



Graduate Research Fellowship Program: Webinar Question and Answer

- 1) Are there cases in which a student has received a GRFP award but the student is not admitted to graduate school or decides to defer graduate school?

In order to accept a fellowship, you have to have been admitted into a graduate program by the time you accept the award, deadline of May 1. You need to speak with the GRFP office to discuss these extenuating circumstances.

- 2) Does the degree you are seeking need to be in the United States?

Yes, you need to be admitted to a US institution. There are possibilities for international study and possibilities for going abroad, but degree needs to come from a US institution.

- 3) Do you need address all 3 types of Broadening Impact in your application?

No, I don't think necessarily, but you explicitly have to talk about that. It's important that you have to talk to that, so if I can't see the impact at level one, then maybe at level two or three. It's important to demonstrate broader impact, but not all three types are required.

- 4) For faculty and staff, is there a possibility to set up a test or beta-application in the FastLane system so as to better understand the system and be able to better support students?

On the GRFP website, there are screen shots of the FastLane system, so you can get in and see what it looks like. The system is very straight forward and student should not have any problems using it.

- 5) Is there benefit to tying your research proposal to undergraduate research you have already done?

I think there is a range of possibilities. Some students do that, so build up a record of research and if this research is something you think you would like to continue in graduate school. You do not have to do this. However, if you do link back to your undergraduate research, they like to see that you are going to take it in a new direction or that you have thought about an innovative or creative approach. You might say that here are our preliminary results, my graduate work will look to replicate these results or take it in a new direction or find out what the discrepancies or the gaps are.

- 6) Do you know what the statistics are regarding funding for social science GRFP applications?

That's something that has been around for years and misconceptions about the competitiveness about different disciplines. The GRFP is mandated to balance across disciplines, types of institutions, geographically, etc. I have not asked that particular question in a few years, but I felt very confident hearing the GRFP officers talk about this issue and that social science applications are not competing against engineering or life science applications.

- 7) How important is it for a student to have already identified a graduate school mentor or can the research proposal stand on it's on value?

That's a really good question and I am not sure that I have a really good gauge on that issue. I think if you have it, it's helpful, but if you don't have a mentor, I don't think that it necessarily hurts you. When you apply, you have to identify your intended school for graduate study and so what happens if you don't get accepted to that program? The GRFP office understands this. It makes a whole lot of sense to identify a graduate program where you would be a good fit and so you can speak intelligently about why you picked the program you did and why it is a good fit for your research. This gets back to intellectual merit, so that piece of it is important.



8) Nontraditional students: are these applications evaluated differently? Are they more competitive?

Everyone is evaluated the same on broader impact and intellectual merit. Readings of applications happen as a peer group, all seniors together for example. However, students who have been out in the real world have the advantage of being able to talk more explicitly about how research informs practice, which might be an advantage.

9) Students who are currently seniors and have future presentations or research opportunities, can they include these in their application?

It's all fair to include as long as it is 100% transparent that this is something that is in the future. They know you have a whole semester ahead of you when you apply, so if you've already had an abstract accepted by the time you are applying or have opportunities the spring semester that are confirmed, then you should include them in your online application. Be sure to include dates and names of conferences. What they don't want are any kind of tentative language—these have to be real, confirmed plans.

10) Within the application, BI and IM have specific headings that need to be followed by specific statements. Is that true?

To be sure, you must check FastLane.

11) What is the best way to contact graduate school admissions directors to let them know you are applying to GRFP? Have you ever had students send their GRFP application as a supplement to their graduate application?

Bounce the idea off your mentor to make sure it's acceptable in your discipline. Once you've identified a few graduate programs or lab, learn more about these programs and how you might fit in with what they are doing. In once you feel like this is a place you would like to land, reaching out to ask about the program, explain your research interests and drop a hint that you are applying for the GRFP and letting them know that you might be coming with your own funding, that makes you an attractive candidate. Faculty have a limited amount of money to support students, but it has to be a good fit on both sides—the department and the student. Conferences are another good opportunity to network with faculty and learn about their program and what they are looking for in their program.

Second part: I wouldn't recommend it. A graduate program will have specific essay requirements that you need to answer. However, it is possible to repackage and repurpose what you have written for the GRFP to applicable purpose statements in graduate applications.

12) For a current graduate student, is funding retroactive or only for the upcoming year(s)?

It's not retroactive. The award would be for the academic year starting in August 2015.

13) Regarding broader impact: if you have a purely theoretical research, how do you demonstrate broader impact? Can you demonstrate broader impact outside of the STEM community?

Being able to articulate why your research matters. So as a tax payer, why does your research matter to me? If you flip it around and think about it that way, how your research is leading to larger societal benefits?

Not just society as it applies to STEM, so broader impact definitely means larger societal benefits outside of the STEM fields.