

# BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

## SCHIFF UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS PROGRAM

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### *Almost Everything You Wanted to Know about the Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program*

#### How do I know if this program is right for me?

The Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program is ideally suited for Brandeis undergraduates with an innovative research or pedagogical project they want to explore in-depth under the mentorship of a Brandeis professor. In the course of working closely with your chosen mentor for a full academic year, you will have the chance to conduct exciting and dynamic research – a significant opportunity in your undergraduate experience.

#### How do I select a Mentor?

Start by thinking about professors who appeal to you because of their research, their teaching, or their specific area of expertise. What classes have presented material you would love to pursue further in an independent project? In talking to your prospective mentor, be sure that s/he will be on campus during the time of your proposed fellowship. It is also possible for a professor to single you out and suggest you apply, but you should feel free to take the initiative.

The mentoring relationship is very important to the Schiff Committee. **Be sure your mentor will act as a steady guide for you through the research process.** And take time to address how you plan to work with your mentor in your application.

All faculty members should already be aware of the Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program, but it's probably a good idea to show your professor this information and application packet.

#### How do I design a proposal?

The opportunities for project proposals are practically limitless. The best and most successful proposals are those that have emerged from the joint efforts of both Fellow and Mentor, where both people design and contribute to the project and ultimately benefit from it. The most successful projects will underscore innovation and the potential to make a meaningful difference. Questions to ask as you design your project are: Is this interesting to me? Is it feasible? Is there enough time during the year for me to accomplish the project? Is this work that will help me grow and stretch beyond my regular course work, as well as beyond my honors thesis? What will I learn through this project?

#### What is the time commitment involved?

Once in the program, you and your Mentor plan and agree on the components of your working relationship. Depending on the nature of your project, your time commitment may fluctuate or remain relatively constant throughout the year. Some Fellows begin their work in the summer and use a portion of their stipend to finance lodging on campus. Most Fellows and Mentors meet at least weekly for an hour. The project should span the entire academic year.

### **How do I put together a "winning" application?**

In general, successful applications demonstrate a clearly delineated plan for a project that shows carefully thought-out collaboration between the applicant and the proposed Mentor. Projects that involve doing clerical work for a professor or merely replicate senior honors efforts are not viewed favorably by the selection committee. Recommendation letters are weighed heavily. While a student's cumulative grade point average is not viewed as a significant predictor of success in the program, grades in the project area are often noted. **Your application should be proofread carefully, assembled according to the instructions provided, and handed in by MARCH 7, 2011.** We anticipate that up to 10 Schiff Fellow/Mentor teams per year will be selected.

### **What are the "research-teaching expenses" that are awarded?**

Fellows have used their award money for buying computer hardware and software; books; travel allowances, lodging and related expenses when attending an out-of-town conference; lab supplies; payment for experimental subjects, and the like. Mentors, too, are awarded a stipend of \$500 for research/teaching expenses, although their expenses need not be related to the project. Awards may be taxed according to IRS guidelines.

### **With whom will I share my findings?**

Each year, all Schiff Fellows are required to present their research to the campus. This showcase may be tied to a forum featuring undergraduate experiential opportunities on campus. Fellows are also encouraged to talk with their mentors about ways to co-publish or present their research in journals and/or at conferences. The Schiff Fellows also meet, approximately once a month, to discuss their work and share their experiences with each other.

### **What kinds of projects have been done in past years?**

- research into children's ability to perceive emotions in music
- organization of an area conference on Women, Complexion & Caste
- development of a new course on modern Jewish religious thought in conjunction with a faculty mentor
- implementation of multimedia into two science courses
- presentation of a paper at the Third World Studies Conference, attended with a faculty mentor
- research on genetic transformation in *Naegleria Gruberi* and work as the T.A. for a genetics course
- a study of the use of masks in various indigenous cultures
- phonological analysis of Odawa, an Eastern Canadian Indian language
- research on the history of ballet and modern dance in preparation for a new course
- preparation of a database on Russian bishops in pre-Revolutionary Russia
- work with a faculty member on a book about the history of the presidency
- design of an upper level laboratory in inorganic chemistry for non-concentrators
- preparation of a performing edition of medieval liturgical song

### **What kinds of things do Fellows and Mentors do in the program?**

A sampling of the kinds of activities Fellows have experienced over the past ten years includes:

- attending professional conferences together
- discussing how to conduct tutorials, advise students, etc.
- selecting books for courses
- designing a course together
- going to dinner at a Mentor's home
- critiquing a Mentor's course
- creating lab experiments for science courses
- teaching classes, leading course sections
- revising course materials and writing curricular proposals
- writing papers for publication or presentation at professional conferences

### **Do Fellows have any say in what takes place in the Program?**

Suggestions about every aspect of the program are welcomed, and both Fellows and Mentors tend to play an active role in shaping the program.

