

## ENHANCING YOUR FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

### **Plan a funding package that will meet your needs for 4-7 years of schooling.**

A mixed funding source consisting of both fellowships and departmental funding is ideal for most students. Fellowships bring both prestige and the freedom to take your funding with you to any school. However, departmental teaching assistantships are an important experience for students who plan to apply for faculty positions – you don't want to be learning how to teach a course when you are a tenure track professor, at the mercy of course evaluations! Similarly, working as a research assistant on a faculty grant comes with its own benefits including being a member of a lab and being under the guidance of a faculty member who is vested in your research.

*Adapted from webinar content developed by Colette Patt, Directory of Diversity Programs, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of California, Berkeley, and Carla Trujillo, Director, Graduate Diversity Program, University of California, Berkeley*

### **Kick-start your funding package.**

- Create a calendar of deadlines (deadlines are a full year ahead of time!)
- Plan for 4-7 years. What fellowships are you eligible for now? What will you be eligible for later? What fellowships can be deferred? What fellowships, if any, can be used simultaneously with other funding sources?

**Set aside the time.** You can expect to spend the equivalent of a couple of hours a day for a month on your research statement and personal statement. You will also need to set time aside to research programs, request letters of recommendation, obtain transcripts, etc. You may want to think of the fellowship application process as an extra course – and devote time accordingly.

**Tap your resources.** Talk with your faculty advisor about your research ideas. He/she may have advice not only on how to craft your research statement, but what types of fellowships you may want to pursue. Ask if he/she would be willing to review your research statement. Talk to faculty who have been on fellowship review panels and to graduate students who have secured funding – what made their applications successful? Don't forget to use the campus writing center to craft compelling research and personal statements and put together a polished package.

**Craft your research statement.** In some cases, (for example when applying to the National Science Foundation Graduate Researcher Fellowship) you may be applying as an undergraduate senior and as such, you may be unsure what your graduate research will be. That's okay! Work with your faculty advisor to craft a research statement and remember that it is acceptable if the research topic changes once you arrive in graduate school. Focus on your ability to craft a clear, organized research plan. Begin with a broad explanation of the area of research that interests you and the types of questions being posed in that area. Using citations, discuss how 2-3 major scholars in this field approach these questions. Finally, describe the question you are interested in and how you plan to approach it, including your methodology and the instruments you will use. Generally speaking, you will want to also include the following elements in your research statement:

- *Intellectual merit* – Why does your research question matter? This should begin your research statement and it should be more compelling than “it hasn't been done before.”
- *Academic preparedness* – How have you prepared yourself to undertake this research? If you have previous research experience, you should emphasize the knowledge and skills you acquired through that research. If you are an undergraduate without a

research background, discuss your academic preparation including any capstone projects or coursework that is particularly relevant.

- *Broader impacts* – How will your research findings impact society? Will you make an important contribution to communicating science? Will you be a role model for others, and/or conducting community or student outreach? In addition to talking about what you plan to do with your graduate research, if you have participated in any broader impacts activities in the past – even small ones – you should reference them in order to demonstrate your commitment in this area.
- *Relevance to funding agency or organization* – Some fellowship applications may ask specifically about the relevance of your work to the organization’s mission or strategic goals. If so, take the time to make a compelling case for why your research will advance the organization’s goals. If appropriate, discuss how you will make use of the organization’s facilities (labs, instrumentation) and scientists.
- *The audience* – expect that most reviewers may not be familiar with your sub-field. Therefore, write accordingly and keep jargon to a minimum. But, remain prepared for a possible expert reviewer– and make sure your methodology is clear and your rationale is sound.

**Craft your personal statement.** Many applications may require a separate personal statement. In this section, you may use active voice and a less scholarly tone. This is where you can discuss how you became interested in science and your field. You can describe any roadblocks you encountered and how you overcame them. If you worked to support yourself during college, are a first generation college student, or have other qualities that set you apart, you should mention them here. This is also a place to reiterate any broader impact activities in which you have participated.

**If at first you don’t succeed, resubmit.** If you aren’t funded the first time, you are often eligible to re-submit. Do so! Where possible, ask to see reviews of your prior proposal so that you may improve on your first attempt.

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