



NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program

INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR GRFP FELLOWS

Georgia Institute of Technology
Office of Graduate Education

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2026 Edition — Revised



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What Changed in This Revision

This edition clarifies how enrollment affects stipend eligibility during an internship. Four points are new or corrected:

- Career Center registration is not required if you maintain at least 12 credit-bearing hours.
- Enrollment is an independent stipend-eligibility trigger, separate from internship funding source.
- INTN is an audit course and does not count toward the 12 credit-bearing hours.
- Internships located abroad must be registered through the Office of International Education via ATLAS.

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 enrollment each term — and understand how enrollment affects stipend eligibility
- 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:

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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 the 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
- You must meet the enrollment requirements described in Section 9 to remain stipend-eligible

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 periods when NSF stipend support cannot be received
- Required when accepting a federally funded internship while On Tenure (months of federal pay)
- Also required when you will not maintain the minimum credit-bearing enrollment for a semester (full semester)
- 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
Funded by: • Private companies (Google, SpaceX, etc.) • Universities • State government agencies • Local government agencies Generally allowed while On Tenure. Stipend forfeiture NOT required on funding-source grounds.	Paid by a federal agency: • NASA, NIH, NSF • DOE, DOD • Any U.S. federal agency or federally funded program Stipend forfeiture REQUIRED while On Tenure for the months of federal pay. Forfeited months are permanently lost.

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.

Second Trigger: Enrollment

Funding source is not the only thing that affects your stipend. If you are not registered in the minimum required credit-bearing hours for a semester, you are not eligible to receive your NSF GRFP stipend for that semester — whether the internship is federal or non-federal. These two triggers operate independently.

5. Decision Guide: What Is Allowed?

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

Scenario	Allowed?	Action Required
On Tenure + Non-Federal + full credit-bearing enrollment	Allowed	No forfeiture. Maintain at least 12 credit-bearing hours. No Career Center registration required.
On Tenure + Non-Federal + below minimum enrollment	Allowed with semester forfeit	Not eligible for the stipend that semester. Forfeit the semester in Research.gov before the start date. Register through the Career Center for INTN.
On Tenure + Federal + full credit-bearing enrollment	Allowed with monthly forfeit	Forfeit the NSF stipend for the months of federal pay. Update Research.gov BEFORE starting.
On Tenure + Federal + below minimum enrollment	Allowed with semester forfeit	Not eligible for the stipend that semester. Forfeit the semester in Research.gov before the start date. Register through the Career Center for INTN.
On Reserve + Any Internship	Allowed	No NSF forfeiture required. Department enrollment expectations still apply. Follow GT registration steps.

If Both Triggers Apply

If you are On Tenure, accepting a federally funded internship, and will also fall below the minimum credit-bearing enrollment, the semester forfeiture governs. You are not eligible for the stipend for that full semester.

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 in at least 12 credit-bearing hours (graded or pass/fail)
- You maintain satisfactory academic progress
- You complete the required Georgia Tech steps in Section 10
- You submit your offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

Result: Allowed. You may keep your NSF stipend **provided you maintain the minimum required credit-bearing hours for the semester**. If you drop below that threshold, you are not eligible for the stipend for that semester, even though the internship is non-federal.

If Your Internship Is Federally Funded

If the internship pay comes from a federal agency or federally funded program, you cannot receive both the NSF GRFP stipend and a 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

You must update your status in Research.gov before the internship begins if either of the following applies:

- **You are On Tenure and accepting a federally funded internship.** Forfeit the months of federal pay.
- **You will not be registered in the minimum required credit-bearing hours for the semester.** Forfeit the full semester. This applies to federal and non-federal internships alike.

If both apply, the semester forfeiture governs.

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 (months of federal pay, or the full semester if the forfeiture is enrollment-based)
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 for federal pay applies only to the affected months
- Forfeiture for insufficient enrollment applies to the full semester
- 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 Graduate 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

Your enrollment configuration determines whether you can receive your NSF GRFP stipend during an internship. There are two paths. Internship registration alone does not satisfy enrollment requirements.

