



NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program

INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR GRFP FELLOWS

Georgia Institute of Technology
Office of Graduate Education

Camile E. Matthews
Graduate Fellowships Manager
fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

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1. Welcome and Purpose

Internships provide NSF GRFP Fellows with opportunities to develop technical expertise, gain professional experience, and explore career pathways across industry, government, nonprofit, and academic sectors. Because fellowship funding is governed by NSF requirements and Georgia Tech administrative processes, participation in internships must be carefully planned.

This guide is designed to help Fellows understand how internships may affect fellowship status, stipend eligibility, enrollment requirements, reporting obligations, and institutional processes. It should be used alongside the NSF GRFP Administrative Guide, Research.gov resources, and Georgia Tech fellowship guidance.

Important Reminder

When in doubt, contact the Graduate Fellowships Manager **before** accepting any internship offer. Early coordination helps prevent funding disruptions and compliance issues.

fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

2. NSF GRFP at Georgia Tech — Overview

At Georgia Tech, NSF GRFP recipients are supported through a coordinated administrative model involving the Office of Graduate Education (OGE), Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid (OSFA), and the Bursar's Office to ensure proper disbursement of funds and compliance with NSF guidelines.

Because NSF GRFP funding is administered differently from assistantships (e.g., GRA/GTA), fellows must actively manage how their funding interacts with enrollment, employment, and institutional systems. Unlike assistantships, NSF GRFP funding is subject to federal restrictions on concurrent funding and employment.

Fellowship Award Structure

Component	Amount	Details
Stipend	\$37,000/year	Paid directly to the student via OSFA
Cost of Education (COE)	\$16,000/year	Provided to institution to support tuition and fees
Duration	3 funded years	Usable over a 5-year fellowship period
Flexibility	On Tenure / On Reserve	Fellows must strategically select usage of funded years

Core Fellow Responsibilities

- Maintain eligibility and academic progress
- Understand and actively manage fellowship status selections
- Maintain required full-time enrollment each term
- Complete annual reporting requirements (AAR) in Research.gov
- Understand how internships and employment affect stipend eligibility
- Review NSF and Georgia Tech guidance regularly

Publication Acknowledgment

All publications, presentations, and creative works related to activities conducted during the Fellowship must include the following acknowledgment statement:

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship under Grant No. DGE-2545526. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

3. Understanding Your Fellowship Status

Each year, you must declare how you will use your fellowship. This choice is made in Research.gov and directly affects your stipend, enrollment requirements, and internship eligibility.

ON TENURE	ON RESERVE	FORFEIT
Actively receiving NSF stipend. NSF funding restrictions apply.	NSF stipend not active. Other funding sources may be used. Years preserved for future.	Specific months when NSF stipend cannot be received. Forfeited months are LOST not recoverable.

On Tenure

- You receive your NSF stipend (\$37,000/year)
- NSF covers your Cost of Education (COE) allocation
- You must comply with NSF funding restrictions
- Full-time enrollment is required (12 total credit hours)
- Minimum graded-hour requirements apply (9 hours fall/spring; 6 hours summer)

On Reserve

- NSF stipend support is not active during that fellowship year
- Other institutional funding (GRA/GTA, department fellowships) may be used
- Fellowship years are preserved for future use
- Enrollment requirements still apply per department/program

Forfeit

- Used for specific months when NSF stipend support cannot be received
- Most commonly required when accepting federally funded internships while On Tenure
- Forfeited stipend months are permanently lost and cannot be recovered
- Forfeit does not change the annual fellowship status selection
- Status must be updated in Research.gov before the internship begins

4. Federal vs. Non-Federal Internships

One of the most critical questions in internship planning is determining who is funding the internship. The funding source directly affects your stipend eligibility and required compliance steps.

