



2025-26 Student Research Assistant Program: Initial Opportunities

Background

The [Growth Lab](#) is continuing its student research assistant (RA) program to engage HKS students to work on research questions relevant to the Lab's ongoing projects and research themes. Teams at the Growth Lab work on a unique blend of academic research and real-world policy engagements that leverage many skills and concepts that are taught at HKS. These RA opportunities aim to expand participating students' learning experiences while also contributing to the Growth Lab's research and impact. This packet outlines initial opportunities that the Growth Lab is seeking to fill at the start of the academic year. Additional opportunities will be posted throughout the 2025-26 academic year if/as they arise.

General Guidelines

Interested students are invited to apply for up to three RA positions on the topics listed below. Applicants should have a developed skillset for economic analysis and a strong interest in public administration in developing countries and/or lower-income communities. RAs' work will be supervised by Growth Lab researchers, staff, Professor Ricardo Hausmann, and/or other Growth Lab associates. The following pages summarize several opportunities with qualifications described for each.

- **Duration and time commitment:** Positions will vary in length and time commitment depending on project needs, with a goal of being flexible to the demands of courses and other student activities. A typical workload is 2-6 hours per week. Most opportunities are expected to begin during the early fall semester and continue into January and the spring semester.
- **Application materials and deadline:** Applications for these opportunities will be accepted on a rolling basis through September 24th. Prospective candidates are requested to submit the following materials through [this form](#).
 - *CV or resumé*
 - *Brief statement of interest*
 - *Latest transcripts available (if second-year student or completed another graduate program)*

Eligibility: Open to currently enrolled Harvard students only.

Questions? Please feel free to email [Alicia Galinsky](#), Program Manager.

Initial Opportunities

1. FDI Promotion for Strategic Opportunities in Azerbaijan

Contribute to the development of pitchbooks and conduct market research to support FDI attractions in sectors identified as strategic opportunities for the country.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309. Preferred: Background in FDI promotion and the private sector.

Expected deliverables: Presentation / Policy Brief

Expected duration: Fall 2025 Semester

2. Tourism as a Pathway to Exports Diversification

Contribute to the research agenda on tourism to position the sector as an alternative source of export diversification.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309. Preferred: Tourism background, interest in Growth Diagnostics.

Expected deliverables: Presentation / Policy Brief

Expected duration: Fall 2025 Semester

3. Assessing the Potential for Free Trade Agreements in Azerbaijan

Conduct research and analysis to assess Azerbaijan's potential for new FTAs, identifying priority partners and evaluating sectoral opportunities and risks.

Experience/qualification: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309. Preferred: Background on trade flow analysis and trade policy, familiarity with gravity models.

Expected deliverables: Presentation / Policy Brief

Expected duration: Fall 2025 Semester

4. Evaluating Integration of Migrants to Different Economies

Help with research on the success of migrant integration into different countries using labor force surveys.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Dealing with large datasets and labor data.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

5. Visualizing Different Spaces

Growth Lab deals with many different datasets that require intuitive visual representations. The RA will help Growth Lab fellows in streamlining this process.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Dealing with large datasets, background in visualizations, coding, and network analysis.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

6. Industrial Composition of Conglomerates in Developing Countries

In many emerging economies, conglomerates solve many market failures. In this research, we will examine the properties of conglomerates in developing countries. In particular, we will analyze which industries the conglomerates pick to co-agglomerate under themselves.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Dealing with large datasets, completed or enrolled in one of Ricard Hausmann's courses, coding, and network analysis.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

7. Deep Dive into Firm Level Trade Data

The Growth Lab has been analyzing value chains in clean energy technologies and other industries with a view to helping places integrate into these value chains. This research has so far relied on various aggregated trade data sets. We are acquiring a new large-scale trade data set on firm-to-firm transactions that is built from customs data. We will use the increased richness in this dataset to refine our understanding of green value chains and of places' ability to integrate into these value chains using green industrial policy. While we will start with green industries, this work will have broader implications for industrial policy in other industries as well. Work will involve conducting deep dives into this dataset alongside growth lab researchers.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309. Preferred: Background on trade flow analysis and trade policy, familiarity with gravity models.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

8. Powershoring

One green growth strategy is for places to use ample renewable energy resources to build an energy-intensive industrial base. We are building a model that lets us assess suitable locations for clean energy-intensive industrial sites that make use of local clean energy resources. This work will largely involve identifying, cleaning, and combining large geospatial and other datasets on various parameters related to industry energy intensiveness. It will also involve applying techno-economic models that assess cost-effectiveness of industrial production at scale using these datasets. We aim to use this analysis to support policymakers who seek to develop an industrial base using clean energy resources.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309, Industrial analysis, and interest in green growth. Preferred:

Experience with life cycle analysis, technoeconomic analysis, engineering, and site selection.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

