

DSEF Fellows Guide



DS**F**

FELLOWS



DSEF Fellows Guide

One of the chief components of the DSEF mission is to partner with members of the academic community to better establish that the direct selling channel of distribution is a mainstream path to micro-entrepreneurship and a viable business model for taking products and services to market. In 2016 DSEF launched the Fellows Program to support educational and research efforts to foster a deeper understanding of the channel and its impact.

In the first year of the DSEF Fellows Program, we partnered with 60 professors from various disciplines—including entrepreneurship, business management, marketing, economics, retailing and consumer studies—providing them with access to a rich offering of benefits and opportunities, such as in-depth industry research, teaching content, networking events, conferences and experiential learning for professors and students.

DSEF Fellows Program

The purpose of DSEF is to engage, equip and empower educators to provide students with an accurate understanding of the direct selling channel.

DSEF Fellows play a pivotal role in helping future generations understand how direct selling is shaping the entrepreneurial landscape in the United States and abroad. The Foundation works directly with Fellows, providing them with the resources and support necessary to incorporate direct selling within their respective curricula, including research, classroom content on multiple platforms, networking opportunities with leading business executives and Campus Events. Membership is open to university and community college faculty.

Fellows don't have to be direct selling experts; nor do they have to dedicate hours to DSEF. All that's required is a willingness to explore direct selling as a means to small business ownership and as a go-to-market strategy. DSEF provides Fellows, in return, with the tools and resources they need to incorporate direct selling into their courses, pursue research and publishing opportunities and spur meaningful discussion with their students and colleagues.





Direct Selling: A Pathway to Micro-entrepreneurship and a Go-To-Market Business Strategy

At this time in history, we're witnessing an unprecedented respect for and interest in entrepreneurship, as people throughout all demographics express the desire to have a career in which their advancement, income and hours are self-determined. DSEF's Fellows Program allows us to promote deeper knowledge and understanding of direct selling as a vibrant form of micro-entrepreneurship.

While entrepreneurship remains highly desirable across all demographics, many aspiring business owners are reluctant to take the risk required to start a company of their own. This is precisely where direct selling offers a distinct benefit.

Research shows that while entrepreneurship is an admired concept in our society, many aspiring entrepreneurs are reluctant to invest their savings and their time on a startup business. By lowering those initial risks and presenting an opportunity in which brand equity already is well established, direct selling is removing those traditional barriers of entry for millions of Americans, and moving small business ownership within their reach.

The beauty of a direct sales business is that it offers a low-risk pathway to entrepreneurship. In essence, it's a "business in a box," offering opportunities ranging from earning

supplemental to primary incomes. That kind of opportunity resonates with the more than 20 million Americans who are involved in direct selling today. Industry analysts expect that number to continue to increase in the years ahead.

Direct selling also presents several distinct advantages that make it a relevant and highly effective go-to-market strategy. Some of the world's largest retailers are taking note, exploring and launching new brands that leverage the direct sales business model. Numerous startup companies also have found that direct sales can be a compelling choice for aspiring business owners.

Engaging with DSEF at Your Own Pace

Through the Fellows Program, DSEF is building partnerships with university and community college educators who have a willingness to learn about our industry as a viable path to independent business ownership and as an innovative go-to-market strategy. DSEF provides you the tools you need to research the channel, discuss it with your students and colleagues, and incorporate it within your curriculum.

Fellows aren't required to invest a minimum number of hours or meet specific criteria. However, we will work with you to ensure that our data, classroom content, and the engagement of leading direct selling executives and other resources create opportunities for mutual value. We hope you'll come away with rich content for your curriculum, a deeper knowledge of industry dynamics, introductions to new contacts from within both academia and business, the opportunity to publish research, if you choose, and a newfound interest in a \$36 billion-and-growing industry.