✔ NON FEDERAL INTERNSHIP	⚠ FEDERALLY FUNDED INTERNSHIP
<p>Funded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private companies (Google, SpaceX, etc.) • Universities • State government agencies • Local government agencies <p>Generally allowed while On Tenure. Stipend forfeiture NOT required.</p>	<p>Paid by a federal agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASA, NIH, NSF • DOE, DoD • Any U.S. federal agency or federally funded program <p>Stipend forfeiture REQUIRED while On Tenure. Forfeited months are permanently lost.</p>

Decision Tip: When in Doubt, Treat it as Federal

If the compensation ultimately comes from a federal source — even indirectly — treat it as federal funding and check with the Graduate Fellowships Manager before accepting the role.

5. Decision Guide: What Is Allowed?

Use the quick reference below to determine your internship options based on your current fellowship status and the funding source.

Scenario	Allowed?	Action Required
On Tenure + Non-Federal Internship	✔ Generally allowed	No forfeiture needed. Maintain full-time enrollment.
On Tenure + Federal Internship	⚠ Allowed with forfeit	Must forfeit NSF stipend for months of federal pay. Update Research.gov BEFORE starting.
On Reserve + Non-Federal Internship	✔ Generally allowed	No forfeiture required. Follow GT registration steps.
On Reserve + Federal Internship	✔ Generally allowed	No NSF forfeiture required. Follow GT registration steps.

6. Internships While on Tenure

If Your Internship Is Non-Federal

You may generally remain On Tenure if:

- The internship supports your professional development
- You remain enrolled full-time (12 total credit hours)
- You maintain satisfactory academic progress
- You complete required Georgia Tech internship registration steps
- You submit your offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

Result: Allowed. You may typically keep your NSF stipend. No forfeiture is required.

If Your Internship Is Federally Funded

If the internship pay comes from a federal agency or federally funded program, you cannot receive both:

- NSF GRFP stipend, AND
- Federal internship salary or stipend

at the same time.

Result: You must forfeit your NSF stipend for the applicable months. Those forfeited months are permanently lost and non-recoverable. See Section 8 for forfeiture steps.

7. Internships While on Reserve

If you are On Reserve, you are not receiving NSF stipend support for that fellowship year.

- You may generally pursue a federal internship
- You may generally pursue a non-federal internship
- No NSF forfeiture action is typically required
- Regular Georgia Tech internship registration steps still apply
- Review department expectations regarding enrollment and academic progress

Result: Internships are generally allowed while On Reserve without additional NSF stipend conflict.

8. Forfeiting Your Stipend — Step-by-Step

If you are On Tenure and accepting a federally funded internship, you must update your status in Research.gov before the internship begins.

Critical: Act Before the Internship Starts

Do not wait until after the internship begins to update your fellowship status. Late updates may create compliance issues. Process the forfeit request in Research.gov **BEFORE** your start date.

Research.gov Forfeit Steps

1. **Log in to Research.gov** at research.gov
2. Select Request Fellowship Status Change
3. Choose the appropriate fellowship year
4. Select Forfeit
5. Enter the start date tied to the internship period
6. Before the end of the forfeit period, return to Research.gov and change your status back to Tenure (if applicable)

Important Forfeiture Notes

- Forfeiture applies only to the affected months
- Forfeited stipend months are permanently lost — they cannot be recovered
- Forfeit does not change your annual fellowship status selection (On Tenure remains your annual designation)
- Contact the Fellowships Manager if you are uncertain about which months to forfeit
- Contact fellowships@grad.gatech.edu before and after completing this process

9. Enrollment Requirements During an Internship

To receive NSF GRFP stipend payments during an internship, you must remain enrolled full-time and meet graded-hour requirements. **Internship registration alone does not satisfy enrollment requirements.**

Internship Type	Required Enrollment	Stipend Forfeiture
Non-Federal Internship	12 total hours per term (audit + graded/pass-fail combined) Minimum graded hours: Fall/Spring: 9 graded/pass-fail hours Summer: 6 graded/pass-fail hours <i>Thesis/research hours (7000/9000) count as graded. INTN course documents the internship.</i>	Not required
Federally Funded Internship	12 total hours (INTN audit course documents internship as full-time enrollment for institutional purposes)	Required while on Tenure. <i>Forfeited months are lost and non-recoverable.</i>

Enrollment Strategy Tips

- **Thesis/research hours (7000 or 9000 level)** count as graded hours and are the most common way fellows on internship maintain graded enrollment without taking additional coursework.
- **INTN audit course** documents the internship but does not generate tuition charges on its own. Regular tuition may still apply if you take additional coursework.
- **12-hour total threshold** can be met by combining thesis/research-graded hours with the INTN audit course.
- **Summer terms** have a lower minimum graded-hour threshold (6 hours vs. 9 in fall/spring).

