



The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship

Nearly 60 years ago, right after the National Science Foundation was founded and began funding research and

education in colleges and universities across the country, one of the first NSF programs developed was for support of graduate students. The <u>Graduate Research Fellowship Program</u> was designed to foster the careers of young scientists and to attract the best and brightest students into careers in science. Now, 60 years later, some 46,500 men and women have had their careers benefit from receiving this prestigious award. And yes, as an under-graduate or beginning graduate student in phycology, or as a faculty mentor of a student with an interest in phycology, the GRF is something you should know about.

I've just returned to my home institution, the Academy of Natural Sciences, after spending two years as a Program Director in the <u>Division of Graduate Education</u> at NSF, where I helped manage

the Graduate Research
Fellowship Program. It's a
unique program that gives
Fellowships directly to
graduate students early in
their careers and provides
them with three years of

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stipend and tuition support, which they can use in any NSF-supported field at the institutions of their choice. Interested? This article provides a snapshot of the program. For complete details, consult the NSF web site at http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=6201.

Before a student applies, he or she should know that the GRF has strict eligibility requirements. First, you must be a citizen or permanent resident of the US. Second, you can only apply during a certain time frame early in your studies: as a senior in college or as a graduate with a bachelor's degree; as a first year graduate student; or as a second year graduate student in the fall. As you can see, the GRF aims to support new and beginning graduate students. The exception to this requirement is if you have completed more than one year of graduate school but had to leave school for at least two years; in that case you may apply, and you are asked to supply a short essay describing your situation. There are also certain things that render you ineligible: (1) if you have any graduate degree in any area (M.S., M.D., J.D., M.B.A., etc.), (2) if your graduate studies are in an field not supported by NSF (disease-related clinical studies, history, etc.).

The application process is roughly equivalent to applying to many graduate schools. The online GRFP FastLane application site (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do) is where applicants enter their academic information,

intended field of study and institution, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and three essays of up to two pages each detailing personal history, previous research experience, and proposed research. Online

applications are submitted in November (due date varies by field of study, so consult the NSF web site for details), and in early spring applicants receive notice if they're one of the GRF awardees (2,000 per year from a pool of over 12,000 applications) or one of the Honorable Mentions (approximately another 2,000). Either way, graduate schools take notice, and lists of awardees and Honorable Mentions are carefully watched by graduate admissions committees to find top candidates for graduate study.

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NSF Fellowships, continued.

What do you get as a Graduate Research Fellow? The GRF is an award to you, the graduate student, administered by the university where you are enrolled. Fellows receive **three years stipend** that they can spread out over a five-year period (two years without stipend are called reserve years). The stipend is currently \$30,000 per year. Moreover, for you the student, your tuition is covered for the years you are on stipend. Your institution receives a cost of education allowance of \$12,000 that it uses at its own discretion--usually to offset your tuition and fees. Fellows also have opportunities to take part in NSF-supported programs in international research.

Beyond the numbers and prestige, the GRF also gives you something that other common forms of graduate support--research and teaching assistantships--do not: *Freedom*. Freedom to use the GRF at the school of your choice, and freedom to pursue ideas in your chosen field, for three years, without any other duties. It could be the only time you experience such freedom in your academic life.

In return, you are expected to remain a full-time graduate student in good standing at your institution, file an annual activities report with NSF, and inform the GRF Program each year as to your preference to receive the stipend and cost of

education allowance, or to utilize one of your two reserve years.

In its 60 year history the GRF Program has supported some incredible people--some 30 Nobel Laureates, more than 400 members of the National Academy of Sciences, and thousands of other scientists and educators. Fellows include Paul Krugman, the Nobel-Prize winning economist; Sergei Brin, the graduate school dropout who cofounded Google; E. O. Wilson, the evolutionary biologist; and many others. Could you or your student be one of them?

Rick McCourt Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia Former NSF Program Director, 2010-12,

For additional information on the GRFP, visit

http://www.nsfgrfp.org/

Division of Graduate Education

Note: This material is based upon work during RMM's employment at the National Science Foundation. Any opinion, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

PSA Student Grants and Fellowships:

Each year over \$25,000 is awarded to support student members in furthering their research (Grants-in-Aid of Research), education (Croasdale Fellowship), and travel to the annual PSA meeting (Hoshaw Travel Award). Competition for these awards is high, so the committee recommends that students have their advisors review their application before submission. Also, the committee would like to remind applicants that all incomplete (i.e. not addressing all of the required points of each award, missing letter(s) of recommendation) or late applications will not be reviewed. The deadline and requirements for each award application is listed on the PSA website: http://www.psaalgae.org/website/opportunities/grants.html. The committee looks forward to reviewing more great applications this year!

The committee is always looking for new members so please let the chair, Amy Carlile <a column lateral column l

Grant-In-Aid of Research Deadline: November 1, 2012