

## Graduate School Exploration Fellowship (GSEF) Application Guide

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### ABOUT THE GSEF PROGRAM

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship (GSEF) Program is one of three main components of the Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program to Diversify the Professoriate, funded in 2015 by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

GSEF consists of both on-campus structured mentoring opportunities for ACM undergraduates with faculty and staff at their home institutions and a paid summer research opportunity following their junior year at one of the Big Ten Academic Alliance member universities or the University of Chicago.

All qualified sophomores from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply, including: African Americans; Hispanics; Native Americans; Alaska Natives; Native Hawaiians; other Pacific Islanders; first-generation college students; and individuals who have followed non-traditional pathways to college due to exceptional talent and motivation in the face of adversity, such as societal, economic, or academic disadvantages.

All GSEF fellows are expected to attend **two Annual Summits** hosted by the ACM. During the summer between sophomore and junior year, students will take part in workshops, presentations, and panels to prepare them for the summer research experience. During their second summit, at the completion of the summer research opportunity, GSEF fellows are expected to present on their projects.

Anticipated Annual Summit dates (all will take place in downtown Chicago):

**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit: Cohort 5 – August 9-13, 2020**

**6<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit: August 2021**

### COMPLETING AND SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION\*

Students must meet the following criteria for eligibility to apply for the ACM & Big Ten Academic Alliance Graduate School Exploration Fellowship:

- Be a U.S. Citizen, permanent resident of the U.S., or non-U.S. citizen with DACA.
- Have sophomore standing (or have completed at least three semesters of undergraduate education, or their equivalent in terms or blocks as determined by their home ACM institution).
- Express a strong interest in pursuing graduate work in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and/or the arts as evidenced by a Personal Statement and a Research Statement.
- Demonstrate excellent academic achievement with a cumulative GPA of 3.0\* or higher (4.0 Scale).

NOTE: If you do not meet this minimum requirement, but have a GPA that is close, please reach out to your campus coordinator to discuss your candidacy.

**\*Please note that your individual college may have different requirements for their selection process.**

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GSEF fellows selected from each ACM College will be required to submit all of the following materials to ACM as part of the research experience matching process by July 1, 2020:

Personal Information

Academic Information and/or Undergraduate Transcript (including final spring term grades)

Personal Statement

Research Statement

Résumé or C.V.

Suggestions from the Applicant of up to 3 ACM Faculty who could serve as a Faculty Mentor

Faculty Letter(s) of Recommendation (1 required, 2 preferred)

### PREPARING YOUR WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Applicants will be required to submit two written statements: a personal statement and an academic statement of research interest. **The written statements are a crucial component of the application and the faculty mentor matching process.** Please proofread and edit your documents. Visit the writing center on your campus if one is available to you. Share drafts with your advisors and/or professors.

### YOUR ACADEMIC STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTEREST (500 – 750 WORDS)

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship is meant to provide students (who have an expressed interest in pursuing graduate study, research and/or teaching careers postsecondary education in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and the arts) with experiences and opportunities that cultivate their passion and enthusiasm for pursuing graduate studies and potential careers in academia.

It is a good idea to consult your advisors or professors for advice as you prepare your research statement. Your professors can help you formulate questions or topics. **Your statement should be specific, but not too narrow in focus.** If you have had other research or apprenticeship experiences, please include a description of the project(s) and your role in them. You can explore areas of inquiry by visiting the web pages of some of the participating summer research institutions, and individual department or faculty pages, to find out more about the kinds of research and projects being done in those areas of study.

In order for Big Ten Academic Alliance staff to identify faculty and graduate student mentors for GSEF fellows, they will need to have a good understanding of your research areas of interest. You should explain as clearly as possible the broad topics that you would like to research and why this research appeals to you.

Some questions you might consider answering in your statement of research interest:

- In which academic discipline or sub-discipline would you like to conduct research?
- Why is this discipline of greatest interest to you?
- What are two specific research topics or questions, in this discipline, that are of interest to you?
- Do you have any research experience (in this or any other academic discipline)? If yes, please describe your experience.

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### **YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT (500 – 750 WORDS)**

The Graduate School Exploration Fellowship is intended to help students from diverse backgrounds learn about and prepare for graduate study in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and the arts. This program is especially for students from groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including low-income and first-generation students, non-traditional students, and students from non-White racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The personal statement is your opportunity to explain why you want the fellowship. Some questions you might consider answering in your statement:

- What are your academic aspirations?
- What are your graduate school goals?
- What are your career goals?
- In what ways have your experiences and background influenced your goals?
- How will the Graduate School Exploration Fellowship help you accomplish your goals?
- What do you hope or expect to gain from a Graduate School Exploration Fellowship?
- How will you contribute to the diversity of the community of GSEF fellows?

