



The Leadership Alliance
Undergraduate Virtual Professional Development Series
Summer 2026 Syllabus

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Program Overview

The Leadership Alliance's Virtual Professional Development (VPD) program is a series of summer workshops and webinars designed to promote interest and preparation for a career in research. VPD is the result of a collaborative effort that leverages the expertise of Alliance researchers and program administrators to share and demystify the research career pathway. The Leadership Alliance VPD provides a robust networking and professional development experience that supports students in preparing for and navigating undergraduate research, applying to graduate school, considering different research career pathways, and more!

Through your participation in the VPD program you will:

- Learn about the overall research process and explore foundations of research in a variety of fields
- Learn about the diversity of research career pathways
- Hear about the personal journeys of underrepresented doctoral scholars who are at the forefront of research in academia, industry, non-profits, and government
- Build and develop research communication skills
- Expand your network through engagement with faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and other future research colleagues
- Meet deans and administrators from Leadership Alliance member institutions to learn more about graduate school and the graduate school application process
- Learn about graduate school funding structures and opportunities
- Gain confidence in yourself as a researcher and an agent of change

Learning Objectives

By the end of the program, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the basic components and requirements of a research career
2. Be aware of potential next steps in their journey towards a career in research
3. Expand their professional, academic, and peer networks
4. Be aware of graduate school programs at multiple research institutions

Program Format

The Leadership Alliance VPD program will integrate virtual workshops, presentations, and recruitment events. Program activities will be synchronous and asynchronous, with all program components housed in a Google Classroom that will be accessible by all program participants and contain all program materials as they are released. Participants will be invited to all professional development series events and are encouraged to participate as their schedule allows. Students will have the opportunity to complete reflections after each Wednesday workshop. At the end of the program, participants will complete a post-survey to reflect on their VPD participation. These survey responses will help The Leadership Alliance determine program impact and explore potential ways to improve and expand upon the program in coming years.

Digital Badge/Certificate of Completion

Virtual Professional Development participants who complete the following requirements will receive a digital badge/certificate of completion administered through [Credly.com](https://www.credly.com).

To receive the digital badge/certificate you must:

- Attend or view at least **5** of the **7** professional development workshops and answer the follow-up reflection questions via a Google Form for these 5 workshops*
- Visit at least **4** institutions/programs at the virtual graduate school recruitment and information sessions**
- Submit a question for at least **2** "Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar" sessions***
- Follow the Leadership Alliance on LinkedIn
- Complete a post-survey that will be emailed to you at the conclusion of the program

**A Google Form with a related question will be posted to the Google Classroom after each workshop. Participants must complete the form for at least five workshops to meet badging requirements.*

***For students who are unable to attend the live info sessions due to schedule conflicts will have the opportunity to do an end of program assignment, which will count for this badging requirement.*

****Questions can be submitted prior to the event via a Google Form posted to the Google Classroom or during the event via the Zoom Q&A box.*

It is YOUR responsibility to keep track of your participation throughout the program!

[i.e. the workshops you attend/watch, the graduate program recruitment/information sessions you attend, and the Doctoral Scholars you ask questions of (even if questions are not answered)]

You will receive a Google Form at the end of the program where you will share your participation information to receive your digital badge and certificate. You **MUST** complete the form to receive these.

Upon receipt of your digital badge, you will be able to upload it to various platforms (LinkedIn, etc), print it as a certificate, and share it with prospective employers and graduate institutions.

SUMMER 2026 VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES SCHEDULE

Video and written resources to supplement the scheduled programming can be accessed via the Leadership Alliance Virtual Professional Development Google Classroom. Registered participants will be invited to join the classroom via email. You must use an @gmail.com email address to join the classroom.

ZOOM LINKS FOR ALL EVENTS WILL BE POSTED IN THE GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Zoom links will be posted in the “Classwork” tab prior to each webinar and in the stream the day of the event.

Schedule is subject to change to accommodate speakers.

All webinars will be recorded and shared for asynchronous viewing – recordings will not be available right away.

Students will be able to attend all graduate school info sessions held on any given day.

Week 1: Welcome to Research!			
Mon. June 1	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 1
Wed. June 3	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 1 – Level Up Through Research
Thurs. June 4	3 and 4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. June 5	3 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Week 2: Professional Skills for Researchers			
Mon. June 8	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 2
Wed. June 10	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 2 – Professional Networking & Branding
Thurs. June 11	4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. June 12	3 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Week 3: Celebrating Juneteenth			
Mon. June 15	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 3
Wed. June 17	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 3 – Graduate School & Your Lived Experiences
Thurs. June 18	NA	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. June 19	NA	NA	Juneteenth Holiday - No Programming
Week 4: Mentorship			
Mon. June 22	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 4

Wed. June 24	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 4 – Building Your Mentorship Ecosystem
Thurs. June 25	4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. June 26	3 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Week 5: Pathway to Graduate School			
Mon. June 29	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 5
Wed. July 1	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 5 – Applying to Graduate School
Thurs. July 2	4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. July 3	NA	NA	Independence Day Holiday - No Programming
Week 6: AI & Research			
Mon. July 6	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 6
Wed. July 8	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 6 – AI Ethics
Thurs. July 9	4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. July 10	3 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Week 7: Wellness			
Mon. July 13	4 pm EDT	Networking	Conversation with a Doctoral Scholar 7
Wed. July 15	4 pm EDT	Workshop	Workshop 7 – Avoiding Burnout
Thurs. July 16	4 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions
Fri. July 17	3 pm EDT	Grad School Recruiting	Recruitment and Info Sessions