9. Jobs and Skills

The Growth Lab has access to a large-scale dataset on jobs and skills. We would like to understand the skill accumulation process using this dataset.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Dealing with large datasets, background in visualizations, coding, and network analysis.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to May 2026

10. City-level Growth Diagnostic Support

The Growth Lab has developed a new approach to guide growth diagnostics in cities and other local labor markets and has worked intensively with 12 cities in the US, Canada, and Finland to utilize the framework. A small team (2-4) RAs is needed to help in continuing to apply and refine the framework in new cities. We expect the focus to be on working with cities in developing countries where the Growth Lab currently has research projects, including Morocco, Bolivia, and Malawi. Student RAs would work on one or two cities under the guidance of Growth Lab fellows.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309. Preferred: City-level work experience and/or desire to work at the city-level in the future.

Expected deliverable: Diagnostic case study or similar.

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

11. Macro Data Dashboard and/or Other Macro Support

Malawi is facing a macroeconomic crisis where the path forward is not clear. Addressing high inflation, spiraling debt, foreign exchange scarcity, and growing risks within the financial system will require not only well-informed and bold policy choices but also active monitoring and adjustments as policy changes are implemented. Therefore, one focus of the next phase of the Growth Lab's project in Malawi will include developing dashboards and other monitoring tools for tracking GDP, inflation, exchange rates (official & parallel), fiscal/monetary variables, and sectoral trends to improve decision-making. One or more student RAs could assist the team in building such tools using cleaned data from reliable sources (RBM, NSO, IMF, World Bank) as well as leveraging macro-level information to better inform priority decisions by the government.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Background in macroeconomics and data analysis. Preferred: Skills with creating dashboards in Excel, Tableau, Markdown, Shiny, etc.

Expected deliverable: Updated macroeconomic dashboard (tentative)

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

12. Survey Data Processing and Policy Research Support

A Growth Lab team has conducted initial research over the summer to understand Malawi's current macroeconomic crisis and its longer-term constraints to Growth. We anticipate launching a multi-year research project in the fall that will empower the newly elected government with research and capacity building. To aid this effort, we will be seeking student RA support with data cleaning, descriptive analysis, and policy research support. This may include policy areas such as tax policy, social safety net design, labor market policies, and agriculture policy.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Experience with granular work with survey data and economics. Preferred: Completed or enrolled in DEV-130 or DEV-309.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

13. Migration Policy Analysis

The Growth Lab deals with many different datasets that require intuitive visual representations. The RA will help Growth Lab fellows in streamlining this process.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Dealing with large datasets, background in visualizations, coding, and network analysis.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

14. Responsiveness to Citizen Priorities and the Political Economy of Reform

The Growth Lab's Malawi project is seeking to involve student RAs from Malawi and the wider region of Southern and Eastern Africa in order to better prioritize economic research that responds to the needs of Malawian citizens and issues facing the region. Student RAs will not only share their own local knowledge and perspectives but also work alongside the Growth Lab team to develop approaches for better elevating voices across Malawian society and for diagnosing political economy roadblocks that undermine better responsiveness to society's needs.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Malawian or from the nearby region, or special experience in the region.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

15. Cost of Living in Moroccan Cities

After conducting extensive economic research at the national level in Morocco, the Growth Lab is expanding its research focus on individual cities to empower better local growth strategies. Student RA support is needed to help collect and analyze data on cost of living in various Moroccan cities, especially data on housing costs for the last several years in Morocco, likely using archived rental data. This information will be used in city-level diagnostic efforts in the short term and will also contribute to a new effort at the Africa Business School in Morocco to construct datasets using emerging technologies. These datasets are intended for widespread use for economic research and policymaking in areas that are poorly covered by national data.

Experience/qualifications: Required: Coding experience. Preferred: City-level work experience or interest in Growth diagnostics.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026

16. Innovation collaborations in Morocco

Over the last year, the Growth Lab has conducted substantial research on innovation patterns in Morocco, utilizing patent and research publication data. This research focus will expand in collaboration with a new research center that is now being launched at the Africa Business School. Student RA support will help to expand this joint research. One initial focus will be to analyze quantitatively and qualitatively potential university partnerships inside and outside Morocco to develop its innovation ecosystem.

Experience/qualification: Preferred: Experience in innovation policy, coding experience.

Expected deliverable: Presentation / Policy brief

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

17. Community action support related to rural economy pilot effort (with six rural communities)

The Growth Lab has conducted an [intensive research project](#) on the State of Wyoming, together with state and local partners, over the last three years. Following an effort over the last several months to support six targeted struggling rural economies across the state, the team is seeking one or more student RAs to expand the capacities of these communities in ways that are consistent with the local diagnoses of constraints to growth. Examples of targeted support could include: better marketing / repurposing of rural gas station for new ownership in Clearmont, WY; support toward community projects to prepare for rare earth mining near Newcastle, WY; and local project design and delivery support with Lusk, WY.

