Graduate Student Snags Unique Internship at Gates Foundation

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Reuben Saunders, a 2nd-year graduate student in the Tetrad program at UCSF, has been named a Hertz Foundation Fellow in Global Health and Development as well as receiving a related, rare opportunity – a summer internship at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Gates Foundation established the Hertz Fellowships in Global Health and Development program in partnership with the Hertz Foundation. This special fellowship provides not only the core Hertz Fellowship support – including tuition and a stipend for up to five years of doctoral study – but also the bonus of a prestigious internship opportunity. The Fellows spend up to two summers in the Gates Foundation’s global health or global development programs, where they learn to apply their expertise in diverse areas of science to improve health and development outcomes around the world.

The enhanced fellowship program began in the summer of 2017 with just two recipients. In the summer of 2018, it was expanded, with six new fellows (including Saunders) starting their internships at the Gates Foundation.

Saunders, who studies quantitative cell biology in Jonathan Weissman’s lab at UCSF, is enthusiastic about the unique opportunity. “I am excited to work on a rigorous science-focused team and to learn what it takes to go from idea to global implementation,” he said.
Saunders was first named a Hertz Fellow in 2016 when he was still an undergraduate at MIT, receiving support for subsequent studies as a graduate student at UCSF. He is broadly interested in understanding how molecules, whose behavior is governed by physical forces, can work together to create something as complicated as a cell. His work at the Gates Foundation brings his scientific expertise to bear on questions around maternal and childhood nutrition.

The seven Hertz Global Health and Development Fellows [4] conduct research in a variety of focus areas and work on different program teams at the Gates Foundation. Two of the other Fellows are students at UC Berkeley. The aim of the internship program is to provide promising STEM students with hands-on opportunities to learn about global health issues more deeply and to inspire them to contribute to global challenges in ways that will have a lasting impact.

The Fannie and John Hertz Foundation is the legacy of John Hertz [5], a Hungarian immigrant and entrepreneur. The Foundation encourages all of the students it supports to pursue science for the public good. Read more about the great work of the Hertz Foundation and previous Hertz Fellows [4] on the Foundation’s website [1].

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