Guidance for Those Applying for NSF Research Fellowships

1. You can find information about the program at http://www.nsfgrfp.org.

2. Georgia Institute of Technology is not listed as the university name in the dropdown. You need to select "Georgia Tech Research Corporation." The state of Georgia has the Georgia Tech contract with NSF in this name.

3. Three letters of reference are required. Referees may benefit from reading what NSF wants in a reference letter, which is outlined at https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingrecommendationlettersonline/node/156.

4. There is a PowerPoint presentation on the NSF website that has helpful information for applicants, which is available at http://www.nsfgrfp.org/additional_resources/promotional_materials.

5. Eligibility is dependent upon the following:

   a. Must be U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
   b. May apply senior year, first year of graduate school, or first semester of second year of graduate school.
   c. May not already hold a master's degree. Exception to this rule is someone with a BS/MS. This person may apply the semester after receiving the combined degree but may not have additional degrees or graduate work.

6. Two essays are required. There is a three-page personal/previous research essay and a two-page proposed research essay. Both must address **intellectual merit** (what you are contributing to knowledge) and **broader impact** (how your work has or will benefit society).

7. You can apply even when you are not sure about your research topic — NSF allows you to make changes if you receive an award, and about 90 percent of applicants change their topic. The important thing for NSF is to see if you can write a strong research proposal by stating the objective and the methodology. Be clear about intellectual merit (how it will contribute to knowledge) and about broader impacts (how your research will benefit society).

8. Read the NSF GRF FAQs at http://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicant_resources/frequently_asked_questions.

9. Get feedback on your essays from the writing specialist in your department (if there is one), from the Fellowships Office (Kathryn.meehan@gatech.edu), from your advisor, and from the

Communications Lab (http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu/).
Start essays long before they are due.

10. NSF provides feedback. You will have this information if you try a second time.

11. A broader impact valued by NSF is work done in STEM areas with schools. Try, if possible, to include experience with schools as part of your background in the personal part of the essay.

12. Make the personal essay section interesting. Avoid beginning 'when I was a child.' Tell a story that is yours, and let reviewers know who you are.

13. When discussing previous research, include what the objective of the research was, what your role was, how the research will contribute to knowledge, and how it will have impact on society. Mention whether you worked alone or as part of a team.

14. NSF GRF applications do NOT include GRE scores.

15. Consider applying for an NDSEG as well. You cannot hold both awards, but you may double your chances of receiving an award. Visit https://ndseg.asee.org/ for more. If your research is computational, also look also at the DOE Computational Science Fellowship. Visit https://www.krellinst.org/csgf/ for more.

16. The journey of applying for an NSF GRF may not be quite as good as winning the award, but it is a special experience that is valuable. The essays serve as an excellent foundation for other applications.