

Help make a difference for Geoscience graduate students

Give Now

The Geosciences Summer Research Fund for Graduate Students

Graduate students in the Department of Geosciences at VT are guaranteed 9-months of stipend and tuition per year, using grants and university funds. But this leaves summers potentially unpaid. This equates to about a ~\$50k/yr gap in funding leaving some graduate students with no other option than to take out a loan, pick up part-time work or see their quality of life decline.

In 2025, the Geosciences Advisory Board took a big step toward covering the gap. Starting with a Giving Day challenge, members of the Board went on to make lead gifts and establish a new endowment. By 2026, 100% of Board members have contributed and others have started joining in.

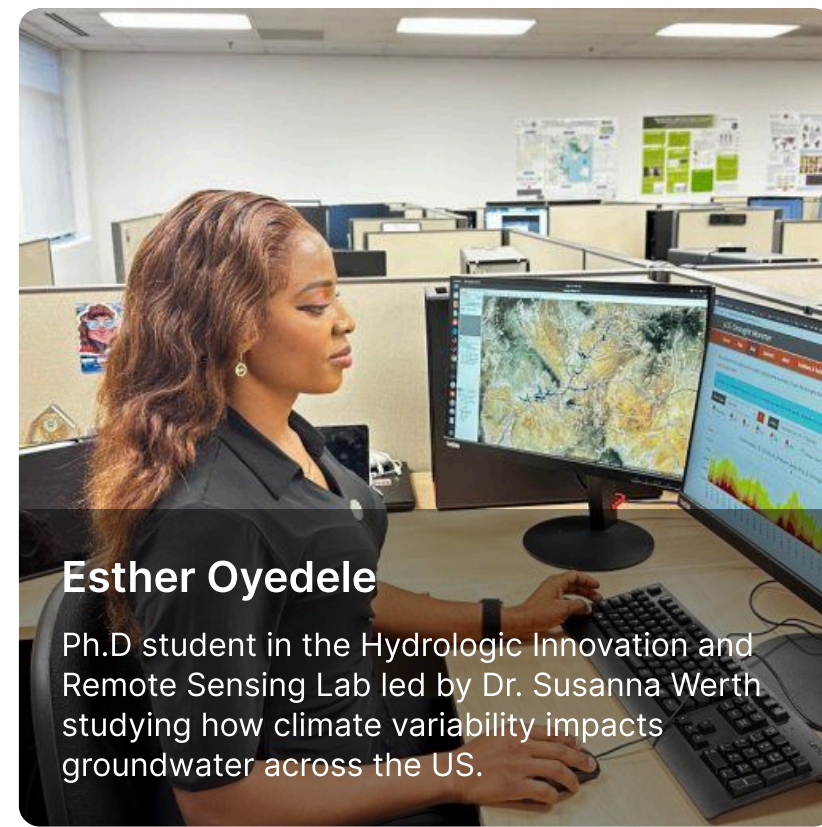
Check out the impact this fund has already made



Alix Ehlers

Ph.D candidate co-advised by Dr. Mark Caddick and Dr. Nancy Ross. Alix is studying mineralogy, crystallography, and material science.

“Funding that I have received from the Advisory Board this summer will be vital to the completion of my PhD. In part, funding this summer will allow me to finish my final project on the crystallographic and thermodynamic properties of “high-entropy” materials; these are novel materials which have the same crystal structures as many common minerals. I am defending my PhD in the coming early fall, and as I have had demanding Teaching Assistantship positions for the past year, summer has become the ideal time in which I can finish the last few papers of my PhD. This summer support I have received will enable me to complete my final papers and will be imperative to completing my dissertation, for which I am extremely grateful.”



Esther Oyedele

Ph.D student in the Hydrologic Innovation and Remote Sensing Lab led by Dr. Susanna Werth studying how climate variability impacts groundwater across the US.

“Before receiving summer funding from the Advisory Board, I faced a gap in financial support that made it difficult to complete my research fellowship and meet key project milestones. This fund made it possible for me to extend my summer research stay at NSF National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO, and dedicate time to finishing my analysis of groundwater and climate interactions across major U.S. aquifers. With this support, I’m able to prepare a publication that could inform sustainable water management strategies under climate change. **Without this funding, I would have had to cut my project short and delay progress toward my degree. Summer funding like this is not just helpful, it’s essential to keeping graduate research moving forward.**”

Help Us Reach our Goal

Our goal is to raise \$1.3 million for this endowment to fully cover summer funding and guarantee all students 12-months of support upon admission. This would allow students to focus on their research in the summer, while also facilitating competitive recruiting.

\$293k has already been raised!

Come be a part of something big. Your donation will directly benefit graduate students!



Give Now

Give now or contact us for more information

Department Contact/Info

Department Head - Jim Spotila (spotila@vt.edu)

<https://geos.vt.edu>

(540) 231-6521

College of Science Contact

Director of Development for the College of Science -

Jenny Orzolek (jorzolek@vt.edu)

(540) 231-5643

