

GRA Student Scholars Program

ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-24

Through the GRA Student Scholars program, GRA offers undergraduate and graduate students in Georgia the opportunity to work in a research lab alongside a top scientist.

Research has shown that problem-solving teams are strengthened by the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives, including teams engaged in scientific exploration.

But some groups are underrepresented in STEMM field research. For example:

- Black, LatinX, and Hispanic people account for 28 percent of all jobs but only 17.9 percent of all STEMM jobs (Pew Research Center, 2021).
- The 2019 American Community Survey revealed that women comprised just 27 percent of STEM employees, compared to 48 percent of all workers.

Beyond inequity, these underrepresented groups are needed to fill **current and anticipated gaps in employment**. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is expected to increase by 10.5 percent by 2030; and in medical occupations, by 16 percent.

In college, Black, Hispanic, and White students all declare a STEMM major at roughly the same rate. However, 58 percent of White students actually earn a STEMM baccalaureate degree, compared to 43 percent of LatinX and Hispanic students and 34 percent of Black students (Riegler-Crumb, 2019).

The GRA Student Scholars program contributes to a solution by **encouraging and facilitating opportunities** for these underrepresented students to experience actual university research.

Origins and Evolution

In 2019, the GRA Academy of Scientists initiated an effort to create research opportunities for students underrepresented in STEMM fields. This led to the formation of GRA Student Scholars.

A pilot cohort in 2021 allowed 10 Georgia students to work in the lab of a GRA Eminent Scholar or GRA Distinguished Investigator. In the summer 2022, the program was expanded to 15 students from across the state. To recruit the second cohort, GRA partnered with The Peach State LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation), a UGA-led coalition working to increase the participation of students underrepresented in STEMM fields.

Summer 2023 brought the third cohort of 15 GRA Student Scholars, as well as the expansion of the program to fall and spring semesters in the 2023-24 academic year.

Program Description

GRA invites the labs of GRA Eminent Scholars, GRA Distinguished Investigators and GRA Senior Fellows (as well as a partner organization, The Shepherd Center) to host one or more students for a fall, spring or summer semester assignment in the lab.

Each host lab manages the work of its students (see Experience Criteria below). GRA provides each participating institution with funds to pay each student a stipend of \$8,000 for the semester. The stipend funds are to be used for direct compensation and support, including travel and supplies for the student.

Participating scientists are responsible for recruiting, screening and placing students in their labs. They may recruit from any college or university, including their own; and scientists may engage the Peach State LSAMP to help recruit students from colleges across Georgia. Each university arranges for / manages housing if and where needed.

GRA helps facilitate communication among the cohort of Student Scholars and collects stories of their experiences.

Experience Criteria

Following are five criteria for participation in the GRA Student Scholars program:

1. Participating students must be from groups considered underrepresented in STEMM field work. GRA uses the [NIH definition of underrepresented populations](#). To summarize the NIH definition: Eligible students include women of all races; representatives of Black, LatinX, Native American and other ethnicities; and students coming from rural Georgia and low socioeconomic backgrounds.
2. Each GRA Student Scholar must work between 25 and 40 hours a week in the host Scholar's lab for the duration of the semester **without enrolling** in courses that semester. In fall and spring semesters, students have the opportunity to work up to 20 hours in the lab if enrolled in one or more courses.
3. Participating labs must engage students in meaningful work in the lab – i.e., participation in funded research projects and inclusion in meetings of/correspondence to the full lab.
4. All labs are encouraged to provide additional opportunities for each Student Scholar to gain relevant experience. Some examples: attending conferences and seminars, contributing to journal articles, creating research posters and other materials and making presentations.
5. A participating GRA Student Scholar must be new to the scientist's lab. Participating scientists are encouraged to provide experiences to students who have not worked in any university research lab setting (outside of a college course), though this absence of experience is not required.

Reporting and Evaluation

GRA has two requirements for participating students: 1) Submit a mid-semester update about the experience in written, graphic, audio or video format; and 2) complete a brief online survey at the end of the semester. Both are used to improve the program and provide funding partners with assessments of the experience.

[Submit a student applicant for a position in your lab here >](#)

Space is limited – so please submit your student nomination(s) as soon as possible.

- The nomination period for Fall Semester 2023 closes at **midnight, Friday, September 1, 2023**
- The nomination period for Spring Semester 2024 closes at **midnight, Friday, January 12, 2024**

Questions? Contact Amanda Schroeder at GRA, aschroeder@gra.org.