

### ABOUT THE GSEF PROGRAM

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship Program is one of three main components of the Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program to Diversify the Professoriate, funded in 2015 by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship (GSEF) Program consists of both on-campus structured mentoring opportunities for ACM undergraduates with faculty and staff at their home institutions and a paid summer research opportunity following their junior year at one of the Big Ten Academic Alliance member universities or the University of Chicago.

All qualified sophomores from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply, including: African Americans; Hispanics; Native Americans; Alaska Natives; Native Hawaiians; other Pacific Islanders; first-generation college students; and individuals who have followed non-traditional pathways to college due to exceptional talent and motivation in the face of adversity, such as societal, economic, or academic disadvantages.

All GSEF fellows are expected to attend **two Annual Summits** hosted by the ACM. During the summer between sophomore and junior year, students will take part in workshops, presentations, and panels to prepare them for the summer research experience. During their second summit, at the completion of the summer research opportunity, GSEF fellows are expected to present on their projects.

Anticipated Annual Summit dates (all will take place in downtown Chicago):

- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Summit: **August 18-19, 2016 (Confirmed)**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Summit: **August 17-18, 2017 (Confirmed)**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Summit: August 13-14, 2018 (Tentative)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit: TBA, 2019
- 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit: TBA, 2020
- 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit: TBA, 2021

### COMPLETING AND SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Students must meet the following criteria for eligibility to apply for the ACM & Big Ten Academic Alliance Graduate School Exploration Fellowship:

- Be a U.S. Citizen or a permanent resident of the U.S.
- Have sophomore standing (or have completed at least three semesters of undergraduate education, or their equivalent in terms or blocks as determined by their home ACM institution)
- Express a strong interest in pursuing graduate work in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and/or the arts as evidenced by a Personal Statement and a Research Statement

Complete applications will consist of:

- Personal Information
- Academic Information and/or Undergraduate Transcript
- Research Statement
- Personal Statement
- List generated by the Applicant of preferred participating research institution(s) and/or department(s) and/or faculty preferences

- Suggestions from the Applicant of up to 3 ACM Faculty who could serve as a Faculty Mentor
- Faculty Letter(s) of Recommendation (1 required, 2 preferred)

### **GENERATING A LIST OF PREFERRED PARTICIPATING DEPARTMENTS AND/OR INSTITUTIONS**

Pursuing a Graduate School Exploration Fellowship provides an excellent opportunity for you to become familiar with a place where you might like to pursue graduate study. You will have the chance to experience graduate-level work, become acquainted with professors in the departments where you might apply, and learn more about the expectations and rewards of a career in scholarship and teaching.

In the institution selection section of the application, you should note your departments and/or institution(s) of preference. Please do not list universities where no one is conducting research in your desired area. The program staff will not be able to match you with a research mentor, and you are unlikely to be placed there. The Big Ten Academic Alliance and ACM program staff will do everything possible to place you within your preferred department and/or institution, but cannot make any guarantees. All of the participating Big Ten Universities and the University of Chicago have very strong summer programs that can offer you a top quality research experience.

Please make sure you spend some time exploring the graduate offerings at all participating institutions to assist you in deciding which universities to list. Your department and/or institution preferences should be intentional. Your references can serve as a resource to help you shape your research interests and may help you select institutions to target for your summer research opportunity.

Consider the following questions when reviewing graduate school websites and listing your preferences:

- Does the university have faculty with expertise in my chosen field of study?
- What kinds of research are the faculty members conducting in my field?
- Are there doctoral degree or terminal master's degree programs at this institution that I would consider?

### **PREPARING YOUR WRITTEN STATEMENTS**

Applicants will be required to submit two written statements, a personal statement and a statement of research interest. The written statements are a crucial component of the application and the faculty mentor matching process. Please proofread and edit your documents, share drafts with your advisors and professors, and take this opportunity to visit your campus writing centers.

### **YOUR STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTEREST (250 WORDS MAXIMUM)**

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship is meant to provide students (who have an expressed interest in pursuing graduate study, research and/or teaching careers in higher and postsecondary education in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and the arts) with the opportunity to cultivate their passion and enthusiasm for continuing their studies in their chosen discipline.

It is a good idea to consult your advisors or professors for advice as you prepare your research statement. Your professors can help you formulate questions or topics. Your statement should be specific, but not too narrow in focus. If you have had other research or apprenticeship experiences, please include a description of the project(s) and your role in them. You can explore areas of inquiry by visiting the web pages of the

participating summer research institutions, and individual department or faculty pages, to find out more about the kinds of research and projects being done.

In order for the Big Ten Academic Alliance staff to identify faculty mentors for GSEF fellows, they will need to have a good understanding of your research areas of interest. You should explain as clearly as possible the areas that you would like to research and why this research appeals to you.

Some questions you might consider answering in your statement of research interest:

- In which academic discipline or sub-discipline would you like to conduct research?
- Why is this discipline of greatest interest to you?
- What are two or three specific research topics or questions, in this discipline, that are of interest to you?
- Do you have any research experience (in this or any other academic discipline)? If yes, please describe your experience.