Experience/qualification: Preferred: Participation in the Growth Lab's Study

Group on Rural American Economies in Spring 2025; Experience or special interest in rural economies

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026

18. New tools for surveying Wyoming businesses and communities to inform economic policy

The Growth Lab has conducted an [intensive research project](#) on the State of Wyoming, together with state and local partners, over the last three years. The [Wyoming Business Council](#), the state's economic development agency, has developed a range of new approaches to respond to constraints to growth as a result of this collaboration. One new function that the Business Council is interested in expanding is regular and structured surveying - both of the business community and of local towns and other communities. The team is seeking a student RA with experience in surveying to help in the design of possible approaches.

Experience/qualification: Preferred: Participation in the Growth Lab's Study Group on Rural American Economies in Spring 2025; Experience or special interest in rural economies.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026

19. New Approaches for Targeting State-level Grant Program

The Growth Lab has conducted an [intensive research project](#) on the State of Wyoming, together with state and local partners, over the last three years. The [Wyoming Business Council](#), the state's economic development agency, has developed a range of new approaches to respond to constraints to growth as a result of this collaboration. One objective that WBC is currently pursuing is better targeting of one of its largest grant programs to better target grant spending to projects that address binding constraints (see [here](#) for more information). The Growth Lab team is seeking student support to help in this policy design challenge.

Experience/qualification: Required: Relevant experience in design or execution of grant programs; Preferred: Participation in the Growth Lab's Study Group on Rural American Economies in Spring 2025 + experience or special interest in rural economies.

Expected deliverable: TBD

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026

20. Andean and Sub-Andean Valleys Agriculture Opportunities in Bolivia

Agriculture in Bolivia's Andean and sub-Andean valleys has long been central to rural livelihoods, yet its productivity, diversification, and market integration lag behind comparable regions in neighboring countries. While regional peers have seen growth in highland crops such as coffee, quinoa, grapes, and horticulture, Bolivia's valleys remain underdeveloped and face persistent logistical, institutional, and policy constraints. This RAship will focus on understanding how these peers achieved

agricultural success in their highland valleys, and what lessons emerge for Bolivia. The research will look at the institutional arrangements (cooperatives, irrigation systems, extension services), infrastructure and logistics improvements, and policy frameworks that enabled productivity growth and market access. By studying these comparative experiences, the RAship will highlight what Bolivia could adapt or replicate to unlock opportunities in its own valleys and promote rural development.

Experience/qualifications: Experience conducting literature reviews, case studies, synthesizing academic and policy sources, and writing analytical memos. Experience in agriculture topics is preferred. Ability to work with basic economic or agricultural data. Familiarity with Latin America, particularly Andean economies, is strongly preferred. Reading proficiency in Spanish (many sources will be in Spanish).

Expected deliverable: A written output/presentation summarizing key findings, including policy recommendations

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

21. An Overview of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Bolivia and Policy Options

Bolivia has one of the world's largest fiscal deficits, which has triggered an ongoing macroeconomic crisis. Its economy is also highly constrained by a complex web of distortions. There are over 60 state-owned enterprises (SOEs), many of which hold several subsidiaries and contribute to both the fiscal crisis and the economy's distortions. Taken together, they employ a substantial share of formally employed workers and hold many real estate or other types of assets in their large balance sheets. A few key SOEs related to hydrocarbons, mining, electricity, telecommunications, and transport explain most of the contribution to the fiscal deficit. However, other SOEs may introduce distortions or compete unfairly in specific markets. For example, there are SOEs for milk products, sugar, agro-processing, seeds and fertilizers, glass containers, paper, and cardboard. The purpose of the research workstream is to study the landscape of SOEs in detail to understand each SOE's externalities, fiscal contribution, balance sheet composition, employment, and capacity to be a positive agent of change over the short term or long term in Bolivia. RAs may be able to coordinate with counterparts in the Bolivian government during their research process.

Experience/qualification: Experience conducting literature reviews, case studies, synthesizing academic and policy sources, and writing analytical memos. Familiarity with Latin America and Spanish proficiency is strongly preferred (many sources will be in Spanish). Background in macroeconomics and microeconomics preferred.

Expected deliverable: A written output/presentation summarizing key findings, including policy recommendations

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026, with possible extension up to May 2026

22. Bolivia's Infrastructure Landscape With a Focus on Logistics and Transportation (for Agriculture and Tourism)

Bolivia's transport constraints are costly within the country and to export markets. Mountainous/Amazonian geography hinder regional development and raise general logistic costs. Poor air connectivity and other means of reaching international markets act as a barrier to international exports and foreign-exchange (FOREX) generation. Transport costs are especially problematic for growth in agricultural and tourism exports. Quantifying how these costs shape market access and connectivity is key to boosting growth, diversifying into higher-value products and experiences, and increasing FOREX generation.