DSEF Fellows are encouraged to participate in the following activities:

- Incorporating direct selling entrepreneurship content into teaching materials used in classes



- Writing, publishing and research directly or indirectly related to direct selling
- Hosting campus events or executive speakers to expose students and colleagues to the channel, micro-entrepreneurs and company executives
- Developing a series of teaching modules that will add to the core of our content for Fellows and other educators. These modules will cover topics such as direct selling as a go-to-market business strategy and pathway to micro-entrepreneurship
- Participating in research surveys and other industry information gathering processes
- Participating in executive roundtables on key industry issues
- Participating in Fellows interest groups: Campus Events, Research, Case Studies and Teaching Content/ Experiential Learning

In addition to these benefits, you'll have the opportunity to network with your colleagues and direct selling executives by participating in DSEF Fellows Learning Journeys to industry-wide events held by the Direct Selling Association (DSA), including:

- DSA Companies in Focus: A deep-dive into several direct selling companies, attended by 300 executives
- DSA Communications and Marketing Conference: Covering the latest marketing trends and best practices, attended by 300 executives
- DSA Annual Meeting: The Association's premier education event, attended by 1,000 executives

Collectively, these efforts provide you, your students and, ultimately, the public with insights into the direct selling channel, its latest trends and innovations, while helping educate the next generation of entrepreneurs and industry leaders about opportunities in this fast-growing space.



Benefits of Engagement

Engagement with DSEF can add another dimension to your research and help you convey to your students an aspect of micro-entrepreneurship or market strategy they may not have previously understood or considered. Direct selling companies encounter similar hurdles to their counterparts marketing through other channels, and are responding with some truly innovative solutions worthy of exploration by academic leaders and students alike.

The advantages associated with your DSEF Fellowship are numerous, including the potential to conduct meaningful research about a modern and highly relevant channel of distribution. As a DSEF Fellow, you'll have direct engagement with executives on the front lines of multiple industries, who can share the challenges and opportunities inherent in their respective leadership roles. In the long term, your engagement can facilitate deeper connections between the academic and business community.

DSEF Fellows will receive access to the following benefits through their participation in the program:

- Industry research, data, trends and innovations to support writing, publishing and academic research; keeping you informed of the latest conditions that continue to shape this fast-growing sector of micro-entrepreneurship
- Networking opportunities with industry executives and academic colleagues with similar interests, both in the United States and abroad, deepening your relationships with the business and academic communities at large
- Improved connections between academic programs and the business community, strengthening your ability to prepare your students for the challenges and opportunities of the modern marketplace
- Online collaboration space, dedicated to DSEF Fellows recognition and information exchange, to facilitate communication and partnership among members of the academic community



- Teaching content (direct selling-specific online modules, industry case studies, industry data, guest speakers) to help you provide deeper context for your students
- Experiential learning opportunities in which professors and students collaborate with direct selling companies to address business challenges
- Access to the DSEF Speakers Bureau, comprised of leading executives of significant national companies who bring the direct selling industry to life in your classroom
- Recognition and important resume accomplishments that enrich your professional development efforts
- Periodic communications, including the DSEF Fellows newsletter, curated articles of interest and US and international research to help you dive deeper into the direct selling channel as a modern, relevant go-to-market strategy
- Eligibility to compete for awards to support research projects
- Career opportunities for students (internships, corporate jobs, entrepreneurship skills development) to gain practical, real-world experience in a \$183 billion global industry
- Business ethics and corporate social responsibility expertise, offering insight into the culture and best practices of direct selling

How DSEF Supports Your Research Interests

Direct selling represents one of the most relevant and scalable marketing channels available to aspiring entrepreneurs today. From a company's perspective, distributing products or services through a direct sales business model can be highly advantageous, providing them access to thousands of micro-entrepreneurs who market their brands and products.

From the independent business owner's perspective, direct selling is a low-cost, low-risk means of entrepreneurship. In the past, a direct selling business relied upon one-on-one interactions. Today, however, distributors can significantly expand their reach through digital technology.

With these realities in mind, DSEF maintains an ambitious research agenda focused on educating the public and key stakeholders. Your Fellowship presents a significant opportunity to partner not only with corporate leaders, but also other academic and thought leaders, including the DSEF Academic Advisory Council (AAC), to obtain actionable data, produce publishable articles, white papers, company case studies, and drive other important research.

Through the DSA and its member companies, DSEF has access to an ever-growing cache of industry and salesforce data. The Foundation and its partners leverage that data and additional sources to drive research and publishing opportunities. The Foundation has developed a set of Research Priorities which serve as a "wish list." We also welcome the contribution of additional research ideas from our Fellows. We provide small grants to cover the administrative costs associated with your research projects. For more information, please email Kimberly Harris Bliton, DSEF's Senior Program Director, Academic Initiatives, at khbliton@dsef.org, for a copy of our Research Proposal Guidelines.



