

# Build Professional Networks and Advance Animal Agriculture

Food availability and accessibility impacts the health of people, animals, the planet and communities. Producing food sustainably requires collaboration among experts in technology, biology, nutrition, economics, sociology, public health and more.

Recognizing this connectivity – and the pork industry’s role in providing solutions – the National Pork Board (NPB) is building an annual cohort of graduate students, or Real Pork Scholars, to advance this complex challenge.

Graduate students desiring interdisciplinary mentor and peer networks should apply. The one-year program builds a foundation to build awareness about the student’s perspective on food and food animal production among consumers and decision makers.

## What Students Gain

Real Pork Scholars develop connections and participate in training to communicate technical details to various audiences. The program includes:

- **Mentoring and Peer-to-Peer Network Building:**  
Scholars participate in monthly conversations with hand-selected mentors relevant to their field of study and multiple in-person and virtual events with peers in the scholar cohort.
- **Skills Advancement:**  
Professional training to help students communicate highly technical information to various audiences will equip scholars to effectively share their expertise in a way that resonates with non-scientific audiences.
- **Financial support:**  
The Real Pork Scholars program invests in students who are doing relevant research. The one-year program offers up to \$30,000 for cohort members to support their academic and professional development, not directly fund their research.
- **Opportunity to make a tangible difference:**  
Real Pork Scholars want to drive the discussion, understanding and efforts to continually advance the health of people, pigs, the planet and communities.

## What skills have you gained as a Real Pork Scholar?

“I’ve gained experience, I’ve gained networking, and I’ve grown as a professional. I feel more confident in promoting our industry.”

— Isabel Rodriguez,  
Iowa State University





## Eligibility and Application Process

Students pursuing graduate study in accredited M.S., Ph.D., J.D., or DVM-Ph.D. are eligible to apply. The program is open to a range of study areas as NPB seeks a diverse group of students representing multiple areas that influence the pork industry. This can include nearly any science focus, as well as environmental studies, public health, nutrition, economics, communications, rural sociology, law and more.

**To apply, students must complete an online application form found at [porkcheckoff.org](http://porkcheckoff.org) and submit the following supporting materials:**

CV, statement of support and CV from their major professor or academic advisor, and two letters of recommendation. Applicants are required to share a video showing an example of how they help advance their interdisciplinary knowledge. This can be related to the pork or agricultural industry, but that is not required.



**Applications will open in December 2024.  
The 2025 cohort will begin in the fall of 2025  
and end in the summer of 2026.**

## Questions?

### CONTACT:

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Learn more and apply:  
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