### **REQUESTING FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Faculty recommendations provide insight to the search committee about who you are as a student and researcher. Recommendations will carry much more weight if they are from professors or instructors who can address your ability to conduct research. Faculty can write a stronger recommendation for you if they understand your research interests and your motivations for wanting to complete a research experience, so feel free to spend time discussing your ideas and research interests. Below are a few tips to assist you when determining who will be your reference and the steps you should take to assist your references:

### **WHO IS AN APPROPRIATE REFERENCE?**

- Ask for recommendations from someone who knows your academic work and can comment specifically on your performance and/or research capabilities, particularly in the fields of study related to your desired research area.
- Advisors and program directors can comment on your overall achievement. Generally, they cannot evaluate you in your field of study, unless they have also taught you directly. If you have a recommendation from someone like this, you should also have a strong academic reference that can speak to your research potential and knowledge in the field to supplement it.
- You should NOT ask a neighbor, church minister, employer (unless related to your research area), family member, or anyone else you know outside of an academic or research context to be a reference for this program.

### **HOW TO SECURE A REFERENCE:**

- Early in the application process, e-mail or visit your references during office hours, and schedule an appointment to discuss your plans to apply for GSEF and your graduate school goals.
- Give the instructions to your reference of when and to which Point Person their letter should be sent (please see the table of Point Persons below). Plan ahead and be sure to give your references 2-3 weeks' notice, at minimum.

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- Provide a list of any relevant experience and areas of interest (and/or your resume if you have one) to your reference. Remind them about a project or paper you completed in their class. What grade did you receive? Was there something about that project that stands out?

### HOME CAMPUS FACULTY MENTOR MATCHING

GSEF fellows will also have a faculty mentor at their home ACM institution. This person may be one of the individuals that you suggest or may be a different faculty member assigned by the home campus coordinator and/or selection committee. The ACM faculty mentor can offer support and guidance as you navigate summer research offers from participating research institutions, and help you select academic coursework and/or readings relevant to your proposed summer research project topics. When creating a list of potential faculty mentors at your home institution, consider naming individuals with whom you have had the opportunity to develop a degree of familiarity (e.g. have taken a class with them, or have had experiences interacting in academic or co-curricular settings).

### SUMMER RESEARCH MENTOR MATCHING\*

Once you have been chosen as a GSEF fellow, you are encouraged to review and expand your writing statements. Final drafts of these statements (which you should work with your home campus mentors, career development offices, and/or writing centers to reach between 500-750 words) and the rest of your academic information will be shared with the Big Ten Academic Alliance staff.

During the fall and winter months, you may or may not hear from SROP coordinators or prospective faculty mentors as they review your materials and stated research interests. Each university maintains its own placement process. Some universities make placements based solely on your application materials (and rely heavily on your personal and academic statements). Some universities prefer to reach out to students prior to finalizing a placement to determine whether a faculty and student would be a good match for each other. **If contacted by a university, please do respond. Please do NOT contact potential faculty mentors with whom you are interested in working with directly.** Instead, please contact the Big Ten Academic Alliance at the faculty mentor's institution to express interest in a potential match.

By the end of March, you will be matched with one or more faculty and/or graduate student mentor(s) at a participating research institution. Please note that although you are welcome to share your preferences for specific Big Ten universities and faculty mentors with the ACM Directory of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives, there is no guarantee that you will be matched at your preferred institution and/or with your preferred faculty member.

When the matches have been completed, the ACM Directory of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives will inform each GSEF coordinator and GSEF fellow of the final summer placements and will follow up to ensure that you have been put in touch with the hosting research institution's coordinator. Once you have received your matches, please make sure you reach out and communicate promptly and proactively with your summer hosts, to begin building a strong working relationship prior to your arrival.

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**\*Please Note:** Due to the research program dates of the participating Big Ten Academic Alliance Universities and the University of Chicago, students who plan to participate in off-campus study/study abroad opportunities may only do so in programs that end by June 1, 2020. Students who participate in programs that end later in the spring/summer cannot be matched due to scheduling conflicts.

### QUESTIONS?

Each ACM Campus has a point person, which can be found in the table below:

ACM Institution	On-Campus Point Person for GSEF Application Submission
Beloit College	Atiera Coleman
Carleton College	Marynel Ryan Van Zee
Coe College	Katie Rodgers
Colorado College	Lisa Schwartz
Cornell College	Laura Farmer
Grinnell College	Al Lacson
Knox College	Sara Kitsch
Lake Forest College	Daw-Nay Evans
Lawrence University	Peter Blitstein
Luther College	Elizabeth Steding
Macalester College	Arthur Mitchell & Matt Katsaros
Monmouth College	Kasia Bartoszynska
Ripon College	Rebecca Matzke
St. Olaf College	Melissa Melgar

You may also consult our Frequently Asked Questions page or contact Allen Linton II, Director of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives, at [alinton@acm.edu](mailto:alinton@acm.edu).

Contact information for the Big Ten Academic Alliance GSEF Coordinators can be found at [www.btaa.org/GSEFcontacts](http://www.btaa.org/GSEFcontacts)

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