

Proposal for Expanded Funding for Student Research at the Botanical Society of America.  
July 12, 2018

The Botanical Society of America (BSA) has a strong record of supporting undergraduate and graduate student research through a competitive grants program. Since 2004, the BSA program has supported 203 student projects totaling more than \$101,500 in awards. In 2016, the BSA granted 20 awards of \$500 for a total of \$10,000.

Developing the next generation of botanists is part of the core mission of the BSA, and as such, supporting the nascent research trajectories of BSA student members is a primary goal of the society. This important role came into focus recently when the National Science Foundation announced the cancellation of their Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (DDIG) Program.

Is the BSA doing enough to support graduate student research? To address this question, we conducted a survey of BSA members in April 2018. More than 300 members responded, of which 57% were professional members, 30% students, 6% postdocs, and the remaining in other categories. Results are available [here](#), and are summarized below.

- **BSA overwhelmingly supports an expansion of funding for graduate student research.** 98% of respondents favored an expanded role for BSA in supporting graduate student research. Respondents agreed that research proposals could request funds for fieldwork, experimental/greenhouse work, sequencing, or some combination of these.
- **Master's thesis research preferred award size: \$1,000** (favored by 47% of respondents) or \$2,000 awards (favored by 30% of respondents).
- **Dissertation research preferred award size: \$2,000** (favored by 38% of respondents) or \$5,000 awards (favored by 37% of respondents).
- **Total number of awards preferred: 20** (favored by 33% of respondents) or 10 (favored by 25% of respondents).
- **Total funding amount: \$25,000** (favored by 41% of respondents) or \$50,000 (favored by 32% of respondents).
- **Prefer fewer, larger awards:** BSA membership favors having fewer, larger awards (63%), rather than more awards for modest funding amounts (35%).
- **Willing to pay for it:** 92% of respondents indicated they would be willing to contribute \$30 in increased membership fees if they knew that the funds would go directly toward an increase in the amounts of research funding offered to graduate students.
- **91 respondents offered comments on how best to go about this.** Sentiments included gratitude for expanded funding, suggestions for cooperative funding with other societies, making sure recipients could include students from developing countries, maintenance/expansion of undergraduate funding levels, willingness to contribute directly to a fund for graduate student research (in addition to a dues increase), structured awards at different amounts, fear that only students from "golden crown of botany research labs" would be funded, need to engage corporate sponsorships to

support awards, perhaps request donations for named fellowships, arrange post-docs to review awards.

Based on these data, we propose an expansion of the BSA Graduate Student Research Awards to help fill the gap in research funding for graduate student research, and to strengthen the society's commitment to growing the next generation of botanists.

We propose increasing the amount of funding for graduate student awards to \$25,000. Funds available for graduate student research would come from the following sources:

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Bill Dahl Graduate Student Research Award Fund in the investment portfolio at Morgan Stanley (~\$440,000)	\$11,000 (2.5% draw)	\$22,000 (5% draw)
Targeted fundraising drive (?) or more?	\$0	\$3,000
		\$25,000

These funds could be distributed in the following way:

**Dissertation research awards:** 10 awards of \$2,000 each: \$20,000

**Master's research awards:** 5 awards of \$1,000 each: \$5,000

**Undergraduate research awards (no change):** 2 awards \$500 each