



I am pleased to announce that Ronné A. Adkins, a doctoral student at the University of Memphis in the Department of Earth Sciences, has been awarded a **NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP**. This award is based on Mr. Adkins' abilities and accomplishments as well as his potential to contribute to strengthening the vitality of the U.S. science and engineering enterprise. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent agency in the executive branch of the U.S. federal government concerned with promoting a national science policy by supporting basic research and education in science.

Founded in 1950, the NSF does not conduct research of its own but makes support grants to qualified educational and nonprofit institutions and awards fellowships to individual scientists, teachers, and students. The foundation supports projects in the mathematical, physical, medical, biological, social, and engineering sciences, including the U.S. Antarctic Program, the Ocean Drilling Program, and programs in global geoscience. It supports the development of improved science curriculum materials and fosters the interchange of scientific ideas nationally and internationally. Among the more important permanent NSF-supported facilities are: National Center for Atmospheric Research (Boulder, Colo.), National

Radio Astronomy Observatory (Green Bank, W. Va), Kitt Peak National Observatory (Tucson, Ariz.), National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center (Arecibo, Puerto Rico), and Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory (La Serena, Chile).

As a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow, Ronné Adkins is awarded full tuition plus a \$30,000 stipend for three years while at the University of Memphis. Ronné plans to study the potential of growing switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum L.*) on a large scale as a substantial energy source for cellulosic ethanol, and to mitigate major erosions problems in the Western grasslands of China. Not only does switchgrass have the ability to produce cellulosic ethanol, but it can also control soil erosion and rehabilitate soils. To date, there has been no research linking and assessing switchgrass's potential for this dual purpose under a single natural resource management and development plan. This work will investigate the viability of large-scale switchgrass cultivation in China as a significant source of domestic cellulosic ethanol production; control of a major soil erosion problem in the Loess Plateau; and ability to increase biodiversity in the areas where switchgrass are grown. Lessons learned in China can be applied worldwide to obtain the biggest returns on investment, including environmental, social and economic benefits. Ronné Adkins was also recently inducted into the Pinnacle Honor Society of Graduate Students across the United States of America.