Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

2019-2021 GRFP Competitions
Today’s Topics

1. Quick GRFP Overview
2. How to Apply
3. The Two Statements:
   1. Personal, Relevant Background & Future Goals
   2. Graduate Research Plan
4. Writing about Intellectual Merit & Broader Impacts
5. What Panel Reviewers Want to Learn About You
6. Q & A
Why take the time to Apply for a Fellowship?
Benefits of Applying

1. Gain proposal writing skills that build across your career
2. Repurpose statements for grad school applications
3. It will set you apart in your application cover letters:
   - Prospective programs view you as high caliber achiever
   - Future mentors know you might bring their own $
   - Prestigious for faculty to mentor a fellow (you)
4. If awarded…
   - You can immerse in research rather than outside work for living expenses
   - Early career boost - strengthens your CV now & in future
   - Fellowships often lead to other opportunities, such as international travel
Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

Presentation developed for McNair Scholars
September 18, 2018
Official GRFP Solicitation

This is the ONLY source of *official* GRFP information.

**FASTLANE GRFP:**  https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do
Fellowship Provisions

- Provides 3 years of support
- Award value: $138,000*
  - $34,000 stipend per year *paid to student*
  - $12,000 “ed allowance” *paid to institution*
- Other opportunities for active Fellows:
  - International research & internships
  - Access to super computing resources
  - Supplemental funding for researchers with disabilities

*“Value” may be greater at institutions with a higher tuition.*
Understand the GRFP’s Program Goals

NSF reviewers seek to fund:

Individually\[s\] from diverse backgrounds with the demonstrated potential to be high achieving scientists and engineers in a globally-engaged workforce with the vision that these new leaders will help the U.S. move to the forefront of research and innovation.
1. Citizen or US/Territory/Permanent Resident

2. Degree requirements*: College senior or BS holder may apply before enrolling in a graduate degree program. Grad students may apply once.

3. Field of study: Must enroll in a research-based master’s or PhD degree in NSF eligible field by next year’s fall semester.

*See solicitation for BS/MS students and upcoming eligibility changes.
Eligible Fields of Study*
(You will submit to a specific sub-discipline.)

Engineering (18)
Computer & Information Science & Engineering (18)
Chemistry (10)
Geosciences (25)
Life Sciences (19)

Mathematical Sciences (14)
Materials Research (10)
Physics & Astronomy (10)
Psychology (15)
Social Sciences (19)
STEM Ed & Learning (5)

(n) = number of sub-discipline fields

* Interdisciplinary applications are also possible.
* Biomed/BioEng students should verify eligibility.

* Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

* Custom seminar for McNair Scholars
Bioengineering Eligibility

Bioengineering grad research that:
• aids persons with disabilities or
• diagnoses or treats human disease
is eligible as long as...

You apply engineering principles to problems in medicine while primarily advancing engineering knowledge.

If this applies to your research, submit your GRFP application to the Biomedical Engineering review panel.
Bioengineering Eligibility

NIH or NSF? Bioengineering Eligibility Check

1. Does your personal statement describe wanting to help find a cure for a friend/family member with a disease or disability? **NIH**

2. Do you envision completing grad courses primarily relating to engineering? **NSF**

3. Is your grad research plan focused on curing diseases or disabilities? **NIH**

4. Are your career goals in the health, medical or related fields? **NIH**

5. Can you identify HOW will your research advance *engineering* knowledge? **NSF**

Eligibility Questions? Consult with your mentor or research dean.
How to Apply to the GRFP

Part 2

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

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September 18, 2018
It’s Easy to Apply

1. Register in NSF FASTLANE - GRFP
2. Complete all sections of online application
3. Write 2 statements (5 pages total)
4. Upload transcripts & statements to the online application
5. Ask 3 faculty mentors or research supervisors to submit reference letters.
6. Submit application before disciplinary deadline

Plan ahead: NSF makes no deadline exceptions!
Fall 2012 example: Mizzou applicant was disqualified for being 16 seconds late.
Here’s where to get started:

FASTLANE GRFP

https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do
A look inside FastLane GRFP: Click on EVERY teal bar!
Each teal bar opens a new panel.

1. Read carefully.
2. Don’t skip anything
3. SAVE often.

Advice: Maximize use of these sections. Your accomplishments will boost the panelists’ assessment of your potential for success!
GRFP Deadlines are in Late October!