Path 1 — Maintain 12 Credit-Bearing Hours (stipend continues)

Enrollment	At least 12 credit-bearing hours (graded or pass/fail). Thesis/research hours (7000/9000) count.
Career Center registration	Not required
INTN course	Not used
Stipend	Eligible, unless the internship is federally funded — in which case forfeit the months of federal pay (see Section 8).

Path 2 — Register the Internship (stipend forfeited for the semester)

Enrollment	12 total hours: minimum 9 graded/pass-fail hours (fall/spring) or 6 (summer), with INTN audit hours filling the remainder.
Career Center registration	Required — enrolls you in the INTN course
INTN course	Audit hours only; documents the internship and maintains full-time status
Stipend	Not eligible for that semester. Forfeit in Research.gov before the internship begins. Forfeited months are permanently lost.

Enrollment Strategy Tips

- Thesis/research hours (7000 or 9000 level) are the most common way fellows reach 12 credit-bearing hours without adding coursework — this is the path that preserves your stipend.
- INTN is an audit course. It does not count toward the 12 credit-bearing hours that determine stipend eligibility; it only fills the gap to 12 total hours for full-time status.
- Because INTN carries no credit-bearing hours, choosing to register your internship necessarily puts you below the 12-hour credit-bearing threshold and forfeits the semester's stipend.
- Summer has a lower graded minimum under Path 2 (6 hours vs. 9 in fall/spring).
- Decide your path before the term begins. Switching after the registration deadline is generally not possible.

10. Georgia Tech Registration Process

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

Required Documentation for the Graduate 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 Graduate 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

1. Receive internship offer.
2. Discuss the opportunity with your faculty advisor and obtain their support.
3. Determine internship funding source (federal vs. non-federal).
4. Determine your enrollment path (see Section 9): 12 credit-bearing hours, or registered internship with INTN.
5. If federal and On Tenure, begin the forfeit process in Research.gov before the start date.
6. If you will be below 12 credit-bearing hours, begin the semester forfeit process in Research.gov before the start date.
7. Develop an enrollment plan with your advisor and graduate coordinator.
8. Submit offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu.
9. If you will not be enrolled in at least 12 credit-bearing hours, register through the Graduate Internship Program via the Career Center (see Section 11).
10. If the internship is located outside the United States, register through the Office of International Education via ATLAS (see Section 12).
11. Confirm all stipend and enrollment arrangements are in place before the internship begins.

11. Career Center Registration — Step-by-Step

Georgia Tech graduate students who will not maintain at least 12 credit-bearing hours (graded or pass/fail) during an internship must register through the Graduate Internship Program via CareerBuzz. This process enrolls you in the appropriate INTN course, maintains your student status, and supports visa compliance for international students.

If You Will Maintain 12 Credit-Bearing Hours

Career Center registration is not required. You remain enrolled full-time through your credit-bearing hours and continue to receive your NSF GRFP stipend, subject to the federal funding rules in Section 4.

Step 1: Complete the Experiential Learning Application

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

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

Step 2: Submit Your Placement Information

- Log in to CareerBuzz
- Select “Experiential Learning” from the left-side menu
- Click “Add New”
- Watch the required Experiential Learning video
- 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 **regardless of enrollment level**. This requirement is independent of whether Career Center registration is needed. 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. Internships Located Abroad

If your internship is located outside the United States, you must register it through the Office of International Education (OIE) using the ATLAS system. This is a separate requirement from Career Center registration and applies regardless of which enrollment path you choose in Section 9.

Required: OIE Registration via ATLAS

Register your internship abroad through the Office of International Education before you depart:

[Register your internship abroad in ATLAS](#)

What OIE Registration Does

- Documents your international placement and confirms you remain a registered Georgia Tech student during your term abroad
- Issues the registration permit associated with your placement
- Enrolls you in the state-mandated travel and health insurance required of all Georgia students traveling abroad (a per-term fee applies)
- Connects you with an advisor who can address country-specific requirements

What OIE Registration Does Not Change

- Your stipend eligibility. The two enrollment paths in Section 9 still govern. OIE registration does not substitute for meeting the 12 credit-bearing hour threshold.
- Your funding-source obligations. A federally funded internship abroad still requires forfeiture of the months of federal pay while On Tenure (see Sections 4 and 8).
- Your Graduate Fellowships Manager documentation. Still submit your offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu.
- Career Center registration, if you will be below 12 credit-bearing hours. Both registrations may be required.