10. Georgia Tech Registration Process

Before beginning any internship, complete the following required steps with Georgia Tech.

Required Documentation for the Fellowships Manager

Send the following to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu:

- **Offer Letter** from your employer, including internship start and end dates, total hours per week, and work site address
- **Letter of Support from Your Advisor** on Georgia Tech letterhead confirming support for the internship

Submit Documentation Early

Send your documentation to the Fellowships Manager as soon as you receive your offer letter. Processing and review take time, and you should not begin the internship until all steps are completed.

Recommended Pre-Internship Process

7. **Receive internship offer.**
8. **Discuss the opportunity with your faculty advisor** and obtain their support.
9. **Determine internship funding source** (federal vs. non-federal).
10. **If federal and On Tenure, begin forfeit process in Research.gov** before the start date.
11. **Develop an enrollment plan** with your advisor and graduate coordinator.
12. **Submit offer letter and advisor support letter** to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu.
13. **Register through the Graduate Internship Program** via the Career Center (see Section 11).
14. **Confirm all stipend and enrollment arrangements** are in place before the internship begins.

11. Career Center Registration — Step-by-Step

All Georgia Tech graduate students participating in internships should register through the Graduate Internship Program via CareerBuzz. This process maintains your student status, ensures proper enrollment, and supports visa compliance for international students.

Step 1: Complete the Experiential Learning Application

15. Log in to CareerBuzz
16. From the homepage, select “Resources” (left-side menu)
17. Under Gain Access to Co-Op & Internships, click “Set Applicant Type”
18. Submit your application

Approval Timeline: Applications are typically reviewed within 2 business days.

Step 2: Submit Your Placement Information

19. Log in to CareerBuzz
20. Select “Experiential Learning” from the left-side menu
21. Click “Add New”
22. Watch the required Experiential Learning video
23. Complete and submit the Placement Form

Required Documentation

- Offer Letter from employer (including internship start/end dates, total hours/week, exact work site address)
- Advisor Approval Form (submitted via DocuSign)

International Students (CPT/OPT)

F-1 visa holders must obtain CPT or OPT authorization before beginning an internship. Contact the Office of International Education (ISSS) early in the process, as authorization processing takes time.

- Office of International Education (OIE/ISSS): iss@gatech.edu
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT): required for most internships during enrollment
- Optional Practical Training (OPT): for post-graduation or qualifying internships
- iStart processing times vary — check current timelines on the OIE website

Questions? Contact the Graduate Internship Program Manager at grad-internship@gatech.edu.

12. Annual Reporting (AAR)

NSF requires all GRFP Fellows to submit an Annual Activities Report (AAR) in Research.gov. Internship activities must be documented in this report.

What to Include

Internship experiences can be reported under:

- Research activities
- Professional development
- Broader impacts
- Technical skills development
- Workforce preparation

Advisor Certification

The AAR requires advisor certification. Coordinate with your faculty advisor early to ensure they are prepared to certify your report and confirm your IDP has been updated.

Recordkeeping Tip

Maintain accurate records throughout your internship (project descriptions, skills gained, professional connections, broader impact contributions). This greatly simplifies AAR completion at reporting time.

13. NSF INTERN Supplemental Opportunity

NSF INTERN is a supplemental funding opportunity designed to provide GRFP Fellows with professional experiences beyond the traditional academic environment. It is separate from standard external internships.

