Submitting a Successful GRFP Application

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Sponsored by:
CAHSI, Provost Office, and Graduate School
GRADUATE RESEARCH FUNDING PROGRAMS
NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

• Help ensure the vitality of the human resource base
• Recognize and support outstanding students
• Provide substantial financial support
OTHER FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

• Ford Foundation Fellowship
• Many more fellowship opportunities are available, including some for international students, non-researchers, and other groups:

  https://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/

  http://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/other_opportunities
Graduate Student Fellowship Incentive Program

• Funded by the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects and The Graduate School
• For students who receive external fellowship support
• Incentive to seek support and to bring the degree to completion
Graduate Student Fellowship Incentive Program

- Applications are reviewed once per year by an appointed faculty committee from across Colleges
- Incentive awards are for 50% of total award, up to $5000 per year of fellowship
- First half of award is made during fall semester; second half is paid upon completion of degree requirements for graduation
Graduate Student Fellowship Incentive Program

- Environmental Protection Agency STAR Graduate Fellowships
- Ford Foundation Fellowships
- Fulbright Research/Study Grants
- NASA Space Technology Research Fellowships
- National Academies Fellowships
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships
- National GEM Consortium Fellowships
- National Institutes of Health Fellowships
GETTING STARTED

Eligibility
Registration
GRFP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

• Citizenship
  - US citizen or national
  - Permanent resident alien

• Degree Requirements
  - Senior completing baccalaureate degree
  - First year of graduate school
  - Not have completed more than 12 months of full-time graduate study or its equivalent as of August 1, 2015
  - More than 12 months graduate school with interruption of at least 2 consecutive years

Three-year annual stipend $34,000 and $12,000 cost of education stipend
VISIT WEBSITES

• Register on NSF Fastlane website ASAP
• Review all sections of the application process
  ➢ Personal information
  ➢ Education—transcripts; fellowships, scholarships, and experiences
  ➢ Proposed graduate program
  ➢ Letters of references
  ➢ Essays
• Pay attention to deadlines
How critical is GPA?
- CRITICAL!

Transcripts: Official or unofficial
- Official electronic copy recommended
- Other colleges or universities if part of undergraduate record

On-time submission
- Know your institution’s turnaround time
- If it takes 4 weeks, then plan ahead

Recommendation: redact personally identifiable information (e.g., DOB, SSN, home addresses, telephone number, email addresses) before uploading.
ELEMENTS OF A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION
• Includes important details that help reviewers understand how the applicant stands out from the crowd
• Presents an opinion of the applicants’ potential for significant achievements and academic and intellectual success
• Speaks to the applicant’s potential for future achievement in graduate school and beyond.

REFERENCE WRITING TIPS: http://www.nsfgrfp.org/reference_writers/tips

Invisible coral flows
LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

References
– Faculty references and references from people who supervised your research/projects or involvement in academic programs
– Character references have less weight

Advice
– Ask if letter writer can provide a STRONG letter
– Describe the program and provide guidelines (see link below)
– Share your goals and accomplishments – if they do not know them, they cannot support them in writing
– Discuss your plans
  o Bring a résumé
  o Allow 3-5 weeks for letters to be written and uploaded

http://www.nsfgrfp.org/reference_writers
STUDENT VOICES:
RECENT GRFP AWARDEES
ESSAYS
ESSAY SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION

- Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement
- Graduate Research Plan

Tips

- Integrate essays into a singular theme
- Address review criteria in each essay: **Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts**
- Write multiple drafts
- Allow time for review and re-writing
How do you envision graduate school preparing you for a career that allows you to contribute to expanding scientific understanding as well as broadly benefit society?
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SELLING YOURSELF: CRAFTING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your Statement should:

• Describe why you are interested in this opportunity and in your professional interests (research area)
• Describe how receiving the fellowship will contribute to your career goals
• Differentiate yourself from other applicants
  – Describe leadership skills
  – Describe unique characteristics that you bring to your area
• Describe personal and individual strengths that make you a qualified applicant
Your Statement should:

• Describe all applicable experiences
  – For each experience, describe the key questions, methodology, findings, and conclusions
  – Include team experiences if applicable
  – Describe your contributions

• Describe your career plan and what has influenced your career path

• Address how your activities address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria
SELLING YOURSELF: RESEARCH STATEMENT

• Consult with your mentors
• State the problem
• Document previous work (identify 2-4 papers)
• Summarize preliminary work
• Present research questions/hypothesis (optional)
• Define approach
• Describe unique resources
• State intellectual merit and broader impact
REVIEW CRITERIA
NSF REVIEW CRITERIA: INTELLECTUAL MERIT

• Considers potential of the applicant to advance knowledge

• Based on a holistic analysis of the complete application

  • Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals Statement
  • Graduate Research Plan Statement
  • Strength of the academic record
  • Description of previous research experience, publications and presentations
  • References
NSF REVIEW CRITERIA: BROADER IMPACTS

• Encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

• Based on:
  – Personal experiences
  – Professional experiences
  – Educational experiences
  – Future plans
ELEMENTS CONSIDERED IN BOTH CRITERIA

• What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?

• To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?

• Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale?

• Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?

• How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?

• Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?
REVIEW OF PERSONAL ESSAYS
ACTIVITY-1: MOCK PANEL REVIEW

Read two essays and rate according to the review criteria. (30 minutes)

1. Break into groups of four.
2. Review and rate the applications according to the criteria.
3. Build consensus regarding fund or do not fund.
ACTIVITY-1

Large Group Discussion
ACTIVITY-2 COMPLETE THE PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHEET

• Does your worksheet sell yourself?
• Does it show how you are unique?
• Is it complete?

The Personal Statement Worksheet guides the development of the Personal Statement.
Time to outline responses: 12 minutes
Share worksheet with partner. Ask questions and seek ways to enhance items on worksheet. (12 minutes and switch)
NEXT STEPS: ASSEMBLING A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION
DEVELOP A TIMELINE

• Register for GRFP: Fastlane
• Create a checklist of all required elements of the application
• Define a timeline for completing sections
• Write essays
• Request reference letters
• Seek reviews
A COMPETITIVE PROPOSAL

• Is well written
• Is organized
• Follows the guidelines
• Has a unifying theme
• Presents a research plan that
  – Solves a significant problem
  – Has social impact
  – Includes sound research methods
• Preliminary review
  – UTEP Writing Center

• Secondary review
  – Sign-up required (contact: ccasas@utep.edu)

• Faculty Mentor’s Review
  – Schedule on your own

Reviews are critical for putting together a competitive application.
Resources

NSF GRFP Fastlane site
https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do

GRFP NSF resource page
http://www.nsfgrfp.org/
RFFP resource page
http://sites.nationalacademies.org/P GA/Fellowships/index.htm#

Fellowship opportunities
http://cahsi.cs.utep.edu/OPPORTUNITIES/FellowshipScholarshipListing.aspx

Resources for Sample Essays
http://rachelcsmith.com/academics/nsf.htm
Contact Information

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