

The Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy

Program Handbook



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Program Handbook

<https://belinblank.education.uiowa.edu/students/academy/>



Welcome from our Director, Dr. Megan Foley Nicpon

Welcome to the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy! We are glad you are here. You are a part of a very special organization, the Belin-Blank Center at the University of Iowa (UI). The Center's mission to *create opportunities for the equitable development of talent* helps guide the work we do with students, educators, and the community.

The Belin-Blank Center is housed in the College of Education, and we have two university-based programs for Iowa students. Your program, the Bucksbaum Academy, makes it possible for students to start college when they are ready. We support Bucksbaum students through weekly seminars, individual support meetings, social and study events, and much more. We want Bucksbaum students to have close connections with each other as they grow and develop their multiple talents.

Again, welcome to Iowa, the Belin-Blank Center, and the Bucksbaum Academy. Go Hawks!

General Timeline

University of Iowa Application Opens – June 1

Common Application Opens – August 1

Information Sessions (Online) - Refer to the [Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy website](#)

Campus Visits - Refer to the [Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy website](#)

UI Admissions will begin reviewing these applications - September 1

FAFSA Opens - October 1 (Verify with [FAFSA website](#))

Application Deadline –Target date is the last Friday of January

Interviews (On-Campus or Online) – January, February, and March

Acceptance Decisions & Scholarship Information Communicated – Target date is March 15

Student Acceptance Deadline – May 1

Classes Begin - August (Refer to the University Calendar for exact date)

***Note: This timeline does NOT include all important University of Iowa dates and deadlines.

History of the Center

The Belin-Blank Center was created in 1988 through the vision of our founders, David & Connie Belin and Myron & Jacqueline Blank. The Center has been a research leader in academic acceleration and twice-exceptionality, providing unique programming for educators and students for decades. In Fall 1999, the Center launched an early entrance to college program called the National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering (NAASE). Through this program, high school students could begin a STEM major at the UI after their junior year.

About the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy



Because of a generous gift from Mary Bucksbaum Scanlan, the NAASE program was enhanced and renamed to the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy in 2016. The improved program permits students to choose any major offered at UI, has additional support services including a resident advisor and increased student financial assistance.

The Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy provides an opportunity for students who are 16 years of age by August 1, have graduated high school early, and are ready academically, socially, and emotionally for university-level work, to enter college early. Program participants are full time University of Iowa students who engage in university activities such as taking classes, using libraries and laboratories, living in a residence hall, and being involved in campus life. Additionally, students experience an enriched academic and social community as they transition to university life together.

Overview of Support

The Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy commits to students' success at UI through a comprehensive support structure.

The Belin-Blank Center is housed in the Blank Honors Center (BHC), which is centrally located on the UI campus. The building has a library, study rooms, computer and printer access, and a student lounge.

First-year students attend a mandatory 3 semester hour course taught by Belin-Blank Center staff that focuses on how to succeed in college. Activities and lessons include navigating the UI campus and its services, study techniques and skills, and time management. We have found the course offers an excellent opportunity to build community among the students. A detailed syllabus is provided at the start of the course.

Every first-year student is required to meet weekly with a Belin-Blank Center staff member. At these meetings, students discuss their transition to college and related issues, such as time management, sleep behavior, personal adjustment, making friends, communicating with professors, etc. While academic advising and/or therapeutic intervention are not part of these meetings, the staff member ensures Bucksbaum students understand how and where to obtain these services on campus, if desired.

The Bucksbaum Academy has additional ways of supporting students. First year students receive class schedule priority status for both fall and spring semesters. Academy students also have their own resident advisor in addition to the general UI floor resident advisor. Our resident advisor plans events, checks in with our students, and meets regularly with Belin-Blank staff who work with the university-based programs.

We also host various social events, such as group lunches, theatrical/musical events, wellness retreats, and events in downtown Iowa City. These events help build community among the students.

Residential Component

To foster a sense of community, students who are accepted into the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy must live in Daum Residence Hall their first year. Using input from a housing questionnaire, students are typically assigned a roommate who also is in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy. If the need arises, a student might be paired with a student in the Academy for Twice-Exceptionality or another UI student. First year Bucksbaum students will be assigned a move-in time into Daum from the university and will receive notice of that time.

