

Graduate Students Pave Career Paths with More Funding Opportunities



Universities providing graduate students access to Pivot are jumpstarting careers by unlocking doors to securing more research funding.



“Pivot is proving to be a tremendous resource for our graduate students.”

Susan S. Robinson, Coordinator of Information Services, University of North Carolina Charlotte

The Graduate Student Dilemma

Securing research funding is becoming an increasingly competitive undertaking on a global scale and across all disciplines.

As a result, university graduate students depending on their institution and its resources, may find their research completely unfunded. Even when research is partially supported by the institution, additional funds are often needed for follow-up analysis, field work, attending scientific conferences, stipends, publishing in open access journals, and other expenses. Lab closures and extending timelines needed to complete research due to Covid-19 are only exacerbating the problem.

Yet, for many grad students, who often carry tuition burdens, “securing their own funding is critical to be able to conduct their research,” explains Susan S. Robinson, Coordinator of Information Services at the University of North Carolina Charlotte’s Center for Research Excellence. “Those who find their own funding can jumpstart their careers or open up opportunities to expand their research in ways that they didn’t know were available to them.”

The typical path forward for grad students is therefore heavily dependent on their ability to independently identify research funding, collaborators and publishing opportunities. If they are successful in obtaining research grants, then they will be seen as valuable recruits in the race to postdoctoral or professional employment.

However, locating the right funding sources for a specific research proposal or project is very challenging. And after a source is found, applying for a grant is time-consuming, often tedious, and most likely to end in rejection – especially for inexperienced grad students.

Universities Find a Way: The Pivot Solution

Universities can step into the gap and support the efforts of their graduate students by providing them access to Ex Libris Pivot, the most comprehensive global resource for finding scholarships, grants, fellowships, and other funding opportunities.

Pivot connects researchers with available funding opportunities quickly and easily, with targeted worldwide searches across 22,000 opportunities worth over 70 billion US dollars. The solution further accelerates research processes by streamlining, centralizing and integrating collaborator discovery and publishing opportunities, as well as offering actionable insights that grad students can take full advantage of.

“The typical comment I hear from graduate students using Pivot is, ‘This is huge!’” - Paul Barrow, Foundations and Grants Librarian, University of Michigan

Paul Barrow, who serves as the University of Michigan’s Foundations and Grants Librarian, consults with faculty and graduate students from across the campus in group and one-on-one sessions. He has noted that Pivot is always central to his conversations about research and funding opportunities. “The typical comment I hear from graduate students using Pivot is, ‘This is huge!’”

At the University of Michigan, the majority of graduate students are initially focused on finding funding that covers their tuition, for which they find Pivot to be a valuable tool. After a brief dig into the solution, and discovering how its powerful Advanced Funding search and Profile capabilities can be leveraged, their focus typically turns toward their broader career trajectory.

“Funding is a central concern for faculty and graduate students. As such, Pivot is like waves spreading in water, and graduate students are often the first wave.”

Paul Barrow, Foundations and Grants Librarian, University of Michigan

An international scope is critical for graduate work

According to Barrow, the University of Michigan is able to more comprehensively meet the needs of its graduate students thanks to the global scope of Pivot’s capabilities. The “Activity Location” field in the Advanced Search feature has proven especially important for students who work with nonprofit organizations that engage outside the United States. For international students, the “Citizenship or Residency” field has been critical in helping them identify opportunities for which they can confidently apply.

The “Applicant Type” field in Pivot is encompassing and allows each user to find unique funding sources for which they are eligible, including those specifically intended for students and early career researchers. The various options in the “Sponsor Type” field provides insight into the different areas and source of funding available.

Barrow’s primary goal in working with graduate students at the University of Michigan is providing them the tools for academic success and for meeting their career objectives. This includes helping them leverage the Pivot database to get an understanding of the funding landscape they will encounter in the future by exploring opportunities with Applicant Type prerequisites common to later stages of their careers.

When graduate students excitedly share newly discovered funding opportunities with faculty members they know, Pivot is often part of the conversation, which inevitably leads to a consultation between Barrow and the faculty member regarding the Pivot solution’s capabilities. As such, Pivot is like waves spreading in the water,” Barrow explains, “and Graduate Students are often the first wave.”

The University of North Carolina Charlotte is helping graduate students more easily find the most relevant funding opportunities with embedded links to curated, discipline-specific Pivot search results.

Providing grad students the tools and advice to succeed is a win for everyone

At the University of North Carolina Charlotte, the Center for Research Excellence supports more than 5,300 graduate students. In order to increase awareness of what Pivot brings to the table for these students, the center proactively embeds links to discipline-specific Pivot searches in its own web pages that point students to funding opportunities that are scoped for early-career researchers. These searches and links are configured and maintained by a Pivot administrator using convenient admin tools in the solution.

The screenshot shows the UNC Charlotte website's 'RESEARCH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT' section. The main heading is 'FUNDING SOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS'. A sidebar menu under 'DEPARTMENTS' lists various categories, with 'Center for Research Excellence (CRE)' and 'Locating Funding' highlighted. The 'Locating Funding' section lists several funding sources, including 'Funding Sources Databases', 'Programs of Interest', 'Limited Submissions', 'Internal Funding Programs', and 'Funding Sources for Graduate Students'. A list of disciplines is provided, including Architecture, Arts, Computer Science, Economics, Education, Engineering, Health, Humanities, Nursing, Natural & Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. The page also includes a note about logging in to access search results.

This makes it possible for students to just be one click away from easily finding highly relevant research funding opportunities, scholarships, grants, fellowships, and other sources for supporting their education and career goals. Though Pivot is highly intuitive to use, the center also provides periodic hands-on workshops that improve student success with the solution and introduces students to advanced Pivot features to enhance their funding discovery efforts.

Personalized profiles, proactive matching

In addition to robust search options, Pivot hosts researcher profiles that it can proactively match with relevant funders and collaborators. Grad students can set preferences in their profiles for alerts and recommendations, as well as share funding opportunities with their colleagues. Over 3.4 million researcher profiles are regularly being enriched with the latest data, including publications and grant awards.

Personalization and an end-user-focused design make Pivot an easy solution to implement and use. Grad students can immediately start receiving funding recommendations and finding potential collaborators after they are credentialed.



About University of North Carolina Charlotte

Founded in 1946, University of North Carolina Charlotte is North Carolina's urban research university, with over 29,600 students from 105 countries and 3,700 faculty and staff. Ranked among the top five institutions nationally for number of startups per million dollars in research funding, the university had a record 28 US patents in 2018. It is the third largest university in the UNC System, leveraging its location in the state's largest city to offer internationally competitive programs and community engagement initiatives.

About University of Michigan

The University of Michigan is a top-ranked public research university located in Ann Arbor. The institution was ranked number one in research volume, with \$1.62 billion in research expenditures in 2019. As of October 2019, 52 MacArthur "genius award" winners, 25 Nobel Prize winners, six Turing Award winners and one Fields Medalist are affiliated with the University of Michigan. The university has students from 139 countries and over 20,000 graduate students.

Learn more and get in touch with us:

www.exlibrisgroup.com/pivot

About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions that enable institutions and their users to create, manage, and share knowledge. In close collaboration with its customers and the broader community, Ex Libris develops solutions that increase library productivity, maximize the impact of research activities, enhance teaching and learning, and drive student mobile engagement. Ex Libris serves over 7,500 customers in 90 countries. For more information, see our [website](#) and join us on [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

