

In the Spotlight

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Ngo Receives NSF Fellowship

Liza Ngo, a second-year graduate student at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy, has been awarded a prestigious National Science Foundation Scholarship Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF) for 2015. Her selection was based on her demonstrated potential to contribute to strengthening the vitality of the United States science and engineering enterprise. NSF Graduate Fellowships are among the most competitive graduate research fellowships, and are often awarded to individuals who go on to become life-long leaders that contribute significantly to both scientific innovation and teaching.



NSF awarded the GRF to 2,000 individuals from among 16,500 applicants in 2015. Among the 2,000 awardees, 1,053 are women, 494 are from underrepresented minority groups, 43 are persons with disabilities, and 31 are veterans.

The stipend for 2015-16 is \$34,000 per twelve-month fellowship year, and another \$12,000 to cover educational expenses. The GRFP Fellowship period is five years; financial support is provided for a maximum of three years.

Ngo is enrolled in the graduate program in the Department of Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences under Associate Professor George Zheng. Her work involves developing novel chemical assays to detect the activity of the post-translational modification enzymes, histone acetyltransferases (HATs). When these enzymes are deregulated, or overexpressed, they can promote cancers, cardiovascular diseases and neurological disorders. Ngo's goal is to develop and apply new assay strategies to screen large compound libraries to discover potential therapeutic leads that target HATs.

The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program supports students in technology, engineering and mathematics who are pursuing research-based graduate degrees at accredited U.S. institutions. Students can apply in their senior year of college or during the first two years of graduate study. The prize is highly coveted by graduate students because it gives students the flexibility to focus solely on research, while many of their fellow students are trying to balance teaching loads with research responsibilities.