

How to Advocate for ... Doctoral Research Funding

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It is important to note that my answers are geared towards doctoral students. EdS/PsyS students should also be encouraged to advocate for funding of research or program ideas. For more information related to funding broadly, please refer to the [Funding Opportunities for Graduate Students fact sheet](#) on the NASP website.

Describe a time when you had to advocate for funding your doctoral research.

I first searched for relevant grants at the university and national levels, using search terms related to my research interests (i.e., autism). To try to fund my research, I applied for the dissertation grant sponsored by the Society for the Study of School Psychology (SSSP). Even though I did not receive funding, it was still a great exercise, and they gave me really helpful feedback. I then took a grant writing class at my university that helped me learn better ways to explain my research to funding agencies.

What are some things you need to do to be effective in acquiring funds?

You need to be able to explain why your research matters and what gap it fills. If you have research that has already been done (not including replication studies) or does not need to be done, then it would not be funded. In addition to having good written communication skills regarding your research, you will also need to be tenacious! It is normal to apply for multiple funding sources to acquire grant money. Time management and planning are also crucial skills in writing grants to acquire funds. You will not be able to write a fundable grant in a week.

What advice would you give individuals just starting their graduate careers on how to advocate for funding?

Start developing your research ideas with your advisor now. To have a chance at receiving funding, you need to have a solid research idea that you can communicate well. If your advisor has a funded grant example, ask them if you can look at it. Look for training grants and fellowships that would best support your ideas. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has a doctoral training grant. The American Psychological Association (APA) also has several fellowships that can support you and your research. In addition, if your university has a grant writing course, consider adding this to your academic plan.

What advice would you give individuals toward the end of their graduate careers on how to advocate for funding?

Unfortunately, you will probably not be eligible for multiple-year fellowship programs. However, there are several opportunities for dissertation grants, like the one sponsored by SSSP. Your program or university may also have specific grants for student research/dissertations. If you are not able to receive funds for your dissertation, you may want to look ahead at postdoctoral or early career research grants as you continue to solidify your program of research.

What else should readers know about advocating for funding?

You probably will not get funding on your first try, and that's OK! Don't give up, and don't be afraid to ask for help from your advisor, previous students, or others.