the methods of the liberal arts to the challenge of building international understanding in the postwar world.

The program carries the intellectual seriousness of advanced scholarly work without being a formal credit bearing College course. Fellows engage closely with McKeon's methods and writings, explore their application across the humanistic disciplines, and benefit from the kind of sustained collegial inquiry that is difficult to achieve within the rhythms of a regular academic quarter. It is conceived as one of the College's most prestigious undergraduate honors: a recognition of exceptional achievement in the Core and an invitation to take that achievement further.

MCKEON FELLOWS PROGRAM: CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The McKeon Center invites applications from advanced undergraduates (rising juniors and seniors) in the College for the McKeon Fellows Program. This competitive fellowship recognizes outstanding achievement in the Core Curriculum and offers a unique opportunity for close, intensive engagement with the liberal arts tradition that has defined undergraduate education at the University of Chicago.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

McKeon Fellows participate in a two-week intensive program held each September at the John W. Boyer Center in Paris. Led by McKeon Center faculty and enriched by sessions with local scholars, the program offers a sustained, immersive exploration of the fundamental concepts and methods of the liberal arts, with particular attention to the work and legacy of Richard McKeon. Paris, where McKeon studied and collaborated with UNESCO, provides a unique setting for this inquiry.

THE PARIS WORKSHOP (2 WEEKS)

The Paris Workshop has three aims. First, it will introduce students to the ideas of the philosopher and classicist Richard McKeon. Second, it will compare McKeon's account of rhetoric and the interpretation of texts with both ancient, medieval, and modern treatments of those topics. Finally, it will apply the methods of McKeon and others to a select range of fundamental texts, whether drawn from the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences. In the first part of the course, we will read McKeon's essays on general education and the liberal arts, and his writings on rhetoric and criticism. In the second part of the course, we will read excerpts from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*, and Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*. We will conclude by examining classic texts chosen by the McKeon Fellows — usually texts they have read during their studies in the Core.

Readings will be accompanied by excursions both within Paris and beyond, to sites that illuminate Richard McKeon's time in the city and the history of rhetoric in its classical and modern traditions — including the UNESCO headquarters, Mont Saint-Michel, the Musée de Cluny, and the Louvre.

WHAT FELLOWS RECEIVE

Selected fellows receive full funding for travel and accommodation during the Paris program. Complete details of financial support will be provided upon selection. Fellows also receive dedicated support for completing and presenting their research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium organized by the College Center of Research and Fellowships.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications are welcome from juniors and seniors in the College who have substantially completed general education requirements in the first two years of study and have a strong record of academic achievement in its divisional sequences.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Each application should include:

- A cover letter identifying a text or author the applicant wishes to explore as a McKeon Fellow, and reflect on its intellectual significance
- An unofficial transcript
- Two letters of recommendation: one from a Core instructor in Humanities, Social Sciences, or Civilization Studies; and one from a Core instructor in Biological Sciences, Physics, or Mathematics
- A 10-page essay (already) written for a Core course

TIMELINE

- Applications due: May 1, 2026
- Fellows notified: May 30, 2026
- Paris program: September 10–26, 2026

Questions about the program or the application process may be directed to Atiya Singh (atiya@uchicago.edu).

