Grant Connection

Almost Done!

With just two weeks left in the semester, some of you may be thinking of getting away! This month’s feature is on finding funding for international research. Karen Wachsmuth and Jennifer Teitle offer their advice.

What advice would you give grad students looking for funding for international study?

Start right away! Ask everyone to help you, particularly your advisors! Work on your grant writing skills! Consider how you and your unique background are different from everyone else’s, and capitalize on that. Dare to dream big!

Jennifer Teitle, PhD
Graduate College External Funding Coordinator

Can you describe your role as the graduate college external funding coordinator?

As a funding coordinator, I help graduate students find and secure external (non-UI) support for travel, research, writing, and other needs. I meet with students individually—to focus on searches, writing, or planning—but also work with groups of students and faculty to support the whole grant process. I also serve as a point of communication between funding agencies, the UI’s Division of Sponsored Programs, faculty, and students, in order to help de-mystify the application process for graduate students.

Karen Wachsmuth, PhD
Academic Programs and Student Services Administrator

Can you describe your role as the International Programs Academic Programs and Student Services Administrator?

I help students find funding opportunities for international research, and I support faculty in our international and interdisciplinary academic programs. As a musician who has studied and lived abroad, I enjoy guiding and encouraging students who are motivated to pursue exciting and challenging projects.

How do you think international study can help a student’s development?

Studying or doing research abroad opens the door to a wide range of opportunities, skills, landscapes, and friendships. It becomes possible to see the world through a completely different perspective when you are speaking a language that’s not your own, walking through an unknown city, or experiencing a new culture. Knowing a second language in today’s global marketplace is a wonderful asset, no matter what your field is.

What advice would you give grad students looking for funding for international study?

1. Be flexible. At age 24, I wanted to teach in Australia, and ended up getting an offer to teach in Germany. I went from knowing almost nothing about Bavaria to having it become one of my favorite places! This is not an unusual story; part of the magic of international study is growing from the experiences you don’t expect.

2. Start early. Big opportunities (such as those offered by Fulbright) not only require well developed proposals, but also language study, testing, and sometimes in-country experiences. It also helps to have an early record of success with smaller opportunities such as travel grants, conferences, and/or trips to archives.

3. Find a Mentor (and other readers!). Nobody can replace a strong faculty mentor when you are developing your research project. Work closely with them to develop your project, gently remind them of deadlines, and make sure they have the information they need to support you. You will also want to find “educated generalists” that can read your proposal and help keep it clear and jargon-free. This is the kind of reading I do for students, but you can also work with Liz Constantine through the COE Grant and Research Services Center, Karen Wachsmuth at International Programs, or another reader.
**APAGS Disabilites Grant Program**

APAGS will award a $1000 grant for a project that promotes training and educational experiences in practice or services for persons with disabilities, or the recruitment, retention, and training of individuals with disabilities.

MORE INFO: tinyurl.com/affes92

**APAGS Teaching Excellence in Psychological Science Award**

The purpose of these two $500 awards is to recognize graduate students who use pedagogical strategies to promote science appreciation among undergraduate students.

MORE INFO: tinyurl.com/alsw082

**APAGS Basic Psychological Science Research Grant**

The Basic Psychological Science Research Grant provides support for grad students conducting psychological science research. The intent of this $1000 grant is to fund innovative psychological science research projects.

MORE INFO: tinyurl.com/b7zzvcs

**APAGS-CEMA Grants**

APAGS-CEMA awards up to three $1,000 grants each fall semester for projects that recruit, retain, and/or enhance the training of ethnic minority graduate psychology students.

MORE INFO: tinyurl.com/aq92mpv

**The Scott and Paul Pearsall Scholarship**

The Scott and Paul Pearsall Scholarship supports graduate work that seeks to increase the public’s understanding of the psychological pain and stigma experienced by adults living with physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy.

MORE INFO: tinyurl.com/bswftnj

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Describe your dissertation topic.

My dissertation is an interdisciplinary study examining education as an issue in presidential election campaigns from 1968 through 2008. I am integrating the fields of history and political science to determine how political elites have attempted to frame or "sell" the issue of education to voters, what factors influence whether education "makes the agenda" during a particular presidential election campaign, the influence of campaign discourse on federal educational policy reform, and the role public opinion plays in these interactions.

How did you find out about the Ballard and Seashore Fellowship? What was the application process like for you?

I found out early in my doctoral program about the Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Year Fellowship from an office mate who was a recipient of this fellowship. Later, I learned more details about it from a second office mate who also received this fellowship.

The Ballard and Seashore Fellowship is unique in that students must be nominated by their department. A student cannot pursue this funding opportunity independently. Relying on faculty to play such a major role in securing funding for me was humbling and I deeply appreciate the effort my advisor, Dr. Katrina Sanders, went to on my behalf. As always, I found preparing the materials I was required to submit as an applicant to be a meaningful opportunity for me to think about my study in new ways and refine the structure my study. Applying for funding sources involves more than jumping through hoops. It is an important process that can yield a stronger, more focused study.

How has the fellowship helped you on your dissertation?

My dissertation required travel to eleven archives in nine states. This extensive travel prohibited me from holding an assistantship that would require me to be on campus on a regular basis. The Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Year Fellowship provided me income while affording me the freedom to complete research trips. This fellowship also assisted my efforts in securing travel research grants from non-university funding sources because it demonstrated to organizations unfamiliar with me that my department and university had confidence in my research and writing abilities.

What advice would you give students searching for funding?

My advice to students searching for funding is to create strong networks with other students because that is the best way to learn about funding opportunities and what other students have done to be successful in securing that funding. For example, not only did I learn about the Ballard and Seashore Fellowship from other students, I asked those students to share their successful applications with me.

Even more importantly, students should realize that the best way to secure funding is to do high quality work in their courses beginning in the first semester of their doctoral program. The learning we do through our coursework is what enables us to identify a meaningful line of inquiry that funding sources will find worthwhile. It is in the classroom that we develop relationships with faculty whose letters of support for funding applications can be the deciding factor in a review committee’s decision. Finally, it is through our written coursework that we learn how to articulate the significance of our work, which may be the most important element in a successful research grant application.