



## Office of Graduate Fellowships

# **NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP): Basic Information**

### **About NSF GRFP**

The GRFP is the National Science Foundation's flagship graduate fellowship program. This program is designed to "launch" talented students in STEM and Social Science disciplines by funding them in the early phase of their graduate study. The GRFP award offers up to three years of financial support, including a stipend of \$34,000 per year paid directly to the student (in monthly installments) to meet costs of living, plus a \$12,000 allowance paid to the institution to offset costs of education. GRFP fellows do not pay tuition or required fees at their graduate institution. Other benefits of participation in the program (which in some cases go beyond the 3-year funding package) include international research and professional development opportunities, internship opportunities, and supercomputer access. Not to mention lifelong membership in the prestigious community of GRFP alumni!

GRFP supports students pursuing research-based MS/MA /PhD degrees in NSF-supported disciplines, including:

- Chemistry
- Computer & Information Science
- Engineering & Bioengineering
- Geosciences and Geography
- Life Sciences
- Linguistics
- Neuroscience
- Political Science/Public Policy
- Mathematical Sciences
- Physics and Astronomy
- Psychology
- Economics
- Sociology and Anthropology
- Environmental Science
- STEM Education (research-focused)

For a detailed list of supported fields of study, please see the appendix to this document (or visit the web site.)

The application deadline for the GRFP falls annually in late October/early November; notification takes place in the spring (around April 1) and fellowships commence during the subsequent fall semester (with an option for a summer start date as well.)

Learn more about the GRFP and link to the most recent program solicitation notice at the official GRFP Operations Center web site: <http://www.nsfgrfp.org/>

Thinking of applying? Please contact:

Dr. Kathryn E. Ágoston, Director of Graduate Fellowships, George Mason University  
[kagoston@gmu.edu](mailto:kagoston@gmu.edu) • 703-993-3131 • <http://gradfellows.gmu.edu>

## **Eligibility**

In order to apply to the GRFP you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident at the time of application.
- Intend to pursue a research-based Master's or Ph.D. degree in an NSF-eligible field.
- Plan to be enrolled full time in a graduate program at an accredited U.S. institution by the time the fellowship will commence. (Note – not necessarily at the time of application.)
- Have completed NO MORE THAN 12 months of full-time graduate study (or the equivalent) as of August in the year of application. For most students, this means you will apply: (1) During the fall of the year prior to entering graduate school for the first time (at the time that you are applying to graduate programs); (2) During the fall of your first year of graduate school; (3) during the fall of your second year of graduate school. Please note that this rule applies to ALL post-baccalaureate study, not just your current program.
- NEW RULE FALL 2016: As of Fall 2016, applicants who are already in a graduate program get only one chance to apply – EITHER the fall of the first year or the fall of the second year.
- Meet any and all other eligibility requirements as set forth in the most current GRFP Program Solicitation.

Note that there are some exceptions to the 12-month rule, including provisions for part-time students and students returning to graduate study after a long interruption. There are also some courses of study that are ineligible (for example MD/JD programs or joint programs.) Detailed eligibility requirements can be found in the annual Program Solicitation. If, after reviewing them, you still have questions, ask the Director of Graduate Fellowships or contact the GRFP staff using the contact information on the web site.

So, to Summarize: Who Should Apply? You are...

- An undergraduate senior / recent graduate planning to enter a graduate program for the first time next fall semester.
- A graduate student who will be in the first OR second year of post-baccalaureate study during the coming fall semester.

Who is...

- A U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident.
- Pursuing a Master's or Ph.D. in an NSF-supported field of study.

And you possess...

- A strong academic record.
- Some prior research / research assistant experience (may be in another field)
- A strong sense of direction in your chosen field.
- A strong interest in making basic science relevant and accessible to society at large.

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## **The GRFP Application and Deadline**

The components of the GRFP application are detailed at the program web site. New application materials for each cycle of the GRFP become available each year in August, and the application deadline falls in later October or early November. Deadlines may vary (by a few days) according to the field of study in which you plan to apply.

The GRFP application package is submitted electronically via NSF's "Fast Lane" application system, and includes:

- Application forms (completed online in the Fast Lane system).
- Two application essays, each three single-spaced pages in length:  
(1) Personal and Professional Background and Future Goals Statement  
(2) Graduate Research Statement
- Academic reference letters (minimum 3, maximum 5)
- Academic transcripts.

The GRFP application, including screen shots from the Fast Lane system and detailed application instructions, may be previewed at any time at the GRFP program web site. NSF updates its application materials each year, so make sure you are reading the most up-to-date program solicitation and web-based information before you begin working on your application.

## **How the Office of Graduate Fellowships Can Help**

The Office of Graduate Fellowships offers the following forms of support for applicants to NSF GRFP applicants:

- One-on-one consultation and advising for prospective applicants.
- Info sessions or class visits tailored to specific disciplines or programs.
- Guidance, support, and trouble-shooting in the mechanics of the application process.
- Feedback and writing support on proposals and application essays.
- Tip and advice for developing a stronger application package.
- Support for faculty mentors.

Please contact the Office of Graduate Fellowships for additional information, or visit the Graduate Fellowships web site <http://gradfellows.gmu.edu> for links and downloadable handouts about the GRFP.

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