

2016 MBB Graduate Student Awards

The main goal of the Mind/Brain/Behavior Interfaculty Initiative (MBB) is to foster a better understanding of the mind, the brain, and behavior by creating and promoting interdisciplinary experiences, education, and research.

We are pleased to announce the availability of the 2016 MBB Graduate Student Awards, intended to help graduate students better understand MBB-related issues by engaging in interdisciplinary experiences. Whether you are currently involved in interdisciplinary work or are planning to start a new interdisciplinary endeavor, all Harvard graduate students in MBB-related fields are encouraged to apply for funding. The maximum award amount is \$10,000, but most awards for research will not exceed \$5,000.

This year's application deadlines are November 6, 2015, February 19, 2016, and May 20, 2016.

Funds can be specified for use any time before June 30, 2016 for the spring awards, between May 1, 2016 and August 31, 2016 for the summer awards, and between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017 for the fall awards. Students are welcome to apply multiple times; although, in the interest of fairness, large awards will likely only be given once per individual.

The types of expenses and experiences we hope to fund include (but are not limited to):

- **Cross-disciplinary experiences:** living, research, and/or travel expenses to study or conduct research in a department or lab different from the applicant's current home department. A grant can be used to replace a teaching fellowship for a semester, permitting a student to spend time in another department rather than teaching in the home department. For example, a philosophy graduate student might spend a semester doing research in a psychology or neuroscience lab, or a neuroscientist might initiate a project in the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology. The "host" department need not be at Harvard. A \$10,000 grant will only be considered for a semester-long or summer research experience.
- **Course or conference in another field:** registration, travel, tuition, or other relevant funding for a conference or course in an MBB field other than the applicant's primary field. For example, a history of science student might attend a summer course in linguistics, a psychologist could attend a philosophy conference, or a neuroscientist might participate in a cognitive neuroscience workshop. The conference or course itself can also be interdisciplinary - for example, a linguist might attend a conference on computational linguistics. Typically such grants will be for less than \$1,000.
- **Interdisciplinary projects:** travel, research, or equipment for ongoing projects in interdisciplinary MBB topics. For example, funds could support a project on the psychology of music or applying new computational methods to semantics. Typically such grants will be for less than \$5,000.
- **Interdisciplinary research teams:** initiating, continuing, or completing collaborative research projects with students in other MBB fields. For example, an evolutionary biology student and an economics student might collaborate on a research project about competition and resource allocation that applies models from economics to an evolutionary problem; a philosopher and a linguist might empirically test a theory from the philosophy of language; psychology and education students might apply insights from cognitive psychology to develop and test an educational intervention. Typically such grants will be for less than \$5,000.

- **Research-directed reading groups:** initiating reading groups with members from multiple departments, with the aim of producing interdisciplinary research ideas, review papers, or book reviews. A grant might cover reading material (e.g. a book per reading group member) and refreshments at meetings. Typically such grants will be for less than \$500.

What counts as interdisciplinary? As fields change, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify what counts as interdisciplinary. MBB encourages applicants who are combining elements of their own field with methods or insights from another field, especially if those methods and insights have not already been appropriated by the student's original field. For example, applying fMRI to the study of emotion involves a method from cognitive neuroscience and a topic from social psychology, but this combination is already accepted within mainstream psychology. The two or more fields being integrated need not correspond to Harvard departments with MBB representatives. For example, a grant could fund a project on the psychology of film. Two good questions to ask when considering the suitability of a project are "Is this a research-oriented project with elements from more than one discipline?" (the answer should be yes) and "Would this typically be funded within my own department?" (the answer should be no). If you're not sure, apply anyway!

Each applicant will be required to request a specific award amount and to submit an itemized account of how the award will be used. MBB cannot guarantee that all successful applicants will receive the full award amount.

Award recipients will be expected to submit a brief written report on their interdisciplinary experience, the fruits of their work, and the insights gained. Students might also be asked to present at an MBB event involving faculty and fellow graduate students.

Section B - Supporting Materials

All applicants are required to submit a CV, a graduate transcript, and a budget. Please complete a budget using the Excel spreadsheet template (from the MBB website) and submit it with this application. The budget should reflect, as accurately as possible, the projected expenses associated with your project. Depending on the project for which you are seeking funding, you will need to satisfy a subset of the following requirements (refer to previous question for guidelines on what will be required).

A. Please attach to this application form a conference or course brochure that contains all the relevant information or attach documentation that provides the course/conference title or theme, description, sponsoring institution or organization, instructors/leaders, participants, location, dates, duration, and cost. In addition, provide a description of your aims in attending the course/conference, and in particular how it might inform your research.

B. Please attach to this application form a description of the books or other reading material for the reading group, along with a paragraph describing the interdisciplinary aims of the reading group. You should also mention the names and home departments of students who will participate, and scheduled dates for group meetings. Note that a single reading group grant will not exceed \$50 per person for reading materials, nor \$15 per person for food and refreshments.

C. Project/Experience Summary (No more than 300 words): Using non-technical terms, please describe the set of questions that your project/experience aims to address and the methods you will use to answer them. Please describe how this work fits within the mandates of MBB, focusing especially on its interdisciplinary nature. Attach the document to this form.

D. Project Description/Technical Summary (No more than 3 single-spaced pages): Please provide us with as much detail as possible, including a succinct description of the problem or issue you are addressing, the background theory/literature, aims and relevant hypotheses, and methods. If necessary, investigators may append an appendix with figures illustrating apparatus or preliminary results; these should not include extensive text. Attach the document to this form.

E. Please have your advisor send a letter of recommendation to the MBB office, or include with your application the letter in a sealed envelope with a signature across the flap. The letter should emphasize how the project is interdisciplinary.

F. Please list faculty member(s) whose lab/department you are proposing to visit, and attach a brief description of the training you are seeking in the host lab or department.

G. Please include a letter of endorsement from the faculty member whose laboratory you propose to visit. This letter should describe both the facilities that will be available to the student and the opportunities for interaction across labs or programs.

Application Packet Checklist

- ___ Application form
- ___ Copy of your curriculum vitae
- ___ Copy of your graduate transcript
- ___ Budget
- ___ Applicable supporting documents

You can ask advisors or recommenders to email their letters directly to Kim Maguschak (see email address below).

Please email a pdf version of this application to kimberly_maguschak@harvard.edu.