SESIL
Swarthmore Economics of Science and Innovation Lab

Call for Research Assistants, 2026–27

SESIL, the Swarthmore Economics of Science and Innovation Lab, is hiring three to five research assistants for 2026–27, starting as soon as possible. Research assistants will work with Pier Paolo Creanza, Assistant Professor of Economics, and with other students in the lab. SESIL is a new research lab in the Department of Economics. It studies knowledge production, from scientific research to technological innovation, and asks what policies and institutions are most conducive to discovery. To start, the lab studies how the many grant designs of the Rockefeller and Carnegie philanthropies affected American science before World War II. The lab's website describes the research: www.ppcreanza.com/sesil.

What research assistants do

Research assistants work on a common project, meet weekly in person with Professor Creanza and present their findings to one another. The work has three stages. First, they read and discuss papers on the economics of science and innovation, building an understanding of the research questions and methods. Second, they investigate historical sources and assess what the evidence can tell us. Third, they take on more autonomous research, with close advising.

Students develop research skills by examining original evidence, building data and explaining their findings to the group. They also learn to use AI agents responsibly, checking outputs against the sources and smaller examples worked through by hand. The lab provides preparation for graduate school, pre-doctoral positions and other research work.

Who should apply

Students of any major and class year can apply. Sophomores and juniors are especially encouraged: for students who are interested, the goal is a long-lasting collaboration. Applicants should have taken, or be taking, ECON 011 (Intermediate Microeconomics), ECON 031 (Introduction to Econometrics) or a comparable statistics course such as STAT 011 (Statistical Methods I), and should have some coding experience in Python, R or Stata (an introductory course is enough). ECON 035 (Econometrics) or STAT 021 (Statistical Methods II) and an interest in science, innovation or history help.

Hours, pay and the summer

Research assistants work 5–6 hours a week during the term, paid hourly at the college's student employment rates. Students can continue over several semesters, including summers, depending on continued interest and available funding. Summer work may be supported by the college's summer research awards (applications due February 9, 2027) or other funding. Professor Creanza supports these applications; summer research associates lead a defined piece of research with close advising. Research assistants are given preference for these summer positions, and students who plan a summer internship elsewhere are also welcome to apply.

How to apply

Apply by Tuesday, November 24, 2026, at 11:59 pm ET, through the application form. The form asks for a CV and a few questions about each applicant's background and interests. Short interviews may follow if needed. Questions are welcome at pcreanz1@swarthmore.edu.