Potential Benefits

- Funding to support a professional experience at a non-academic host organization
- Exposure to new sectors and applied research environments
- Workforce development and expanded professional networks
- Support for broader impacts activities

How to Apply

Georgia Tech has prepared specific guidance for fellows interested in NSF INTERN supplemental funding. Review the guide available on the OGE website:

[Georgia Tech: Preparing to Apply for NSF INTERN Supplemental Funding](#)

Contact the Fellowships Manager for current eligibility requirements and application procedures, as NSF INTERN requirements may be updated periodically.

14. Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid These Common Errors

- ✗ Accepting a federal internship while On Tenure without requesting forfeiture in Research.gov
- ✗ Forgetting to switch your fellowship status back to Tenure after a forfeit period ends
- ✗ Assuming all internships are treated the same regardless of funding source
- ✗ Assuming internship registration (INTN) alone satisfies all enrollment requirements
- ✗ Dropping below 12 total credit hours or failing to meet minimum graded-hour requirements
- ✗ Failing to register through the Career Center before the internship begins
- ✗ Failing to submit the required offer letter and advisor support letter to the Fellowships Manager
- ✗ Waiting until the last minute to check whether a role is federal or non-federal
- ✗ Forgetting to document internship activities in the Annual Activities Report (AAR)

15. Pre-Internship Checklist

Use this checklist before accepting and beginning any internship as an NSF GRFP Fellow.

Before Accepting the Internship

<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine whether the internship is federally or non-federally funded
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm your current fellowship status in Research.gov (On Tenure or On Reserve)
<input type="checkbox"/>	If On Tenure and federal internship: determine which months require forfeiture
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact fellowships@grad.gatech.edu if you have any uncertainty about funding source or stipend implications
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss the internship with your faculty advisor and obtain their support

After Accepting the Internship

<input type="checkbox"/>	If required: submit forfeit request in Research.gov BEFORE the internship start date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create an enrollment plan (thesis hours + INTN course to meet 12-hour total requirement)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm you will meet minimum graded-hour requirements (9 fall/spring; 6 summer)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the Experiential Learning Application in CareerBuzz
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit your placement information and required documentation in CareerBuzz
<input type="checkbox"/>	If international student (F-1): contact ISSS for CPT/OPT authorization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm all stipend arrangements and enrollment are in place before starting

After the Internship

<input type="checkbox"/>	If applicable: update Research.gov status back to On Tenure after forfeit period ends
<input type="checkbox"/>	Document internship experience in your Annual Activities Report (AAR)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Update your IDP to reflect new skills, professional development, and career goals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm advisor has certified your AAR

16. Key Contacts & Resources

Contacts

Office / Resource	Email / Link	Use For
Graduate Fellowships Manager	fellowships@grad.gatech.edu	Fellowship status, stipend, compliance, forfeit requests, offer letter review
Graduate Internship Program Manager	grad-internship@gatech.edu	Career Buzz registration, INTN course, placement forms, advisor approval forms
Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid	finaid@gatech.edu	Stipend disbursement, direct deposit, student account processing
Office of International Education	isss@gatech.edu	CPT/OPT authorization for international students
NSF Research.gov	nsfgrfp.org	Fellowship status changes (On Tenure, On Reserve, Forfeit), Annual Activities Reports

Georgia Tech Resources

- Georgia Tech NSF GRFP Webpage: grad.gatech.edu/nsf-grfp
- [Georgia Tech NSF GRFP Onboarding Quick Reference](#)
- [Georgia Tech Guidance for NSF GRFP Fellows \(2026\)](#)
- [Preparing to Apply for NSF INTERN Supplemental Funding](#)
- Graduate Internship Program (Career Center): career.gatech.edu

NSF Resources

- [NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program \(GRFP\) Website](#)
- [Graduate Research Fellowship Program \(GRFP\) Administrative Guide \(NSF 25-033\)](#)
- [GRFP Module \(Research.gov\)](#)
- [FAQ: Graduate Research Fellowship Program \(GRFP\)](#)
- [NSF GRFP Continuing Fellow Webinar \(2026\)](#)

Your Primary Contact

Graduate Fellowships Manager

Camile E. Matthews

fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

When in doubt — contact the Fellowships Manager before accepting any internship offer.