National Science Foundation

Graduate Research Fellowship Program

NSF 16-104

Annual Program Cycle

- GRFP operates on an annual cycle. The following are critical dates for administrative actions that are performed in the GRFP FastLane module:

- March/April - Program Office announces new Fellowships

- Feb/May 1 – **New Fellow**: Accepts/Declines Offer; Re-certifies program eligibility; Verifies contact information, GRFP institution, and start date (summer/June 1 or fall/August 1); Submits annual Fellowship Status Declaration

  - **Continuing Fellow**: Submits Annual Activities Report; Obtains signed Academic/Research Advisor Confirmation Form; Re-certifies program eligibility; Verifies contact information; Submits annual Fellowship Status Declaration

  - **Academic/Research Advisor**: Verifies satisfactory progress and signs Academic/Research Advisor Confirmation Form (for continuing Fellows only)
Annual Program Cycle (continued)

• May/June – Coordinating Official (CO): Certifies progress of all Fellows except new ones; Submits Grants Roster Report
  - Program Office: Approves Grants Roster Reports
• October – Financial Official (FO): Submits Institution Program Expense Report
  - CO submits Institution Completion Report
• Anytime – All Fellows: Submit Change Requests for Field-of-Study, GRFP Institution, Fellowship Status changes to Medical Deferral, Military Deferral, Forfeit, or Termination Statuses only
  - Program Office and COs: Review and approve/disapprove Fellow Change Status Requests; Update Completion Report

Deadlines – Failure to meet the established GRFP deadlines will result in termination of the Fellowship. When in doubt, Fellows are strongly encouraged to contact their CO.
Fellowship Status Options

During the Fellowship Period (five-year maximum), the Fellowship provides up to three Tenure years of financial support (stipend and institutional cost-of-education allowance) and two Reserve years.

• Tenure Status ensures that Fellows have the resources (time and financial support) to devote full-time effort to their graduate programs of study.

• Reserve Status ensures that Fellows have the option and flexibility to participate in other education and training opportunities.

• Tenure and Reserve Status are only assigned on an annual basis (12-month increments).

• A Fellowship Year that starts in summer runs from June 1 – May 31. A fall start runs from August 1 – July 31.

• New Fellows may begin their Fellowship either during the summer (June 1) or the fall (August 1) immediately following the Fellowship Offer, provided they are actively engaged in research or coursework at the time of the Fellowship start. New Fellows who are between programs or are not actively engaged in a graduate program during the summer are only eligible for a fall start.
Fellowship Status Options (continued)

- A Fellow may change between Statuses from one year to the next, but may only change the Fellowship Year start (Summer or Fall) when switching between Statuses (e.g. Reserve to Tenure).

- Fellows must be in one of the following Fellowship statuses: Tenure, Reserve, Forfeit, Medical Deferral, or Military Deferral.

- Fellows not on NSF-approved Military or Medical Deferrals who have used 2 years of Reserve Status must choose Tenure or Forfeit Status for subsequent years. The Fellowship may not be deferred for other reasons.

- Annual Activities Reports are required regardless of status. With the assistance of the Academic/Research Advisor, Fellows should exhibit sound judgment with the use of GRFP resources at the beginning of their Fellowship. Retroactive changes are not permitted.
Stipend

• The annual, 12-month GRFP stipend amount is specified in each year’s Program Solicitation. The amount for FY21 is $34,000. The amount of $2833.33 is paid monthly to the student through the Financial Aid Office.

• No dependent, research, or travel allowances are provided.

• Only Fellows on Tenure in good standing are eligible to receive stipend payments. If a Fellow does not conform to the Standard of Conduct at the GRFP institution and/or the NSF, NSF reserves the right to withhold a Fellow’s stipend payment or terminate a fellowship.

• Stipends may be considered taxable income. Fellows may find it helpful to consult the US IRS Tax Topic 421: Scholarship and Fellowship Grants and Publication 970: Tax Benefits for Education. These are available at http://www.irs.gov.
The second part of the NSF GRFP award is a cost of education (COE) allowance that is managed by the Graduate School. The university is required by the NSF GRFP to cover all registration costs for each fellow, regardless of what they cost the institution.

- The COE allowance is specified each year in the Program Solicitation. For FY21, this is $12,000.
- All living expenses are the responsibility of the Fellow.
- The Graduate School reports at the end of the year exactly how the COE allowance has been spent for each fellow.
- For in-state Fellows, the COE allowance covers most of registration costs. The balance is covered by the Graduate School.
- For out-of-state Fellows, the COE allowance covers around 1/3 of the cost. The balance is covered by the Graduate School.
Assistantships

• Each Fellow is expected to devote full time to advanced scientific study or work during the Fellowship Period. However, it is generally accepted that teaching or similar activity constitutes a valuable part of the education and training of many graduate students. A Fellow may choose to undertake a reasonable amount of such activities without NSF GRFP approval.

• If a Fellow has at least a 25% GTA/GRA assistantship, the Fellow’s health insurance and in-state maintenance fee are covered by the assistantship. The out-of-state tuition is waived, as is the case with all assistantships. All remaining fees are covered either by the NSF COE allowance or by the Graduate School.
Health Insurance

• Health insurance is not provided for any NSF GRFP Fellow if there is no assistantship.
• The department may pay for the Fellow’s health insurance directly by working with the Hildreth Agency. They may be contacted at studenthealth@hildrethins.com or 865-691-4652.
Contact Information

Dr. Ernest Brothers, Associate Dean of the Graduate School
865-974-3634
ebrother@utk.edu

Sharon Foy, Business Manager of the Graduate School
865-974-3653
sfoy1@utk.edu