As a graduate student, there are times when you might feel strapped for cash with all of the conferences to attend, research projects to conduct, and, of course, tuition to pay. All of these expenses can seem especially overwhelming in the absence of a full-time job. However, there are options at the national, state, and university levels to help defray student expenses.

National

Financial Aid: One important source of general funding not to be overlooked is financial aid provided by the United States Department of Education. To be considered for this type of loan, students complete an application known as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA; www.fafsa.ed.gov). This general form serves as an application for grants, loans, and work-study. Also, most universities use this form as the basis for awarding non-federal educational funding.

Scholarships and Awards: Many scholarships available at the national level are for women with children who are returning to the workforce, and ethnic minorities (including American Indians, African Americans, Latinos, and international students). Guidelines for conducting scholarship searches as well as web sites that provide free searches are also available. These lists and links are found on the NASP website at www.nasponline.org/students/scholarship.aspx. NASP also offers a minority scholarship program for specialist-level school psychology students; details can be found at www.nasponline.org/about_NASP/minority.aspx. There are also a number of books that include scholarship application information, including Peterson’s Scholarships, Grants, and Prizes; Kaplan Scholarships; and Cash for Grad School: The Ultimate Guide to Grad School Scholarships. All of these are available at major bookstores and at www.amazon.com.

There are awards presented to students through national organizations, such as NASP and APA. Some examples of awards from these associations are:

- APA/APAGS Distinguished Graduate Student in Professional Psychology
- NASP Graduate Student Research Award
- NASP’s Paul H. Henkin Trust Award (for education and research)

Other awards are available and can be found at the organization’s respective website by searching for “awards”. Often a short essay describing your intent for a professional goal in psychology is all that is required to apply. While these awards typically come with small stipends (often $1000), they are reputable and noteworthy to future employers.
Grants: Grants are available to graduate students conducting research that will promote the field of study in which they are working. At the national level, grants are available through NASP and APA, as well as many other organizations within the student’s respective field of study. Grant programs are offered for students studying in a variety of education related fields, including research grants, projects, programs endorsing educational training and practice, and the promotion of minority students in education. A comprehensive list of grants can be found on individual organization websites or by conducting a search using an internet search engine such as Google.

Fellowships: Graduate fellowships are available nationally for students who are members of various organizations (such as fraternities and sororities), are writing dissertations, pursuing doctoral degrees, or interested in conducting research.

State

Scholarships and Awards: If your state has a professional association for school psychologists, you can contact them for a list of scholarships available within the state. They may also offer awards in the form of conference/travel grants, scholarships, or small awards to be used in developing a program at your internship site.

University

Assistantships: Research, graduate, and teaching assistantships are the most common sources of funding for graduate students. Research assistantships may include conducting literature reviews, data collection, and data analysis. Teaching assistantships allow graduate students to teach undergraduate courses and assist with graduate course preparation under the supervision of a professor. Graduate assistantships may provide support in a range of duties from administration to working with college students. In return for these services, students are provided with a stipend based on the number of hours assigned to the assistantship position, as well as partial or full tuition remission. At some public universities, graduate assistants are eligible to receive health care benefits at greatly reduced rates and are eligible for in-state tuition, even if they are out-of-state residents.

Scholarships and Awards: At the university level, scholarships are available university-wide and/or through departments. The department of graduate studies might offer opportunities to apply for scholarships or award scholarships to undergraduates planning on attending graduate school, as well as to students enrolled in graduate degree or certification programs in Education who meet the application’s requirements. Your alma mater’s Alumni Association may also grant scholarships. Finally, similar to the national scholarships and fellowships, there may be funds for minority students, as well as students participating in certain activities and organizations at the university level. University awards can also come from funds given in memory of individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field. Your university may also have research competitions with cash awards.
Students are often able to obtain conference travel funds through their university. Universities may provide financial support for students who have conducted research and are presenting their findings at a conference or who are members of committees that meet during a conference (e.g., NASP Student Leaders Annual Meeting at the NASP Convention). Travel funds are commonly granted through a graduate program, department or college.

Grants: Universities often award departmental grants for research within specific areas of study. Many universities also provide research grants to graduate students. Graduate students should also consider joining research teams with grant funding to help defray research expenses.

A Final Note on Funding

The best piece of advice to consider when searching for funding is to look within your area of study at the collegiate, state, and national levels. Don’t forget to check with local organizations as well, since less-publicized scholarships, grants, and awards may be available. If you are attending school out of your home state, look into opportunities within both states, as there may be statewide funding for residents, regardless of where you attend college. Just remember: a few hours spent searching for funding may pay off in a major way during the course of your graduate education!

Helpful Web Resources

APAGS Scholarships and Awards:
www.apa.org/apags/members/schawrdsintro.html
Department of Education General Student Aid Information: Why fill out a FAFSA?
www.fafsa.ed.gov
NASP Student Scholarships and Fellowships:
www.nasponline.org/students/scholarship.aspx
NASP-ERT Minority Scholarship Program:
www.nasponline.org/about_NASP/minority.aspx

This fact sheet was developed by Gina Raineri a school psychology student at The University of Alabama and 2005-06 NASP Student Leader. She prepared this information in conjunction with the 2005-06 NASP Student Leaders and Faculty Sponsors, as well as the NASP Student Leader Resource Committee. Special thanks to Allison Nebbergall for her editorial assistance in updating this fact sheet.