Submitting a Successful GRFP Application

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GRADUATE RESEARCH FUNDING PROGRAMS
NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

• Helps ensure the vitality of the human resource base
• Recognizes and supports outstanding students
• Provides substantial financial support
• 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
GETTING STARTED

Review Handouts
Eligibility
Registration
Citizenship: US citizen, national, or permanent resident alien

Degree Requirements
- Senior completing baccalaureate degree
- Degree holders starting graduate studies
- Graduate students enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program submitting in the first year or at the beginning of the second year of their degree program.
- Returning to graduate study after an interruption of at least two (2) years
- Individuals holding joint bachelor's-master's degrees who have not previously applied as graduate students

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, Work and Other Experience
  ➢ Electronic transcripts
  ➢ Proposed graduate program and field of study
  ➢ Names and e-mail addresses of 3 reference letter writers
  ➢ Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement
  ➢ Graduate Research Plan Statement.

• Pay attention to deadlines
October 22, 2018 (Monday): Geosciences & Life Sciences

October 23, 2018 (Tuesday): Computer and Information Science and Engineering, Engineering, Materials Research

October 25, 2018 (Thursday): Psychology, Social Sciences & STEM Education and Learning

October 26, 2018 (Friday): Chemistry, Mathematical Sciences, & Physics and Astronomy

November 2, 2018 (Friday): Reference letter deadline
ELEMENTS OF A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION
TRANSCRIPTS

• GPA is critical, although personal statement can address GPA
• 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.
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
- Share your goals and accomplishments – if they do not know them, they cannot support them in writing
- Discuss your plans
  - Bring a résumé
  - Allow 3-5 weeks for letters to be written and uploaded
Letters:
• Include important details that help reviewers understand how the applicant stands out from the crowd
• Present an opinion of applicants’ potential for significant achievements and academic and intellectual success
• Speak to the applicant’s potential for future achievement in graduate school and beyond.

REFERENCE WRITING TIPS:
http://www.nsfgrfp.org/reference_writers/tips
STATEMENTS
STATEMENT SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION

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

TIPS
- Integrate statements into a singular theme
- Address review criteria in each statement:
  - 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?
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?
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
  – Present a concise description of the activities
  – Highlight the results and how these activities have prepared you to seek a graduate degree
  – Include team experiences if applicable
  – Describe your contributions

• Describe your career plan and what has influenced it

• Address how your activities address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria
The Personal Statement Worksheet guides the development of the Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals Statement.
ACTIVITY-1: CRAFTING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Think-Share-Pair
Think: 10 minutes
Share 1: 10 minutes
Share 2: 10 minutes

- Does the worksheet sell yourself?
- Does it show how you are unique?

Share
Listen to your partner’s responses, ask questions, provide feedback
SELLING YOURSELF: RESEARCH STATEMENT

- Consult with your mentors
- State the research problem
- Document previous work (identify 2-4 papers)
- Summarize preliminary work
- Present research questions or hypothesis
- 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
• 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
• Outcomes include such things as
  – Full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and URMs in STEM
  – Improved STEM education and educator development at any level
  – Increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with STEM
  – Improved well-being of individuals in society
  – Development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce
  – Increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others
  – Improved national security
  – Increased economic competitiveness of the US
  – Enhanced infrastructure for research and education
• What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit)?
  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 STATEMENTS
ACTIVITY-2: MOCK PANEL REVIEW

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

Read statement and rate according to the review criteria. (20 minutes)
ACTIVITY-2

Large Group Discussion
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
REVIEWS

• 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/OPPORTUNITYES/FellowshipScholarshipListing.aspx

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

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