- Submit *before* your disciplinary deadline
- 3 panelists review your application
- Award offers in April
- All applicants receive 3 reviewer comments

Go here:
https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do

Start your application soon!
The 2 GRFP Statements

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

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September 18, 2018
2 GRFP Statements = 5 pages total

Personal, Relevant Background & Future Goals

• Motivation for an advanced degree
• Professional development plans
• Research & professional experiences
• Educational & career goals

and

• Intellectual Merit
• Broader Impacts

Graduate Research Statement

• Original research topic
• General approach (methods)
• Resources needed
• Literature citations

and

• Intellectual Merit
• Broader Impacts
2 GRFP Statements = 5 pages total

- Motivation for an advanced degree
- Original research topic
- Educational & Career goals
- Literature citations
- Intellectual Merit
- Broader Impacts

IM & BI are so important, I’ll explain those in Part 4
Why do Personal Statements Seem Intimidating?

Students have told me:

1. Uncomfortable sharing one’s personal story
2. Not wanting to brag about achievements
3. Having so much to say, unsure where to start
4. At this juncture, path forward unclear (goals)
5. Lack of confidence or imposter syndrome
BE WILLING TO ALLOW YOUR CHALLENGES TO BECOME MOTIVATION
Your GRFP Complete Application Packet

Notes:
- You can’t upload a CV or GRA Scores.
- There’s no interview.

Everything you submit **MUST** help convince reviewers that **YOU** are the ideal person for this award!

What is your **best** opportunity to set yourself apart from the other highly qualified applicants?

Exceptional reference letters will affirm your potential!

*Writing the 2 GRFP Statements*
Personal Statement Instructions will be found in Fastlane GRFP

2.12 Prepare Application / Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement

Applicant selects ‘Continue’

PERSONAL, RELEVANT BACKGROUND AND FUTURE GOALS STATEMENT

Privacy Act Notice
* Required Field

Statement Upload and Format Instructions
Prior to uploading, please check the Statement preparation and format checklist (a new browser window will open) to ensure that your statement complies with format and preparation requirements. Failure to comply with the requirements will result in your application being returned without review.

To upload the statements, supported word-processors can be found in Supported File formats (a new browser window will open). Use the ‘Upload’ button below to upload your file. For additional instructions, please see the File Uploading Instructions (a new browser window will open). If you continue to experience problems, please contact the NSF Help Desk (a new browser window will open). Please turn off Pop-up Blocker in order to allow a new window to open.

Reviewers read both statements. Please address Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in both written statements in order to provide reviewers with the information necessary to evaluate your application with respect to both Criteria. Please refer to the Program solicitation for further information on the NSF Merit Review Criteria.

Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement
Please outline your educational and professional development plans and career goals. How do you envision graduate school preparing you for a career that allows you to contribute to expanding scientific understanding as well as broadly benefit society? Page limit - 3 pages

Describe your personal, educational and/or professional experiences that motivate your decision to pursue advanced study in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Include specific examples of any research and/or professional activities in which you have participated. Present a concise description of the activities, highlight the results and discuss how these activities have prepared you to seek a graduate degree. Specify your role in the activity including the extent to which you worked independently and/or as part of a team. Describe the contributions of your activity to advancing knowledge in STEM fields as well as the potential for broader societal impacts (See Solicitation, Section VI, for more information about Broader Impacts).

NSF Fellows are expected to become globally engaged knowledge experts and leaders who can contribute significantly to research, education, and innovations in science and engineering. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate your potential to satisfy this requirement. Your ideas and examples do not have to be confined necessarily to the discipline that you have chosen to pursue.

Document Uploaded: No

*Statement File: Browse... No file selected.

Upload

Continue  Cancel
Main Topics Covered in the GRFP Personal Statement

- Educational goals
- Career goals
- Professional development plans
- Motivation to pursue grad degree
- Specific research experiences
- Professional experiences*
- Independent work and team work
  - Intellectual Merit
  - Broader Impacts

* Examples: work, internships, leadership, teaching, outreach, service & study abroad
Advice for the *first* GRFP statement

1. **Be original!** Grab the readers’ attention in the first few lines.
2. **Write with energy & conviction.**
3. **Include one paragraph for each research experience.** Be sure to list the skills you acquired, like team leadership & project management.
4. It’s ok to talk about challenges and failures because it shows your resilience and persistence. Put a positive spin on the outcome by adding what you learned.
5. Use **good sentence structure & grammar** and smooth transitions for ease of reading.
Don’t make assertions about your attributes. Instead, give specific examples.

