

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

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All Big 10 candidates work with Scholarship Opportunities Program (SOP) staff, who run the campus advising, application evaluation and endorsement processes. Read this document while you complete the [Pre-Application](#) and refer to it throughout the application process.

UNIVERSAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

BE A UCI UNDERGRADUATE

The SOP is funded to advise current UCI undergraduates only. Students at other universities must work with representatives on their campuses.

UCI ALUMNI EXCEPTIONS

In some cases, SOP staff may coach highly motivated recent UCI alumni IF they meet all eligibility requirements and have not yet enrolled in a graduate program.

SUBMIT A PRE-APPLICATION BY 4/3/17 (NOON)

You must complete and submit a [Pre-Application](#) to begin the [application process](#).

BE A U.S. CITIZEN, NATIONAL OR PERMANENT RESIDENT

BE A JUNIOR OR SENIOR

Submit a [Pre-Application](#) in the spring before your final year on campus. **The full application process lasts six months**, so by the time you complete it you will be in your final year of study at UCI.

You may also submit a Pre-Application in the spring of your final year.

BE GOAL-FOCUSED

The NSF GRFP funds graduate study leading to research-based master's and doctoral degrees in STEM or in STEM education.

BE AVAILABLE IN SUMMER 2017

Candidates must participate in draft writing, SOP advising, and correspondence with recommenders.

BE WILLING TO WORK HARD

You will submit a series of application drafts to SOP staff and receive advising and editing suggestions. You will also share drafts of application essays with the faculty who will write your [letters of recommendation](#).

Be ready to devote a minimum of 10 hours/week to the process; the commitment is equivalent to a 4-unit summer class.

BE DEADLINE-ORIENTED

You are responsible for ensuring SOP staff receives all application components by SOP deadlines.

COMMUNICATE WITH SOP STAFF

Candidates must maintain regular communication with SOP staff and with recommendation letter writers. [Email ALL staff](#) to submit drafts or ask questions.

APPLYING FOR MULTIPLE AWARDS

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Candidates may apply for multiple scholarships simultaneously. However, consider the work required to apply for each, the variances in application components, letters of recommendation and interview scheduling and the time constraints you'll face this summer.

IS THE NSF FELLOWSHIP RIGHT FOR YOU?

SELECTING A PROGRAM AND INSTITUTION

Ask your faculty which institutions/programs are considered competitive.

FACTORS TO WEIGH

Consider field of study, strength of particular programs and institutions, long-term academic focus, and eligibility requirements relating to GPA and degree requirements.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Read the [NSF Program Solicitation](#).

Funds up to three years of graduate study leading to research-based master's and doctoral degrees in STEM or in STEM education. NSF provides three years of support, including an annual \$34,000 stipend, a \$12,000 cost-of-education allowance, and up to a \$5,000 international travel allowance.

2,000 recipients annually, including current graduate students.

Candidates must be U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents by the application deadline.

Prior research experience is **strongly recommended**.

Fellowships are awarded for graduate study that leads to research-based master's and doctoral degree in most STEM fields, including Life Sciences, Geosciences, Computer and Information Science, Engineering, Materials Research, Psychology, Social Sciences, STEM Education and Learning, Chemistry, Mathematical Sciences, and Physics and Astronomy.

Read the [Field of Study](#) eligibility requirements to ensure that your intended graduate program is eligible.

SELECTION CRITERIA

All NSF applications are evaluated through use of the two (2) National Science Board approved merit review criteria: **Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts**.

The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and

The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

Please read [NSF Merit Review Principles and Criteria](#) for more detailed descriptions.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- Electronic Application
- 3 [Letters of recommendation](#) from writers who can provide detailed and specific information about how you demonstrate NSF's Merit Review Criteria and potential for success in graduate school.
- Transcripts from all colleges attended
- 2-page Graduate Research Plan Statement (include Introduction, Background & Significance, Research Plan, Anticipated Results, Discussion, Broader Impacts and References)
 - You should have a strong, clear hypothesis to be tested.
 - **Address the two merit review criteria, Intellectual merit** (the potential for your project to advance the field) and **broader impacts** (the potential for your project to benefit society), as a separate subsection.
 - Often, but not always, students choose to address them near the end, right after outcomes.

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- 3-page Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement (intellectual biography that intertwines your academic pathway, your past research experiences, and broader impacts).
 - Address the two merit review criteria, **intellectual merit** and **broader impacts** (with subheaders), with focus on **why society should invest in educating YOU**.
 - Intellectual merit: What unique qualities, talents, experiences or values do you bring to your field and your future graduate cohort?
 - Broader Impacts: You might plan to present your research, tutor, volunteer, coordinate science fairs, develop partnerships with industry, or otherwise reach the public through your work. If you have done these activities before, **give examples**.

