



2026-27 Student Research Assistant Program: Initial Opportunities

Background

The [Growth Lab](#) is continuing its student research assistant (RA) program for the 2026-27 academic year. This program involves HKS students in research embedded in 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 2026-27 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 or the spring semester.
- **Application materials and deadline:** We will accept applications on a rolling basis through Sep. 25th. Applicants are requested to submit a CV or resumé, brief statement of interest, and latest transcripts available through [this form](#).

Eligibility: Open to currently enrolled Harvard students only.

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

Initial Opportunities

1. Managing the personbyte: How have universities adjusted to the explosion of knowledge?

This RA would contribute to an ongoing research effort investigating how universities adapt to the exponential growth of knowledge given the inherent limits of human learning capacity. Using aggregated course taking data spanning multiple years and the course contents and descriptions, we are analyzing the evolution of course offerings and degree structures to study the specialization and breadth of students' course decisions and their impact on how universities react to this demand and on their long-term view of what skills will be required. The research seeks to understand how universities manage the increasing specialization of knowledge while maintaining coherence across disciplines (substitute and complementary skills).

Experience/qualifications: Advanced use of statistical programming, data organization and experience working with large datasets

Expected deliverables: To be determined. Likely to include data analysis contributions, presentations and written summaries of research findings

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027, w/possible extension

2. The “Sense of Us” and its foundational myths

This RA would collaborate with Prof. Ricardo Hausmann on a research effort to identify, categorize, and catalogue the various types of unifying features and foundational myths that countries and societies leverage for their “sense of us.” This is a concept that has proven powerful over the last decade for understanding why and how countries achieve (or do not achieve) the type of coordination needed to support state capacity and problem solving across complex and diverse societies. See this [lecture](#) for a foundational introduction of the sense of us. The concept has been utilized in practice in Growth Lab applied research and explored over the years with master’s students and policymakers through executive education programs. This effort aims to scale up this learning using AI tools to create profiles of the sense of us of countries. By understanding the sense of us of various societies, we can better understand how it arises, how it evolves, and how it breaks down or is superseded.

Experience/qualifications: Deep topic interest; Strength in AI use for research

Expected deliverables: To be determined. Likely to include data analysis contributions, presentations, and written summaries of research findings

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027, w/possible extension

3. Morocco: Female Labor Market Inclusion

The Growth Lab's project on Morocco is centered on a multi-year research agenda on growth and development challenges facing Morocco and the African continent. Research is being conducted in collaboration with the Economics and Complexity Unit (ECU) at University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P). The ECU was established in 2025 to embed new and frontier research capacity in Morocco. The combined team is seeking 1-2 student RAs to work with a team conducting policy-oriented research to address exclusion of women in the Moroccan labor market.

This support would build on a draft research paper by the Growth Lab and ECU that reframes the longstanding challenge in Morocco based on several underappreciated dimensions of the problem. Morocco faces primarily a labor market entry problem, which is not being resolved by a rapid increase of female participation in higher education. Women are excluded from key growing sectors of the economy that employ men at lower levels of education. Meanwhile, good jobs for higher educated individuals are restricted to a few local labor markets in the country. RAs would participate in next phases of research that will aim to diagnose underlying causes of specific gaps (such as informal retail and hospitality sectors), learn from industries that outperform global norms in Morocco (such as the electronics sector), and inform strategies for public policy and civil society efforts.

Experience/qualifications: Research and/or policy experience on female labor market inclusion preferred.

Expected deliverables: Analytical contribution to team research outputs, participation in virtual working meetings, presentations, etc. with project counterparts and stakeholders in Morocco

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027, w/possible extension

4. Morocco: Cities

The Growth Lab's project on Morocco is centered on a multi-year research agenda on growth and development challenges facing Morocco and the African continent. Research is being conducted in collaboration with the Economics and Complexity Unit (ECU) at University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P). The ECU was established in 2025 to embed new and frontier research capacity in Morocco. The combined team is seeking 1-2 student RAs to work with a team that is conducting wide-reaching research on Moroccan cities. Cities across Morocco are engines of national and regional growth, but there are strong indications that many are growing below potential. This research has been exploring patterns of spatial equilibrium in Morocco (see [here](#)) and conducting numerous individual city growth diagnostics. These diagnostics utilize newly developed city growth diagnostic methods developed by the Growth Lab.

RAs on this workstream may contribute to new research on the city of Casablanca

specifically. Casablanca's growth over the last several decades has interacted with large-scale public housing strategies that have resulted in increasingly disconnected parts of the city agglomeration, which may undermine continued growth, both of the city's economy and the national economy. Research is ongoing to study these patterns, underlying institutional and market causes, and strategies for positioning Casablanca (and Morocco overall) for stronger economic growth moving forward. RAs may also work on other cities of interest based on spatial equilibrium patterns and anomalies as well as cities where local leaders seek analytical training and support from the Growth Lab-ECU collaboration.