International Students on F-1 Status

If you hold F-1 status and your internship is abroad, contact ISSS before you make travel arrangements. Time outside the United States can affect your visa status, re-entry, and CPT/OPT eligibility. This is separate from and in addition to OIE education abroad registration.

Plan Early

Registration, insurance enrollment, and any country-specific requirements take time to process. Begin the OIE registration as soon as you accept an international offer, and coordinate the timing with your Research.gov forfeiture steps if either forfeiture trigger applies.

Questions: education.abroad@oie.gatech.edu

13. 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.

14. 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: [Preparing to Apply for NSF INTERN Supplemental Funding](#).

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

15. 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 INTN audit hours count toward the 12 credit-bearing hours required for stipend eligibility
- ✗ Assuming a non-federal internship protects your stipend even if you drop below the minimum credit-bearing hours
- ✗ Dropping below 12 credit-bearing hours mid-semester and losing the full semester's stipend
- ✗ Falling below 12 credit-bearing hours without registering through the Career Center before the internship begins
- ✗ Failing to submit the required offer letter and advisor support letter to the Graduate Fellowships Manager
- ✗ Failing to register an internship located abroad through the Office of International Education via ATLAS
- ✗ Assuming Career Center registration satisfies the OIE requirement for an internship abroad, or vice versa
- ✗ 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)

16. Pre-Internship Checklist

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

Before Accepting the Internship

- ☐ Confirm you can maintain the minimum required credit-bearing hours for every semester the internship spans
- ☐ Determine whether the internship is federally or non-federally funded
- ☐ Determine whether the internship is located inside or outside the United States
- ☐ Confirm your current fellowship status in Research.gov (On Tenure or On Reserve)
- ☐ If On Tenure and federal internship: determine which months require forfeiture
- ☐ Contact fellowships@grad.gatech.edu if you have any uncertainty about funding source or stipend implications
- ☐ Discuss the internship with your faculty advisor and obtain their support

After Accepting the Internship

- ☐ Choose your enrollment path: 12 credit-bearing hours (stipend continues) or registered internship with INTN (semester stipend forfeited)
- ☐ If using Path 2: confirm you will meet the graded-hour minimum (9 fall/spring; 6 summer)
- ☐ If required: submit the forfeit request in Research.gov BEFORE the internship start date
- ☐ Submit offer letter and advisor support letter to fellowships@grad.gatech.edu
- ☐ If below 12 credit-bearing hours: complete the Experiential Learning Application in CareerBuzz

- ☐ If below 12 credit-bearing hours: submit placement information and required documentation in CareerBuzz
- ☐ If the internship is located abroad: register through the Office of International Education via ATLAS before departure
- ☐ If the internship is located abroad: confirm travel/health insurance enrollment is complete
- ☐ If international student (F-1): contact ISSS for CPT/OPT authorization
- ☐ Confirm all stipend arrangements and enrollment are in place before starting

After the Internship

- ☐ If applicable: update Research.gov status back to On Tenure after the forfeit period ends
- ☐ Document internship experience in your Annual Activities Report (AAR)
- ☐ Update your IDP to reflect new skills, professional development, and career goals
- ☐ Confirm advisor has certified your AAR

17. Key Contacts

Contacts

Office / Resource	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	CareerBuzz 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 iss@gatech.edu	CPT/OPT authorization for international students
Office of International Education — Education Abroad education.abroad@oie.gatech.edu	ATLAS registration for internships located outside the United States, travel/health insurance
NSF Research.gov nsfgrfp.org / grfp@nsf.gov	Fellowship status changes (On Tenure, On Reserve, Forfeit), Annual Activities Reports