WINNER CHARACTERISTICS

An intellectual spark; commitment to contributing to your field; the promise of intellectual leadership; a well-written application; strong letters of recommendation.

APPLICATION PROCESS TIMELINE

SUBMIT A PRE-APPLICATION BY 4/3/17 (NOON)

You must complete and submit a [Pre-App](#) to begin the campus application process.

ATTEND BIG 10 INFORMATION SESSION

All students who have submitted pre-applications are required to attend one of three information sessions regarding the application process. You will receive a Student Deadline Table and crucial information about the scholarship process. (Students who are abroad or have unavoidable scheduling conflicts will watch a video of the presentation and pass a quiz.)

REVIEW PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

You will select a personalized advising appointment time to discuss your plan for crafting a strong application. If you will be abroad, [email SOP staff](#) in advance to make arrangements for a virtual meeting.

SUBMIT SIGNED LETTER OF INTENT AND CONSENT FORM TO SOP

You will be provided a letter of intent and consent form to return with signature and must also register for an appointment to view past winning scholarship applications in EEE.

READ PAST WINNING APPLICATIONS

On file in the SOP office, past winning applications demonstrate successful methods used by past UCI winners to produce compelling and concise research proposal and personal statement essays. They also showcase successful formatting amid each application's unique space constraints.

You must request an appointment in advance to view these files, as we will select the most closely related applications from our extensive archive and have them ready for you.

MEET WITH YOUR FACULTY

After submitting your Pre-Application, meet in person with at least three faculty members or research mentors.

DISCUSS YOUR PLANS/PROJECT IDEAS

Explain that you'll [furnish him/her with drafts of your application essays](#) as they evolve, and let him/her know when to expect these. Detail your ideas for potential research proposals. Ask for advice in narrowing your topic.

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REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Ask if s/he is willing to write a comprehensive letter of recommendation on your behalf. **Candidates are responsible for ensuring faculty have submitted their letter drafts to NSF Fastlane by the deadlines.**

For more information, please see our handout on [letters of recommendation](#).

SUBMIT FACULTY SUMMER CONTACT INFO TO SOP

In your [email to SOP staff](#), include full names, positions, departments, emails & phone numbers for each faculty letter writer. If you are applying for multiple scholarships, identify to SOP which faculty will write on behalf of which of your application(s).

CONFIRM SCHOLARSHIPS & PROVIDE ROUGH DRAFTS

Confirm scholarships to which applying; list proposed program(s) & institution(s) for each.

[Email essay rough drafts and updated CV](#) to SOP staff, your faculty, and your assigned Writing Specialist.

SUBMIT 1ST APPLICATION DRAFT(S)

To produce a competitive application, email a copy of your Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement and your Graduate Research Plan Statement to [SOP staff](#), your faculty, and your Writing Specialist for review and feedback by the deadline.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

You'll receive feedback from SOP staff, faculty and your Writing Specialist. Incorporate this feedback into your second draft.

SUBMIT 2ND APPLICATION DRAFT(S)

Email your revised Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement and your Graduate Research Plan Statement to [SOP staff](#), your faculty, and your Writing Specialist for review and feedback by the deadline.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

You'll receive feedback from SOP staff, faculty and your Writing Specialist. Incorporate this feedback into your final draft.

SUBMIT FINAL DRAFT(S)

Please note that the NSF GRFP does not require university endorsement and thus does not require a screening committee interview at UCI.

Make sure you know the **deadline for your field**, as they vary.

Submit the following information in the Fastlane application system: Personal Information; Education, Work and Other Experience; electronic transcripts; Proposed Field(s) of Study; Proposed Graduate Study and Graduate School Information; contact information for Letters of Recommendation; Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement; and Graduate Research Plan Statement.

Email a PDF of finalized full application including forms, essays and all supplementary materials [to SOP](#).

ENSURE FACULTY HAVE SUBMITTED LETTERS

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION REVIEWS YOUR APPLICATION

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Applications will be reviewed online by virtual panels of disciplinary and interdisciplinary scientists and engineers and other professional graduate education experts. Applicants are reviewed in panels based on their selection of a primary Field of Study.

You will be notified of the outcomes of your application by early April of the competition year. **Please forward the status update to [SOP staff](#).**