Here are some reflections former Fellows have offered about their experiences in the Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program:

- "The friendship that develops is one of the most rewarding aspects of the program. Without the support and confidence of my Mentor, I would not have been able to take on all of the responsibilities of my project or to take the reins of my project and really run with it."
- "The relationship with [my mentor] is proving to be one of the most meaningful in my academic career to date."
- "This experience is going to be as intense and important as [you] make it. This is an amazing opportunity to get to know the professors better, to advance in your field, to make connections and use resources that are not available otherwise. Make the most of it, don't be lazy, dig into it."
- "I learned about the many aspects of teaching that transcend the course material itself. I learned about teacher-student relations, student-student relations, and also I learned about myself, as both a student and scholar-in-training!"

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## Application Cover Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Box Number \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Major(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Minor \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_

Student Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Name and Dept \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE of your PROJECT \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit the original and 4 paper-clipped copies of the non-confidential materials (items 1-3, below, collated in order), along with one original copy each of items 4 and 5 to Meredith Monaghan, USDAN 130, Mailstop 001 no later than 5pm on Monday, MARCH 7, 2011. *Late applications will not be considered. Be sure to keep a copy for yourself!*

## Application Checklist

*(DO NOT STAPLE MATERIALS - Use paperclips and collate each copy as follows)*

(1) This application cover sheet including your project title

(2) Essay, *no more than 1000 words in length*, describing your proposed project and/or activities. How do you plan to work with your mentor? (Be specific.) How does this project relate to your educational and professional goals? Be sure your project is not just about helping a professor with his/her research, but is driven by your own initiative and creativity. Prospective honors students: how will this project supplement or differ from your thesis? *Your essay should be word-processed, double-spaced, and printed on one side of the page only. Your name must appear on each page in the upper right-hand corner.*

(3) Your resume, including honors, special programs in which you are enrolled, extracurricular activities, etc.

(4) Faculty mentor letter - confidential and in a sealed and signed envelope. The "Mentor's Instructions" should be given to your mentor to inform him or her of the fellowship criteria and application process.

(5) Your transcript - one official copy in a sealed envelope

*If you have any questions, please contact:*

Meredith Monaghan, Director of Academic Fellowships, Academic Services, x63470

# Brandeis University

## Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program

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### Mentor's Instructions

The Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program is made possible by the generous funding of the Jerome A. Schiff Charitable Trust Foundation. The program is designed to provide promising students with the opportunity to perform innovative and dynamic research, including pedagogy-related projects such as course development, under the close guidance and mentoring of a member of the Brandeis University faculty. Projects normally span one academic year. Project descriptions should demonstrate the student's leadership in the research or praxis proposed, and be clear about how the mentor and student will work together. Describing opportunities for (co)publishing or (co)presenting research results would be an asset to your application. How will this project make an impact in your field? To the student's future? To your own research or teaching? To the University? Proposals that appear to either duplicate senior thesis efforts or utilize students only for clerical, research, or TA support are not appropriate. Indeed, fellows who try to take on a Schiff project and a thesis at the same time are often overwhelmed by their research responsibilities. Schiff Fellows may be from any class year.

Mentor's letters should be typed and double-spaced. Please put your name and the applicant's name in the upper right hand corner of each page.

We ask both the applicant and mentor to describe in their own words: (1) the proposed project(s), and (2) the work you each expect to do.

Your letter also serves as a CONFIDENTIAL letter of recommendation for the applicant. Please indicate how you know the applicant and provide an evaluation of his or her work and potential in the field. Both concrete examples and general impressions are useful to the selection committee. You might also compare this student with other applicants or other concentrators with whom you have worked closely.

Your letter should be returned to the applicant in a *signed and sealed envelope*, to be submitted by the student as part of a complete application package. The deadline for receipt of application packages is **Monday, March 7, 2011**.

*Please feel free to direct any questions you may have to:*

Meredith English Monaghan  
Director of Academic Fellowships  
monaghan@brandeis.edu  
781-736-3470

And thank you for your interest and support of the Schiff Undergraduate Fellows Program. It provides an invaluable opportunity for Brandeis undergraduates.