

Texas A&M AgriLife Research Strategic Initiative Assistantship

Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will award assistantships for first-time admits for Fall 2018 (FY19) to pursue their Ph.D. The goal is to recruit and matriculate top quality Ph.D. graduate students in strategically important priority themes and to help support the formation and success of research teams in the priority topics. Approximately 22 new assistantships will be awarded each year going forward, and the list of strategic priority themes may be revised each year. This program is available to students who conduct their research with any Texas A&M AgriLife faculty member (including those at Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Centers) with the requirement being that the student pursue their Ph.D. through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University.

Priority Themes for FY 2018

- Unmanned Aerial Systems and Biophotonics
- Insect and Tick-Borne Diseases
- Vegetable Breeding and Consumer Behavior
- Water and Soil Health
- Antimicrobial Resistance and Phage Technology

Number of students

- Up to 4
- Up to 4
- Up to 4
- Up to 4
- Up to 4

An additional 2 assistantships will be used for other opportunities that arise in the above areas, other topics or specific initiatives such as international or other institutional partnerships.

Funding

- Domestic and international students will be eligible. Due to the sensitivity of some projects, international students will need to have passed an export control review.
- The assistantship will be at the departmental base doctoral rate.
- Tuition and fees (approximately \$9,600) will be provided by the agency with the assistantship.
- The employee health insurance plan will be covered by the department.

Departmental/Unit Match – AgriLife Research will provide full tuition and fee funding for the first three years, with the department, unit or faculty member’s external funds providing any funding beyond that. Departments will be expected to make offers to these students for sufficient time to complete their degree.

Selection and Criteria

- Selection of students will be made on a competitive basis. Nominations are due to Dr. Reed by 5:00 pm on Friday February 16, 2018.
- First-time graduate enrollment (new Ph.D. student enrollees only) Fall 2018.
- Preference will be given to Ph.D. students.
- The student will be asked to accept the assistantship within 2 weeks after receiving the offer, if possible, but will be given until April 15 if needed.
- Recommendations will be made by an ad hoc committee of the Graduate Program Council. Award decisions will be made by the AgriLife Research Director and Dean.

Texas A&M AgriLife Research Strategic Initiative Assistantship (continued)

Two-Step Selection Process

- **Step 1.** Students nominated by a faculty member or team will be screened by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and Faculty Development, an Associate Director of AgriLife Research and the Graduate Program Council using their standard evaluation rubric that considers the quality of the student's record and nominator's recommendation according to the following areas:
 - **Grades and Standardized Test Scores**
 - **Academics** – University or program attended, clarity of career objectives, Ph.D. preference but M.S. thesis-option with a clear commitment to pursue a Ph.D. also considered, class rank, academic awards and honors, etc. This addresses the overall academic training and potential of the student.
 - **High Impact Experiential Learning** – Emphasis is on some type of independent research experience (REU, honors research, University Scholar, independent study, etc.) that resulted in presentations, posters, abstracts, publications, etc. Other high impact experiences may include study abroad, internships, special projects, etc.
 - **Intangibles – Demonstrated leadership, contribution to college diversity, and intangibles related to the high probability for success in graduate school** (Leadership experience, involvement in societies/organizations within and beyond the department/college/university (ex. clubs, officer, scientific societies, etc.), contribution to diversity in the college, life intangibles, etc.
 - **Strength of Letters of Recommendation** – Based on overall strength of the letters of recommendation. To be most impactful, the letters should give overall quantitative (ex. top 1%, top quartile, etc.) or qualitative ranking (ex. best, above average, etc.).
- **Step 2.** Students deemed competitive in the first step will be evaluated by the AgriLife Research Director and Dean for possible selection according to the following considerations on how well they align with the priority theme:
 - Does the proposed faculty advisor have a **sufficient record in the theme area**?
 - Is the proposed faculty member **part of a team in the theme area**?
 - How **successful is that team** and what is the **likelihood for their future success**?
 - How does **this particular student help that faculty member and/or that team effort**?

Contact

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