### **YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT (250 WORDS MAXIMUM)**

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship is intended to help students from diverse backgrounds learn about and prepare for graduate study in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and the arts. This program is especially for students from groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education including low-income and first-generation students, non-traditional students, and students from non-White racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The personal statement is your opportunity to explain why you want the fellowship. Some questions you might consider answering in your statement:

- What are your academic aspirations?
- What are your career goals?
- In what ways have your experiences and background influenced your goals?
- How will the Graduate School Exploration Fellowship help you accomplish your goals?
- What do you hope or expect to gain from a Graduate School Exploration Fellowship?

### **REQUESTING FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Faculty recommendations provide insight to the search committee about who you are as a student and researcher. Recommendations will carry much more weight if they are from professors or instructors who can address your ability to conduct research. Faculty can write a stronger recommendation for you if they understand your research interests and your motivations for wanting to complete a research experience, so feel free to spend time discussing your ideas and research interests. Below are a few tips to assist you when determining who will be your reference and the steps you should take to assist your references:

### **WHO IS AN APPROPRIATE REFERENCE?**

- Ask for recommendations from someone who knows your academic work and can comment specifically on your performance and/or research capabilities, particularly in the fields of study related to your desired research area.

- Advisors and program directors can comment on your overall achievement. Generally, they cannot evaluate you in your field of study, unless they have also taught you directly. If you have a recommendation from someone like this, you should also have a strong academic reference that can speak to your research potential and knowledge in the field to supplement it.
- You should NOT ask a neighbor, church minister, employer (unless related to your research area), family member, or anyone else you know outside of an academic or research context.

#### HOW TO SECURE A REFERENCE:

- Early in the application process, e-mail or visit your references during office hours, and schedule an appointment to discuss your plans to apply for GSEF and your graduate school goals.
- Give the instructions to your reference of when and to which Point Person their letter should be sent (please see the table of Point Persons and Due Dates above). Plan ahead and be sure to give your references 2-3 weeks' notice, at minimum.
- Provide a list of any relevant experience and areas of interest (and/or your resume if you have one) to your reference. Remind them about a project or paper you completed in their class. What grade did you make? Was there something about that project that stands out?

#### HOME CAMPUS FACULTY MENTOR MATCHING

GSEF fellows will also have a faculty mentor at their home ACM institution. This person may be one of the individuals that you suggest, or may be a different faculty member assigned by the home campus coordinator and/or selection committee. The ACM faculty mentor can offer support and guidance as you navigate summer research offers from participating research institutions, and help you select academic coursework and/or readings relevant to your proposed summer research project topics. When creating a list of potential faculty mentors at your home institution, consider naming individuals with whom you have had the opportunity to develop a degree of familiarity (e.g. have taken a class with them, or have had experiences interacting in academic or co-curricular settings).

#### RECEIVING A SUMMER RESEARCH OFFER

Once you have been chosen as a GSEF fellow, your information will be shared with the Big Ten Academic Alliance and Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) staff. During the fall and early winter months, they will work to match you with one or more potential faculty mentor(s). It is possible that you could receive multiple offers between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>. To allow you time to consider multiple offers, you will have from March 1<sup>st</sup> (the first day that matching can occur) until March 15<sup>th</sup> to decide.

**Note:** Once you have accepted an offer to a participating research university, you cannot accept an offer from a different institution. Acceptance decisions are final.

We encourage you not to hold onto multiple offers while waiting to hear from other institutions. For example, let's say you applied to A, B, C, and D universities. You received an offer from B and C. You know that A is your first choice. Given a choice between B and C, you definitely prefer B. We encourage you to decline the offer from C as soon as possible.

The sooner you make your decision on an offer, the sooner you can begin establishing a relationship with the faculty mentor and graduate students with whom you will work during the summer. We encourage you

to work with your ACM faculty mentor(s) and campus coordinators to review the institutions, to ensure that you select one that best matches your areas of interest.

### QUESTIONS?

Each ACM Campus has a point person and individual deadline for GSEF application submission, which can be found in the table below:

ACM Institution	On-Campus Point Person for GSEF Application Submission
Beloit College	Nicole Truesdell and Yaffa Grossman
Carleton College	Bill North, Joy Kluttz, and Marynel Ryan Van Zee
Coe College	Paula O’Loughlin and Dan Lehn
Colorado College	Emily Chan
Cornell College	Ben Greenstein
Grinnell College	Lakesia Johnson
Knox College	Mariangela Maguire
Lake Forest College	Davis Schneiderman
Lawrence University	Kia Thao
Luther College	Terry Sparkes
Macalester College	Lynn Hertz and Alicia Muñoz
Monmouth College	Hannah Schell
Ripon College	Ed Wingenbach
St. Olaf College	Melissa Melgar

You may also consult our Frequently Asked Questions page or contact Lilly Lavner, the ACM Coordinator and Campus Liaison for the Fellows Program, at [llavner@acm.edu](mailto:llavner@acm.edu).