2 acceptable ways to document your abilities in your personal statement:

1. Use a short scenario that DEMONSTRATES your professional demeanor, character or attribute.

2. Ask your references to make note of your leadership, persistence or problem solving skills. Then you may write something like…

“As Dr. Smith confirms in her cover letter, I have exceptional communication skills and serve as a leader in our lab.”
## Customize these 3 pages to showcase your work!

- Craft a unique introduction that sets you apart from others.
- Closely follow the rest of instructions.
- Write a compelling conclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Previous Research 1</th>
<th>Previous Research 2</th>
<th>Previous Research 3</th>
<th>Leadership and Volunteer Service</th>
<th>Intellectual Merit</th>
<th>Broader Impacts</th>
<th>Teaching and Outreach</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Customize these 3 pages to showcase your work!

✓ Connect your educational goals to career goals that include advancing knowledge and benefiting society.

✓ Explain how past research efforts have advanced knowledge &/or benefitted society.

✓ State how past experiences have equipped you with specific skills to undertake your research plan, persist and earn an advance degree!
Include ALL previous research and research-related experiences.
Subheads show reviewers that you did not omit anything.
Seek critical feedback from several people who will be honest with you!

Customize subheads to highlight your work.

Clearly label Intellectual Merit & Broader Impacts Paragraphs

Add the name of each research project.
Research Plan Statement Instructions will be found in Fastlane GRFP
Main Topics Covered in the GRFP Research Statement

• Original research topic
• General approach (methods)
• Resources needed
• Literature citations

and

• Intellectual Merit
• Broader Impacts
Your outline will seem familiar! Think of this like a research abstract.

I. Introduction

II. Background/Literature Review

III. Hypotheses or research questions

IV. Methods (or general approach)

V. Unique Resources

VI. Intellectual Merit (*this is required*)

VII. Broader Impacts (*this is required*)

VIII. Conclusion

IX. Literature Citations
Suggested 2 page format for the GRFP Graduate Research Plan.

| Introduction | Concerto fugit voluptat fugias consequat amet Incratae molestias rem corollar molorec uscilis illabororum reperum et qua
| Background/Lit Review | amet endi blacera
| Hypothesis or Research Questions | Incelliquae pra simuluptae[1]. Natinum sunt volor sim et moloreh enditec tistem que molorum. Et la Iducatius se
| Methods (general approach) | prerenhentis seque a di ist laboro Reperum [1, 4].
| Unique Resources | amet endi blacera
| Intellectual Merit | amet endi blacera
| Broader Impacts | amet endi blacera
| Citations | amet endi blacera

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Yes, you CAN fit it all in 2 pages.
When you edit, don’t skimp on your Methods section!

**Introduction**. Am fugit voluptat fuglas consequamet incetas moles mos rem coreiur molorec uscilis illabororum reperum et quilate sit atiandt pedis evendae nest. et quilate sit atiandt pedis evendae nest. uscilis illabororum reperum et quilate sit atiandt pedis evendae nest.

**Background**. Obis exersis et, officitio moditais amet endi blacera inveliquae pra simoluptae[1]. Natium sunt volor sim et moloreh enditec tistem que molum. Et la iduclatius [2, 3], se prerehenhisis sequa a di ist laborbo. Reperum [1, 4], erem voloseq nos remporempor aut que molor facias re res rectur? Quisciumqueet pererem latume veriorest, odis utetur, venis ratibus adis conserum latet pro magnatum. am fugit voluptat.

**Research Question or Hypotheses**. Pliciti ut dolupta si omnis dus endem et, officitem: arcitatus quo bearum reperem derfercis molor facias re res rectur? Quisciumqueet pererem latume veriorest, odis utetur, venis ratibus adis conserum.


**Resources Needed**. Icti ut dolupta si omnis dus endem et, officitem arcitatus quo bearum reperem derfercis molor facias re res rectur? Quisciumqueet pererem latume veriorest, odis utetur, venis ratibus adis conserum.


**Literature Citations**
1. Author names, date, title of article, name of journal
2. Author names, date, title of article, name of journal
3. Author names, date, title of article, name of journal
4. Author names, date, title of article, name of journal
Too early to know what type of research project to undertake?

Don’t panic!

There’s a little secret about the Graduate Research Plan.

1. Pick a topic of interest & develop a rigorous plan.
2. If you get awarded and want to propose a new but related topic, just contact the GRFP office!
3. Why? This office funds students who have potential to become top researchers (i.e., not your research plan.)
Advice for your GRFP Research Plan

1. Have a powerful beginning. State the problem you are solving and document the need for your study with the literature.

