

# Finding Funding Cheat Sheet

## For Graduate Students

Last updated 10/14/2013

### I need funding to support my graduate research. Where do I start?

There are many types of awards that can support your research as a graduate student. These include grants, training and assistanceships, fellowships, scholarships, travel funds, awards, internships, and others. VCU has assembled a single portal giving you access to search tools, search tips, and suggested funding programs to help get you started. Go to the following **Research Guides**:

- VCU Libraries Grants & Funding for Graduate Students: <http://guides.library.vcu.edu/graduate-grants>
- VCU Libraries Grants & Funding in the Health Sciences: <http://guides.library.vcu.edu/health-sciences-grants>

### Is there an easy way to search for a broad range of grants, fellowships and awards?

There are a number of databases that allow you to search for graduate funding opportunities, all of which can be accessed from the above **Research Guides**.

Database	Description	User Tips
VCU Subscriptions		
<b>COS Pivot</b>	Pivot is a database that allows users to search for funding opportunities and instantly view collaborators or mentors from inside or outside VCU. As long as you are a current VCU student with an @vcu.edu email address, you can access and use Pivot from anywhere. However, you should <b>sign up for a Pivot account</b> in order to maximize the database's capabilities. <a href="http://library.vcu.edu/search/1145">http://library.vcu.edu/search/1145</a>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. On the Pivot homepage, click on <b>Advanced Search</b>.</li><li>2. Make sure you are not working in the <b>Exclude these</b> section.</li><li>3. Under <b>Activity Location</b>, select <i>United States, Virginia, Unrestricted, and Unspecified</i>.</li><li>4. Under <b>Citizenship and Residency</b> select your country/countries of citizenship or residency, <i>Unrestricted, and Unspecified</i>.</li><li>5. <b>Funding type</b> is the activity for which you want the award. Select <i>Dissertation or thesis, Training, scholarship or fellowship, Research</i>, and (if appropriate) <i>Travel. Artistic pursuit</i> may also apply in some disciplines.</li><li>6. Under <b>Keywords</b>, select your field(s). It is better to be broad rather than narrow.</li><li>7. Under <b>Requirements</b>, select <i>Graduate Student</i>. If appropriate, select <i>Minority, Persons with disabilities, and/or Women</i>.</li></ol> <p>You can also try the <b>Curated List of Pre-doctoral Funding Opportunities</b>. These are hand selected grants, fellowships, and awards that may be of interest to VCU graduate students: <a href="http://pivot.cos.com/curated_opps/268">http://pivot.cos.com/curated_opps/268</a></p>
Federal Funding Opportunities Databases ( <i>selected</i> )		
<b>Grants.gov</b>	Searchable database for all federal funding opportunities. <a href="http://www.grants.gov">www.grants.gov</a>	Grants.gov can be difficult to search if you don't already know what you are looking for. However, it's often required for applying for federal grants. We recommend that you sign up for alerts to make navigating the database easier.
<b>The National Academies Fellowship Office</b>	The Fellowships Office administers pre-doctoral, post-doctoral, and senior fellowship awards on behalf of government and private sponsors. The office also posts an extensive list of fellowships, scholarships and grants from other organizations in a range of disciplines. <a href="http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/Fellowships/PGA_046301">http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/Fellowships/PGA_046301</a>	

Database	Description	User Tips
<b>National Institutes of Health</b>	NIH has two funding mechanisms to support pre-doctoral health sciences research: the F30 fellowship for pre-doctoral training which leads to the combined M.D./Ph.D. degrees; and the F31 fellowship, which provides pre-doctoral individuals with supervised research training in specified health and health-related areas leading toward the research degree (e.g., Ph.D.). <a href="http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html">http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html</a>	To find all current solicitations for which pre-doctoral students are eligible:  1. Click on Advanced Search. 2. Under Activity Code, select one for which you are eligible.  In addition, go to <a href="http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm">http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm</a> to get an idea of what has already been funded in your area.
<b>National Science Foundation</b>	NSF has several opportunities for graduate student funding, such as the Graduate Research Fellowship Program. <a href="http://nsf.gov/funding/">http://nsf.gov/funding/</a>	A list of all NSF funding that graduate students may be interested in is compiled at <a href="http://nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?fund_type=2">http://nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?fund_type=2</a> for easy browsing.
Databases and Lists Hosted by Other Institutions ( <i>selected</i> )		
<b>GRAPES</b>	UCLA's GRAPES database catalogs extramural funding opportunities of interest to prospective and current graduate students, students working on a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, and postdoctoral scholars. It contains information on over 500 private and publicly funded awards, fellowships, and internships. <a href="http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm">http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm</a>	
<b>Funding Opportunities</b>	Hosted by Duke University, this database allows you to search by keyword, agency, discipline, award type, and for targeted opportunities. <a href="https://researchfunding.duke.edu/search.asp">https://researchfunding.duke.edu/search.asp</a>	
<b>Fellowships Database</b>	The Graduate School at Cornell University has developed this database to allow you to search by field, keyword, and deadline. <a href="http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/fellowships">http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/fellowships</a>	
<b>Michigan State University Libraries</b>	Comprehensive listing includes information about grants for graduate students. You can browse opportunities by academic level, population group, or subject. <a href="http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3subject.htm">http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3subject.htm</a>	Be aware that some opportunities listed here are for Michigan residents or MSU students only.

## I still seem to be stuck and not able to find any good results. Do you have any advice?

- We use terminology and keywords that are particular to the field but may not be used by most funders. If you're searching for funding in fluid physics, you're missing funders who state that they make awards to graduate students who excel in science and engineering. To get around this, **start broad and then narrow**. This may feel uncomfortable at first, but will result in more options to choose from.
- **Look for patterns of keywords.** The databases and funders may be using slightly different terminology than what you are used to. Read carefully to see if there are terms that seem to reappear as good (or better) descriptors of your work. For example, can you use "minority health" in place of "health disparities"? How about "social change" rather than "social justice"?
- **Review the literature** to get a variety of keywords to search. Since authors also acknowledge their grants in the publications, this will give you an idea of where funding may be trending.
- **Consider characteristics of you.** There is funding for women, underrepresented groups, alumni from particular schools, etc.
- **Talk to your mentors, program directors, and colleagues.** They may know about targeted funding opportunities within the field that never make their way onto these lists and databases.
- **Start early!** It can take six months or more to hear a decision from a funder. But the good news is a lot of programs are on an annual cycle so you know that they are coming up well in advance.