Experience/qualifications: Experience and/or academic focus in urban economics, urban design, or related areas

Expected deliverables: Analytical contribution to team research outputs, participation in virtual working meetings, presentations, etc. with project counterparts and stakeholders in Morocco

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027, w/possible extension

5. Morocco: Green Growth and Spillover Research

The Growth Lab's project on Morocco is centered on a multi-year research agenda on growth and development challenges facing Morocco and the African continent. Research is being conducted in collaboration with the Economics and Complexity Unit (ECU) at University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P). The ECU was established in 2025 to embed new and frontier research capacity in Morocco. The combined team is seeking a student RA to join team efforts on understanding [green growth](#) opportunities. An initial focus area of this research has been "[powershoring](#)" through in-depth research on its implications for Morocco. The student RA may contribute to the finalization of this research, which involves reflecting on Morocco-specific results to develop a "policy playbook". The student RA may alternatively support research on economic spillovers and global market changes in the areas of desalination and water management, green ammonia, or electrical component manufacturing — all of which are green growth-relevant industries in Morocco.

Experience/qualification: Topic area expertise or special interest

Expected deliverables: Analytical contributions as part of the team; Global demand-side research and/or innovation-focused research.

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027

6. Four Corners: Arizona state institutions and support to tribal nations

The Growth Lab, in coordination with the Harvard Project on Indigenous Governance and Development, is conducting a research collaboration with the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and State of Arizona focused on understanding constraints and opportunities for the Four Corners regional economy. This is a short-term project (14

months) that is incorporating student involvement through summer internships (completed) and topic-specific RA-ships during this academic year.

Arizona is working to improve its capabilities and institutional structures to better support tribally led economic growth strategies across the sovereign tribes in the state. The three governments involved in this project recently [signed a MOU](#) focused on collaboration toward economic resilience. This RA would help the state government learn from practices of other states, countries, localities and explore potential tools and approaches that could work well in Arizona. This effort would not be limited to Four Corners region, but it would build on emerging needs of the state from the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.

Experience/qualifications: Native Nation course sequence (DEV-501M/502) is preferred and/or experience with indigenous governance or state governments

Expected deliverable: Contributions to project research; presentation summarizing learning and suggestions for the State of Arizona

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027

7. Four Corners: Navajo Nation diaspora policy and strategies

The Growth Lab, in coordination with the Harvard Project on Indigenous Governance and Development, is conducting a research collaboration with the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and State of Arizona focused on understanding constraints and opportunities for the Four Corners regional economy. This is a short-term project (14 months) that is incorporating student involvement through summer internships (completed) and topic-specific RA-ships during this academic year.

The Navajo Nation is the largest tribe in the United States with more than 400,000 enrolled citizens, and the Navajo reservation is the largest reservation in the United States. But less than half of Navajo citizens live on the reservation. There is a very large Navajo diaspora spread across the U.S. and beyond. This diaspora is a major asset for the nation, and many individuals desire to utilize the skills and other resources that they have gained from working off the reservation toward development on the reservation. The project team is conducting data analysis using data from U.S. Census and Revelio Labs to understand the economic capabilities of the diaspora. This RA would help with this analysis and work directly with Navajo government counterparts to develop and potentially pilot approaches for enabling diaspora connections and policies to capitalize on this opportunity.

Experience/qualifications: Topic area interest and/or experience in working with large workforce-related datasets; Native Nation course sequence (DEV-501M/502) is preferred

Expected deliverable: Contributions to project research; presentation summarizing learning and suggestions for the Navajo Nation

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027

8. Lesotho: Support to the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC)

The Growth Lab is working closely with 4 members of the LNDC in a capacity-building effort. The LNDC is responsible for investment promotion, export facilitation, and state-level investments in Lesotho. They have recently developed a new strategy that is focused on diversifying Lesotho's economy and increasing its complexity ranking. Four members of this team will be taking the 10-week Leading Economic Growth (LEG) executive education course through HKS starting in late September. During this period, the Growth Lab will be supporting that team with analytical support while also helping to build their capacity for data analysis and for better investment promotion. In addition, the LNDC team has recently gained access to LLM tools and is learning to use them for their work.

This is a short-term engagement but could lead to further work. We are looking for 1-2 RAs who can help the Growth Lab fellow who is working closely with the LNDC team. The work of the RA would be in producing analysis, coaching the LNDC LEG participants, making dashboards and usable tools, and helping the LNDC increase its analytical capabilities.

Experience/qualifications: Topic area interest. Experience with statistical methods and using LLM tools for developing dashboards and conducting analysis

Expected deliverable: Support to Lesotho participants of the executive education program. Development of dashboards and data tools.

Expected duration: October 2026 through January 2027

9. Gates Foundation: Labor Participation, Time Use, and Economic Development (Pending Project Launch)

The Growth Lab is expecting to begin research with the Gates Foundation in a project that has two main objectives. First, to write a primer on how to diagnose when labor supply and participation (especially of women) is a binding constraint to country growth prospects. Second, to write research using new time use survey data to understand how time allocation by individuals and within the household change over the development process and how such changes impact growth, diversification, and complexity.

We are looking for 1-2 RAs to support this research. Work would involve processing datasets, literature reviews, secondary research and analysis, as well as contributing to the production of the research outputs.

Experience/qualifications: Topic area interest. Experience with statistical methods and working with household surveys. Familiarity with the literature on labor force participation and time use (especially for female labor force participation rates).

Expected deliverable: Contributions to a diagnostic primer and papers on time use, participation, and economic development.

Expected duration: November 2026 through May 2027