Tips for Engaging with Executive Leadership

Your engagement with direct selling companies can expand and diversify your curriculum, which benefits your students and your academic organization as a whole. Your engagement with executive leadership allows you to bring into your classroom real-world examples of the direct selling business model, principles and ethics. While direct selling companies face many of the same challenges associated with the business world at large, some of its hurdles are unique to the industry. Your students' exposure to case studies, textbook content, guest speakers, research, panel discussions and even internships significantly enriches their educational experience, while forging your own connections within a global industry.

Here are just a few of the ways you can engage direct selling companies through your DSEF Fellowship. The Foundation is ready to support you in your efforts, facilitating introductions, providing tools and resources, and answering any questions you may have.

- Invite an executive leader to present a guest lecture or serve as a panelist on the topic of micro-entrepreneurship
- Host campus events to introduce your colleagues and students to company executives and the direct selling channel
- Develop experiential learning opportunities for your students in partnership with executive leaders.
- Partner with an executive leader or leaders to write company case studies and company-sponsored research projects
- Invite direct selling companies to participate in your college career or internship fairs and other networking events
- Attend a direct selling corporate tour or annual independent salesforce conference
- Invite senior executives to serve as an Executive-in-Residence for a week, a month or a semester.
- Serve on a company board of directors or advisory board

How DSEF Supports You in the Classroom

The Foundation's objective is to deliver to your classroom real-world examples of direct selling, customized to meet the needs of your business specialization, course content and class size. Through research, educational videos, guest speakers, experiential learning opportunities and access to a rich library of online resources, DSEF aims to deepen insight and encourage exploration of our industry.

CAMPUS EVENTS

DSEF maintains an extensive network of senior executives from a variety of direct selling companies – both public and privately held, Fortune 500 companies and fast-growth startups. Working with participating universities, we leverage those connections to bring expertise to your classroom.





How DSEF Supports You in the Classroom

Our campus programs are customized to match executives and their respective companies to the interests of professors and their institutions, the learning objectives of your course, your class size and specialization. Direct selling executives speak to graduate and undergraduate students about their companies, the industry and the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with this business model. Key objectives of DSEF's campus events include:

- Helping students better understand direct selling, a global channel of distribution with annual revenues of more than \$183 billion worldwide
- Bringing "real-world" examples of marketing, entrepreneurship, research, sales management, ethics, consumer behavior and other aspects of direct selling applied to the study of business
- Making students aware of a variety of corporate and entrepreneurial opportunities

Your students have the opportunity to learn directly from and speak to these executives about their companies, the direct selling industry and the challenges they face not only as corporations, but within the direct selling business model.

How DSEF Supports You in the Classroom

Since 1989, the DSEF has held dozens of Campus Events throughout the United States, including the University of Texas at Austin, California State University at Los Angeles, University of Florida, University of Alabama, University of Oregon, Baylor University, Northeastern University, Brigham Young University and many others.

CONTENT

DSEF continuously creates timely and useful classroom resources that can be easily incorporated into any curriculum. Many of these resources are created in collaboration with our Fellows. For example:

- **What Big Data Can Do For You**

This panel discussion, presented by DSEF during the 2016 Direct Selling Association Annual Meeting, features Dr. Liz Davis, University of San Francisco; John Parker, Amway; Bill Schmarzo, EMC; Frank Perkins, salesforce.com; and Brian Hopkins, Forrester Research, who share how successful companies turn data into actionable business strategies.

- **Micro-Entrepreneurship and the Gig Economy**

Held at Belmont University, this DSEF Campus Event featured Lori Bush, Executive Advisor, Retired President & CEO; and Will Reinhart of the America Action Forum, who bring fresh insight to the gig and sharing economies and explain how direct selling fits.

- **"Ask the Experts" Video Series**

Working in partnership with our DSA colleagues, DSEF initiated this online series featuring DSEF Fellows who present such topics as business ethics, consumer engagement, sales, micro-entrepreneurship, and more.

