Focus III: Applying for Fellowships

Introduction.

• Overview of funding picture for graduate students in the department. Starting with this school year (2009-2010), all incoming mathematics graduate students, (both Math and AIM PhD) are given support as Graduate Student Instructors (GSI). The funding package is comprehensive. Some students will receive limited-term fellowships from the department (usually sponsored by Rackham) for one or more semesters. (The department routinely nominates students for these, and occasionally we get them.)

• Very few students are supported by external fellowships. It is probably incorrect to assume that this number is small because external fellowships are hard to get; more likely is that very few people bother to apply for them.

• Value of external support:
  – Financial independence.
  – Opportunity to concentrate wholly on research and coursework (no teaching or grading).
  – Research independence (not employment under a research assistantship).
  – Prestige. Put it on your CV and it will help you get a job.

• Personal experience: NSF Graduate Fellowship (1990-1994).

• Many fellowships are available for students in their first few semesters of graduate school. You should apply now! The worst that can happen is that you don’t get funded externally.

Funding sources.

• Rackham’s website: www.rackham.umich.edu and go to “Funding Resources”. Read about “Tips for Fellowships”. Specifically look at the Rackham-sponsored web resources linked on that page.

• “SPIN” (Sponsored Program Information Network) searching: this database is accessible at the address www.infoed.org/new_spin/spin.asp. First read the information at www.drda.umich.edu/funding/spin.html. You will most likely need to access the database from a UM computer.
  1. Under “Applicant Types” choose “Graduate Student”.
  2. Under “Award Types” choose “Dissertation”, “Fellowship”, and “Writing Projects”.
  3. Type anything you want under “Synopsis Contains”.

• Graduate Fellowships granted by the National Science Foundation. Special guest presentation by Chris Fink (physics).
  – The NSF “Fastlane” website: accessible through www.nsf.gov. Follow link for “Graduate Research Fellowship Program”. To apply you need a password that you can get by clicking the appropriate link “Register Here” on that page.
  – From the Program Announcement: eligibility requirements, application procedures, value of fellowship, deadlines, etc. Generally these applications are due in the beginning of November. I believe most first and second year AIM students should be eligible to apply for these fellowships, and the application is not too difficult.

• Graduate Fellowships granted by NIH (National Institutes of Health).
• Graduate Fellowships in computational science granted by the Krell Institute (Department of Energy). Special guest presentation by Dave Starinshak. The relevant website is www2.krellinst.org/csgf. This application became available in October. You can click on a link to sign up for email notification of the posting of the online application.

• On-campus fellowship opportunities. The CRASH Research Group in AOSS. The relevant website is aoss-research.engin.umich.edu/crash. More information from Dave Starinshak.