

Elena Galbally Herrero
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Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald,

My name is Elena Galbally, and I am writing to express my gratitude for the John R. MacDonald Memorial Fellowship. Thanks to your generosity, I am able to pursue my PhD in mechanical engineering at the Stanford Robotics Laboratory. I feel both excited and extremely lucky to be performing research in a field which has huge potential to positively impact people's quality of life.

I grew up in Santander, a small city on the north coast of Spain. As a teenager, I was extremely passionate about sports and was fascinated by the world of bionics and how it can enable handicapped athletes. Guided by my desire to solve human-centered engineering problems, I moved to Madrid to major in biomedical engineering. Economically speaking, this was a very complicated period for Spain and research funds suffered the effects. Therefore, I did not have a lot of opportunities to be involved in any projects during the first few years of undergrad. However, I was eager to get some real-world experience, so when I heard that my school was offering two spots to study abroad at the University of Maryland (UMD), I immediately applied.



After an extraordinary year at UMD, I started working at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Florida. There, I had the opportunity to work on a new exoskeleton that ended up placing second at the powered exoskeleton category at the 2016 Cybathlon in Switzerland. My experience at IHMC confirmed my passion for robotics and stimulated my desire to strengthen my knowledge of mechanical engineering areas such as control theory and haptics. With this idea in mind, I applied to Stanford's mechanical engineering graduate program. I cannot put into words the excitement I felt when I found out that I was accepted and received your fellowship. Without your financial support I would have had to decline the offer.

Last year was full of amazing experiences. I learned how to mill, turn and weld; improved my electronics skills; swam with Stanford's Master's Swim Team; met wonderful people; and was accepted into the PhD program! On the research side, this quarter I am using machine learning and classical controls to enable robots to perform complex manipulation tasks required to help the elderly. Regarding sports, I joined the Stanford Triathlon Team and I am looking forward to participating in this spring's Triathlon Nationals.

I cannot stress enough how grateful I am for your generous contribution. You have played a key role in allowing me to live this remarkable learning opportunity, and I hope that in the future I will be able to make substantial contributions in the field of robotics that will have a powerful impact in our society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Galbally". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

Elena Galbally Herrero
Stanford PhD Candidate
Department of Mechanical Engineering