Second-year students are responsible for arranging their own housing. They may choose to reside either in UI residence halls or move off-campus. Those who wish to live on-campus during their second year will apply through the university housing system. The Belin-Blank Center does not pair roommates beyond the first year in the program.

The Belin-Blank Center does reserve the right to transfer a student to other University Housing if the need arises according to University Housing and Dining Policy 10.a.

Students will need a state or federal form of identification (e.g., driver's license, state ID card, or passport) to move into the residence halls.

Communication with Family

The Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy sends a newsletter to parents/guardians approximately once a month. A family event will be held every year in the Spring. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the Bucksbaum Academy staff whenever they have a question.

Beyond the First Year

Although the course and weekly meetings conclude after the first year in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy, second year students will have the opportunity to take a seminar course with the Belin-Blank staff focused on careers and community building.

In addition, we will keep in touch with all Bucksbaum students through graduation. We typically have an Academy-wide meal in the fall semester and attend a live performance together at Hancher Auditorium. We also have several group lunches in the dining halls. All students will receive the student newsletter that is published twice a semester.

We have found it is valuable for third- and fourth-year students to serve as mentors for first year students. We will ask for volunteers to visit the seminar class and/or on-campus visit days for prospective students. to share experiences and advice.. Insights from the upper-class students are also well-received from families and students alike.

We plan a special event in the spring for graduating students. Once an alum, we will remain connected with you through the Belin-Blank Center and Bucksbaum newsletters.

Starting in Spring 2024, an early entrance alumni event was created for graduates to return to campus and interact with current students. This event will be held every other year.

Admission Requirements

The Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy is a highly selective program that empowers high-achieving students to begin full-time on-campus study at the University of Iowa who have graduated high school in less than four years.

The Belin-Blank Center seeks to discover students for the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy whose profile strongly suggests they would be a good fit for early entrance to a Big 10 University. Students MUST be 16 years of age by August 1 of the intended school year. (For students waiting to turn 16, the Belin-Blank Center can provide suggestions for challenge and enrichment.)

We are seeking to admit students who will be successful academically, socially, and emotionally at the UI. Applicants should note that admission requirements for the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy are considerably higher than they are for traditional students entering the University of Iowa. Those factors include:

- Standardized Test Score Performance (target scores ACT – 30 on one or more subtest or SAT – 1400 on one or more subtest)
- Unweighted High School GPA - 3.5 or above
- Weighted High School GPA – 3.8 or above
- College Readiness Coursework (Honors, AP, Dual Credit)
- Extracurricular Involvement
- Academic Enrichment Experiences (e.g., clubs, camps, competitions, mentorship)
- Volunteerism
- Personal Statement
- Letters of Recommendation

Matching Process

The process begins with an online application to the University of Iowa. Belin-Blank Center staff along with UI Admissions will review the pool of applicants.

Prospective students and their parents will have an interview with Belin-Blank Center staff in-person or via Zoom in January, February, or March. The interview provides the opportunity for the student to expand on aspects of their application and share other relevant information that does not exist in the application. The interview also assists students in determining if the Bucksbaum Academy is a right fit for them.

Applicants will learn of their Bucksbaum Academy admission status by March 15th of each year. For students who are accepted, the deadline to accept or decline the offer is May 1st, but we would appreciate notice prior to this date.

Benefits of the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy

Research has found that acceleration is the best intervention we have for advanced students. When this population of learners is challenged, they are more motivated and engaged in school. Probably the greatest benefit of the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Program is the provision of a more appropriate match between student readiness and academic experience. Other noted benefits (that are detailed more in this Program Guide) include:

- Financial Assistance / Scholarships
- Assistance navigating UI campus and its services
- Individual weekly meetings
- Class schedule priority status (for the first year)
- Social events
- Support through graduation
- Sense of community

Scholarship (2025-2026)

Mary Bucksbaum Scanlan's endowment of the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy allows the Belin-Blank Center to provide merit scholarships for students during their first year at Iowa and while enrolled in the Bucksbaum Academy program. After the first year, students will receive an equivalent scholarship for the following six semesters from the University of Iowa as long as they meet the renewal criteria. Scholarship amounts will vary and are set by UI Admissions.

See the "**Scholarship Information Contract Form**" found later in this "Program Handbook".

Conditions of Participation

To participate in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy, students and their parents/guardians must sign the “Conditions of Participation” form. This form communicates program structure and expectations. A copy of this form is included in this handbook.

