

Psychological Scientists Receive Prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowships

April 29, 2020

The US National Science Foundation (NSF) has included 231 early-career psychological scientists among the recipients and honorees of its Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), a premier recognition program for undergraduate and graduate students. Announced every April, this highly competitive program provides crucial funding for researchers enrolled in, or about to enter, a research-based graduate program in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, including psychological science. Among the 2,076 researchers offered fellowships, 91 are psychological scientists. Another 140 psychological scientists received honorable mentions.

Since 1952, NSF has funded more than 50,000 Graduate Research Fellowships out of more than 500,000 applicants. Each fellowship includes a generous financial award that can substantially boost graduate student stipends, with funding for three years within a fellowship period of up to five years. The 2020 stipend is \$34,000 annually, plus a \$12,000 education allowance for each fellow's department. Over the three-year period, the total GRFP grant value is \$138,000 per grantee.

Each year, students in psychological science are well represented among the broader set of GRFP recipients.



Tori Peña

APS Member Tori Peña, a graduate student at Stony Brook University, is one 2020 GRFP recipient in psychological science. Her research examines how individuals use hints or cues to help their memory, particularly assessing the influences of social and nonsocial cues to improve recall.

“While ample research shows that cues have a complex relationship with human memory, people continue to believe that cues help more than hurt memory. My proposal provides a precise test of these beliefs,” said Peña. “The extent to which social and nonsocial cues help or hurt memory across the lifespan has wide implications for education and in aging to help improve cognitive performance.”



Brooke Burrows

APS Member Brooke Burrows (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), also a graduate student in psychological science, seeks to investigate how public expressions of suffering influence attitudes toward conflict perpetuation and reconciliation. Her proposed research program will demonstrate how empirical research can contribute to evaluating conflict reconciliation strategies.

“I hope to start a line of research that critically explores how different modes of communication influence individual, group, and societal-level change within both collective action and conflict reconciliation processes,” Burrows said.



Margarett McBride

APS Member Margaret McBride, a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, focuses on measuring the content, frequency, and motivation of fathers’ conversations with their children around community violence issues, and what affect that might have on adolescents’ psychological well-being. “By identifying mechanisms behind the impacts of community violence exposure on well-being in my research, policymakers, practitioners, and interventionists can have a more holistic view of ways to help families, and specifically fathers, cope with community violence,” she said.



Michaela Gusman

The GRFP also offers honorable mentions that do not include NSF funding. Among those recognized in psychological science is APS Member Michaela Gusman, a graduate student at Arizona State University. Her proposed research focuses on examining how the development of sociocultural differences over time moderates neuroendocrine stress pathways in individuals exposed to adverse childhood experiences.

“Recognition from NSF validates my interests in integrating dimensional cultural concepts into the study of longitudinal stress outcomes to later inform culturally responsive, trauma-informed interventions,” Gusman said. “I ultimately plan to use this proposal as the foundation for an NIH F31 predoctoral NRSA grant to further my training in this line of research.”

Advocacy from APS, Congress

APS is a strong advocate for the GRFP and the important function it serves to support psychological scientists and researchers from across the STEM fields. Upon indications in 2019 that NSF would award only 1,600 GRFP fellowships for the 2020 cycle instead of the customary 2,000, APS led a letter, cosigned by numerous other professional membership organizations and universities, encouraging NSF to support a full complement of 2,000 fellowships. The letter highlighted the program’s importance for the research community and showcased its broad support across the scientific community. Congress has also shown strong support for the GRFP in recent appropriations bills. APS is pleased that NSF was able to offer more 2,000 fellowships in 2020 and will continue to advocate for consistent or increasing numbers of GRFP fellowships to support talented early-career researchers.

Researchers pursuing their master’s or PhD with an interest in applying for an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program may wish to visit this page on the APS website: bit.ly/grfp-deadline. You’ll find deadlines, frequently asked questions, eligibility information, and psychological science-specific relevant information. The deadline to apply for the 2021 cycle is October 22, 2020.