2. Use the terminology of your discipline (follow the top tier journals).

3. Your methods MUST be rigorous as well as appropriate (work closely with your mentor!).

4. This is YOUR grad research project, so take ownership. State, “I will…” versus “Our group will…”

5. Write with conviction: State, “I intend to…” versus “I hope to…”
Intellectual Merit & Broader Impacts

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

Presentation developed for McNair Scholars
September 18, 2018
GRFP’s 2 Review Criteria

Intellectual Merit
The potential to advance knowledge

Broader Impacts
The potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes
IM or BI? How to Remember the Difference

**Intellectual Merit = Scholarly Endeavors**

- e.g., research that advances knowledge within and/or across disciplines & sharing research findings with *scientific* audiences

**Broader Impacts = Helping Society**

- e.g., how findings make lives better AND attempts to engage lay people from diverse backgrounds through outreach activities AND sharing research findings with *lay* audiences
IMPORTANT: You are REQUIRED to Address IM & BI in BOTH Statements

- Motivation for an advanced degree
- Professional development plans
- Research & professional experiences
- Educational & Career goals

and

- Intellectual Merit
- Broader Impacts

3 pages

Graduate Research Topic

- Original research topic
- General approach (methods)
- Resources needed
- Literature citations

and

- Intellectual Merit
- Broader Impacts

2 pages
Don’t forget to plan a BI activity aimed at “ Desired Societal Outcomes”

- Partner higher ed with government, business & industry
- Engage in cross cultural experiences in US or abroad
- Teach & mentor in STEM (K-12 &/or collegiate level)
- Lead environmental or societal initiatives
- Help to improve public scientific literacy through outreach education
- Engage and serve diverse audiences
- Educate local, state & federal policy makers on BI
**Bottom line:**

**Statements MUST be equally strong**

**Intellectual Merit**

- Personal, Relevant Background & Future Goals

**Broader Impacts**

- Graduate Research Topic
**What to Write in your GRFP Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts Paragraphs**

### Personal, Previous Research & Future Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Merit Paragraph</th>
<th>Broader Impacts Paragraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> This is a summary paragraph of your past IM accomplishments.</td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> This is a summary paragraph of your past BI accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Quantify your research experiences, such as &quot;I have completed three independent research projects at two institutions.&quot; Or I have two years of collaborative research experience, including with international researchers.</td>
<td>1. Describe how the type of research you have conducted in the past has the potential to benefit society in the future. If it connects to a &quot;desirable societal outcome,&quot; be sure to state which one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If you have made significant discovery or filed a patent, say so.</td>
<td>2. Quantify how many times you have shared your research findings with public audiences – particularly if it was an audience who might reap the benefits from your line of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quantify your publications and presentations, such as I have three local and one national presentation and coauthored one refereed article.</td>
<td>3. Quantify the number of people you have reached through education, media, service learning or volunteerism, particularly if these are underrepresented in STEM research and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Briefly note your preparedness (knowledge and skills) to undertake your proposed plan and obtain your degree.</td>
<td>4. As appropriate, mention your rationale for choosing the grad institution – such as mentors, labs or degree program that aligns with your career aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. As appropriate, mention your rationale for choosing the grad institution – such as mentors, labs or degree program that aligns with your career aspirations.</td>
<td>5. If you will apply for a patent, say so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research Plan Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Merit Paragraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explicitly state how your findings will advance knowledge in your discipline and – if applicable - across disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State in which journal(s) you will submit your findings and by what year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. State which conferences you intend to present your findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How this research will benefit society – try to connect to a “desirable societal outcome.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Where you will share your research findings in public venues (lay audiences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Describe a broader impact activity that connects to a “desirable societal outcome.” If it is a continuation or extension of past BI activity, say so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Plan for how you can sustain the activity once you graduate. Will you mentor others to take over the project? Or will you continue your project into your career?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tip:* Be innovative. Engage people from diverse backgrounds, especially those who are underrepresented in STEM research and education.