Campus Involvement

Campus involvement is important because it bolsters academic performance, sense of community, well-being, leadership, and multicultural awareness. Students in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy are expected to be involved in at least one extracurricular activity. First year students typically join one of the hundreds of student organizations, but tend to get involved through research, tutoring, or employment as they move through their academic journey. Students may spend the first semester researching and visiting organizations before making a commitment.

Code of Student Life

The UI Code of Student Life provides important information regarding student rights and responsibilities. The Belin-Blank Center expects that Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy students will adhere to these guidelines. The Belin-Blank Center reserves the right to terminate a student’s participation in the Academy if a student is found to be non-compliant with the Code of Student Life.

<https://dos.uiowa.edu/policies/code-of-student-life/>

Transportation

First year Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy students are discouraged from bringing a car to campus. The student parking lot is NOT conveniently located in relation to the Residence Hall.

The Belin-Blank Center is centrally located on the UI campus and very close to downtown Iowa City. Students find that most places that they need to go are within walking distance. UI has an excellent campus FREE bus system (CAMBUS) that one can use to get to any university building. The cities of Iowa City and Coralville also have excellent transit systems.

Registration Self-Disclosure

Students should self-disclose their involvement in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy when meeting with their UI Academic Advisor during Orientation. This will provide additional background information to the advisor during course selection and determine how many credit hours a student can manage.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, [Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#), the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, daod-ocrc@uiowa.edu.

BUCKSBAUM EARLY ENTRANCE ACADEMY

Scholarship Information Contract Form

For the 2025-2026 academic year, your guaranteed scholarship amount is _____ **pending you meet the scholarship conditions.**

University of Iowa scholarships are not available for early entrance students until their high school cohort enrolls in college. For example, if a student graduates from high school after their junior year and starts college in fall 2024, they would not be eligible for University Iowa scholarships until fall 2025 (which aligns with their original senior graduation and enrollment date).

To maintain eligible for the merit-based scholarship, students must maintain full-time student status and a cumulative GPA of 2.75.

CONDITIONS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

- Maintain full time student status with a 2.75 cumulative GPA
- Meet the seminar and individual weekly meeting attendance expectation as stated in the syllabus
- Meet the community-building event expectation (up to two per semester)
- Participate in one campus student organization (or a qualifying experience)

We have read and accepted the scholarship conditions.

Student Signature _____ Date:

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date:

BUCKSBAUM EARLY ENTRANCE ACADEMY

Conditions of Participation Form

The Belin-Blank Center is committed to making the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy an exceptional educational experience for its students. To accomplish this, it is important to keep close ties with students and parents. It is also important for the Belin-Blank Center to gather information so that we can evaluate the success of the Academy.

The following are “Conditions of Participation” specific to the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy. These conditions are also required for the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy scholarship that is awarded from the Belin-Blank Center during their first year at Iowa.

Conditions of Participation

- Attend the Bucksbaum orientation for students and their parents/guardians on move-in day.
- Meet the cohort event expectation (not to exceed two per semester).
- Maintain a 2.75 cumulative GPA.
- Participate in at least one university student organization.
- Agree to permit the Belin-Blank Center to receive progress and grade reports, scholarship and financial aid reports, and reports from University Housing & Dining and Dean of Students (including discipline records).
- Agree to sign the *FERPA Release Form* so Belin-Blank Center staff may provide relevant information concerning your progress in the Academy (e.g., academic, financial, and disciplinary) to parents/guardians.
- Adhere to the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy Program Handbook.
- Adhere to the University of Iowa Academic Policies and Code of Student Conduct.
- Reside in Daum Residence Hall.
- Enroll in the Bucksbaum Early Entrance Academy seminar.
- Meet the seminar and individual weekly meeting attendance expectation.

We have read and accepted the “**Conditions of Participation**”

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____

The University of Iowa

FERPA Release Form

By signing this form, I agree to allow the University of Iowa to release any and all education records related to me, including but not limited to, transcripts, notes, evaluations, emails, letters, contracts, agreements, billing and payment records, scholarships and grants records, financial aid records, academic and non-academic misconduct records, as well as any and all information contained within such records, to:

[My parents/guardians], Print Names:

For the purpose of: Assessing progress in the Academy (e.g., academic, financial, and disciplinary)

This release is valid until [September 1, 2025].

Name: _____

(Please print your name)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____