Experience/qualifications: Strong data skills and experience with geospatial analysis. Preferred: Experience in analyzing multimodal transport costs and logistics, including trade research. Spanish proficiency preferred.

Expected deliverables: A quantitative overview of Bolivia's multimodal transport costs (e.g., road, rail, air, and river) with a focus on how these costs affect agriculture and tourism. This should include subnational and international comparisons, highlighting major bottlenecks and their implications for competitiveness. The work should also provide clear visualizations (maps, charts).

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026 with possible extension up to May 2026

23. Deep Dive on Business Regulations With a Focus on Labor Regulations

For the past 20 years, Bolivia's state-centric economic growth model has stifled private sector development. Today, the country has one of the highest informality rates in Latin America (close to 80%), low private investment (around 6% of GDP - 3x times lower than neighboring countries such as Paraguay and Peru), and little diversification in business activities. Firms cite burdensome business regulations, including restrictive labor policies, a very bureaucratic tax system, and trade barriers, among some of the obstacles constraining private sector development. The purpose of this workstream is to (i) analyze and evaluate Bolivia's business regulations and identify most binding regulations to private sector development, with a focus on labor regulations, (ii) study the relationship between these regulations and informality and (iii) provide policy recommendations for reform, including changes to labor laws, the tax regime, and other restrictive policies. The RA would have the opportunity to apply the growth diagnostics methodology on labor market dynamics using quantitative and qualitative methods, engage with private sector actors in Bolivia, and advance the Lab's understanding of the causes behind informality.

Experience/qualifications: Experience conducting literature reviews, regulatory analysis, and writing policy memos. Spanish proficiency preferred. Ability to work with different data sources, such as enterprise surveys. Background in labor markets and informality preferred.

Expected deliverables: A business and labor regulations diagnostic with policy recommendations (both written output and slide deck). If interviews are

conducted, a summary of the key findings during the interviews.

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026 with possible extension up to May 2026

24. Fiscal Decentralization and Local Governance in Bolivia

Bolivia faces mounting macro-fiscal pressures driven by high and persistent fiscal deficits, monetization, and rising financial vulnerabilities. The Growth Lab has built a consolidated public-sector fiscal picture; the next step is to disaggregate it by level of government and assess how Bolivia's decentralization architecture shapes revenues, expenditures, and fiscal balances. The intern will (i) assemble and harmonize fiscal data for central, departmental, and municipal governments; (ii) map the budget cycle and execution bottlenecks across levels; and (iii) analyze how current and potential reforms in fiscal decentralization (i.e., intergovernmental competencies, transfers, and borrowing rules) would affect fiscal balances at each level of government and to the overall fiscal position. The work blends public-finance analytics, institutional mapping, and policy translation.

Experience/qualifications: Experience with public finance/fiscal federalism (revenue & expenditure assignments, intergovernmental transfers, PFM/budget execution). Spanish reading proficiency for budget/legal documents is a plus (English writing for outputs).

Expected deliverables: 1. Harmonized subnational fiscal dataset with codebook 2. Short diagnostic (written output) and slide deck on revenue/expenditure composition by level of government, execution, and decentralization implications. 3. Scenario tool to gauge impacts of plausible decentralization/transfer reforms.

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026 with possible extension up to May 2026

25. Formalization of Mining Activities in Bolivia

Bolivia's mining cooperatives are at the center of the country's mining sector and play a unique role compared to international norms - they dominate the \$3bn heavy gold mining sector of the country. Originally created as small groups of workers who took over operations abandoned by the state during the 1980s collapse of COMIBOL, they have since grown into politically powerful organizations. Today, tens of thousands of miners are formally affiliated with cooperatives, though many operate under highly informal conditions. Unlike private firms, cooperatives are legally considered associations of workers rather than commercial enterprises, which exempts them from paying corporate income tax and provides them with other fiscal advantages. This legal status has encouraged their rapid expansion but also left regulatory oversight weak, leading to widespread informality within a "semi-formal" framework. We would like to understand efforts that other countries, such as Peru, have undertaken to formalize the informal mining sector. The RA will (i) analyze formalization approaches in other countries, such as Peru, and (ii) analyze the application of these learnings to Bolivia.

Experience/qualifications: Experience conducting literature reviews, case

studies, synthesizing academic and policy sources, and writing analytical memos. Familiarity with Latin America and Spanish proficiency is preferred (many sources will be in Spanish).

Expected deliverable: A written output/presentation summarizing key findings, including policy recommendations.

Expected duration: October 2025 to January 2026 with possible extension up to May 2026