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This new handout explains how to write about IM & BI in both statements!
McNair Repository of GRFP Handouts

Personal, Previous Research & Future Goals Statement
- Outline for the Personal-Previous Research-Future Statement
- Sample format for the P-PR-FG Statement
- Writing about Previous Research Experiences
- Writing Prompts (Worksheet)

Graduate Research Plan Statement
- Outline for the Research Statement
- Research Plan Worksheet
- Sample format for the Research Statement

Other Helpful GRFP Handouts
- Checklist for Completing the GRFP Application on Time
- This PPT
- What to Write for IM & BI paragraphs
- 10 BI Strategies
- Broader Impacts Planning Sheet
- Selecting Reference Writers
- Handout for Reference Writers
- Rubric for Critiquing Drafts
- Tips for Getting into Grad School
- Choosing a Grad Degree Program Checklist
- PPT & Handouts for Frosh-Soph-Jrs

Personal, Previous Research
& Future Goals Statement

Graduate Research Plan
Statement
How to Make Your 2 Statements
Appeal to GRFP Panel Reviewers

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

Presentation developed for McNair Scholars
September 18, 2018
First, your 2 statements MUST work together.

For example:

My career aspirations are X, Y & Z. A research plan that will help prepare you for a career related to X, Y & Z.

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Next, you must convince them of your readiness!

How prepared is this applicant (e.g., knowledge, skills & abilities) to undertake a graduate research project, conduct broader impact activities and persist toward a graduate degree?
Third, provide sufficient detail in your plan \textit{and} make sure it is consistent with your goals.

Is this an innovative, rigorous \& doable plan? How will this research project build the student researcher’s IM \& BI \textit{and} help her/him achieve academic and career goals?
Reviewers like SPECIFIC Examples of IM & BI

For Intellectual Merit, write about your…

- knowledge/skills/preparedness for future research endeavors
- leadership; motivation to become a scientific leader
- engagement with others from diverse backgrounds in your research endeavors
- past efforts & plans to share findings in scholarly settings

Broader Impacts, write about your…

- the BI of your past research & proposed research plan
- past efforts & goals to teach & mentor others (any age/level) about STEM
- past efforts & goals as a volunteer with diverse groups, especially toward desired societal outcomes
- past efforts & plans to share findings with lay (non-scientific) groups

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Panelists value letters from **faculty mentors** who have supervised your research.

Panelists discern good letters from exceptional letters. (Choose writers wisely!)

Letter from administrator not recommended unless the person knows your work.

1. As soon as possible, arrange a time to meet.
2. Take your resume/CV & proposed research plan.
3. Get right to the point. Include the deadline.

“I am applying for the National Science Foundation’s prestigious Graduate Research Fellowship. Would you be able to write a *strong* letter of reference for me, addressing my potential for intellectual merit and broader impacts? The deadline for reference letters is November X.”
GRFP Writing Resources

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September 18, 2018
Writing Resources

NSFGRFP.org site

https://www.nsfgrfp.org/

Under Tips for Applying:
Experienced Person Resource List

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

Custom seminar for McNair Scholars
Review criteria: IM & BI
Outlines & worksheets
Checklist: stay organized
Self-scoring rubric
Selecting references
Reference writer tips
Future applicant info
Advice from reviewers
GRFP Fellows’ advice
Links to statement examples
Conclusion

Writing the 2 GRFP Statements

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September 18, 2018
Why are these graduate students smiling?
1. No tuition payments

2. $2,833 monthly paycheck
## Trends: GRFP Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># Applications</th>
<th># Awards</th>
<th>Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>2,053</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16,500</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>2069</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>2,116</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>???????</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Distribution of GRFP Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># Applications</th>
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<tr>
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<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>?????</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fellowships MUST be distributed equitably for:
- geographic location
- gender
- disability
- veteran
- race & ethnicity
- institutional type
- discipline

In 2017, of the 2,069 awardees: 1,158 women; 498 from URM groups; 75 persons with disabilities; 26 veterans; 726 undergrad seniors and 449 from baccalaureate institutions.
26 Scholars Selected as 2017* NSF GRFP Fellows

- Augsburg College
- Ripon College (3)
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- University of Eastern Washington
- University of Florida (3)
- University of California Davis
- University of Central Florida (3)
- University of Kansas (2)
- University of Missouri
- University of Nevada, Reno (2)
- University of New Hampshire
- University of Oklahoma (2)
- University of South Carolina
- University of Washington (2)
- University of Wyoming
- Winthrop University

*The 2017 competition had 13,000 applicants
6 Tips for Success From Past Awardees

1. Analyze GRFP solicitation carefully (read 2-3 times.)
2. Call GRFP office or expert if you have questions.
3. Read examples of FUNDED proposals.
4. Meet with mentor(s) often, especially on research plan.
5. Precisely address the questions/directions.
6. Ask several others for critical feedback. (Seek help if needed e.g., stats, grammar, etc.)
The NSF Graduate Fellow Research Program is a great opportunity to begin your legacy!
Thank you!

National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program

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