The Case for Direct Selling

In college classrooms across the country, students are learning about micro-entrepreneurship and hearing buzzwords like the “gig economy.” Such modern distribution models have dramatically altered the way Americans define work. Cubicles and 9-to-5 workdays aren’t necessarily required anymore, and thanks to mobile technology, income generation can happen anytime, anywhere. American workers are taking on side “gigs” to earn extra income, establish a safety net or otherwise fill in their financial gaps. And, while brands like Uber, Etsy and Airbnb are commanding headlines, that’s only part of the story.

For more than 150 years, the direct selling industry has been providing opportunities just like these for millions of Americans. Direct selling often remains outside of any college classroom discussion about entrepreneurship – and yet, it represents a \$183 billion global industry.

In contrast to a traditional startup, direct selling offers a comparatively low-risk opportunity. New independent distributors open up shop with an already established brand. They receive access to marketing materials, education and resources for personal development, along with a community of support, a culture of recognition, and no limits on their advancement. Social media has dramatically expanded the potential reach of a direct selling business, empowering representatives to reach audiences across oceans, and in essence be open for business 24 hours a day.

More than 20 million Americans were involved in direct selling in 2015, up 11 percent from the prior year, and nearly three in every 10 of them were Millennials. Independent distributors generally report high levels of satisfaction with their businesses when weighed against employees in comparable industries. That sense of fulfillment comes not just from the financial rewards of an independent business, but also the strong sense of community – including active involvement with philanthropic causes – that the majority of direct selling companies maintain.

Further, the direct selling industry has created positive impacts on underserved populations, including Hispanic, rural and economically disadvantaged communities. Freedom, flexibility and personal empowerment are principles that translate to all. Statistics also have shown that direct sellers generally fare well during periods of economic recession, due to its low barriers for entry and open-ended opportunities for advancement.

With estimated retail sales in the United States exceeding \$36 billion in 2015, the industry has outpaced the growth rate for traditional retail sales and the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. More individuals generated more revenue from direct selling in 2015 than in any previous year. This is an incredibly exciting time for our industry, and for aspiring entrepreneurs.

How DSEF Supports You in the Classroom

For DSEF Fellows, we're always adding new and exclusive content designed specifically for your needs. The Foundation also can help you identify opportunities to produce your own white papers, published articles and other research to further enhance your course content.

You may also wish to use in the **Direct Selling Entrepreneur Workshop** teaching content, which offers colleges, business organizations and other educational partners a set of free entrepreneurship education tools and materials that can be delivered in flexible workshop formats or embedded into for-credit courses. DSEF has developed three workshop formats that can accommodate a variety of venues and audiences.





How DSEF Supports You in the Classroom

Here's how your participation in the Direct Selling Entrepreneur Workshop initiative benefits you:

- These educational sessions can be incorporated into to your business, marketing or entrepreneurship classes and can expose your students to more business startup examples
- The materials also provide non-credit educational opportunities for continuing education, adult education, workforce development and small business development organizations
- Workshops may serve as a recruitment event for your college, organization or entrepreneurship center that provides connection to prospective small business owners

Education partners in our workshop initiative receive a free electronic subscription to the curriculum, including instructor's manual, PowerPoint presentations and participant worksheets. To find out more, email Nancy Laichas, DSEF Chief of Entrepreneurship Initiatives, at nlaichas@dsef.org.

About the Direct Selling Education Foundation

At the Direct Selling Education Foundation (DSEF), we believe that direct selling captures the spirit of entrepreneurship like no other business model. We were established to engage and educate the public on the ways that direct selling empowers individuals, supports communities and strengthens economies.

And that's why our vision is for the next generation of leaders, business owners and problem-solvers to understand the value of direct selling as a powerful go-to-market strategy, a streamlined distribution channel and a vibrant entrepreneurial engine that will continue to play a significant role in both our national and global economies. To accomplish that vision, we bring together academic and corporate leaders to facilitate the exchange of ideas, and support them with timely and thought-provoking data, tools and resources that share the facts about a growing and highly relevant path to modern entrepreneurship.

We strive to engage, equip and empower educators to provide students with an accurate understanding of the direct selling channel.



info@dsef.org | www.dsef.org

Phone: (202) 452-8866

Fax: (202) 452-9015

1667 K street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20006



FELLOWS