Submitting a Successful Fellowship Application

Dr. Ann Q. Gates
Chair, Computer Science

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Associate Provost

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Director of Graduate Professional Development

Dr. Bess Sirmon-Taylor
Associate Dean, Graduate School

Sponsored by:
CAHSI, Provost Office, and Graduate School
Funding Opportunities from the UTEP Graduate School
Diana Natalicio
Dissertation Research Fellowship

• Awarded to one truly outstanding doctoral degree candidate

• Last semester of residence

• Application, proposal summary, transcript, letters of support, detailed timeline to graduation

• In 2013, $9000 award to Michael K. Bess
Dodson Research Grant

- Competitive process for supporting graduate student research
- Dissertation, thesis, final project
- Application, description of research, itemized budget with justification, letter of faculty support
- Faculty committee review
- Up to ten grants made twice a year
- Up to $3000 per individual award
Student Travel Grants

- Competitive award for full-time master’s or doctoral students
- Application and supporting documents
- Funds travel related to research or professional development
- Awarded to two students monthly
- Up to $1000 per award
Additional funding opportunities:

- Roy & Keith Chapman Scholarship
- Frank B. Cotton Estate Fund Scholarship
- Kalpana Chawla Memorial Scholarship
- George Krutilek Memorial Graduate Scholarship
For more information:

graduate.utep.edu
NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS
GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

- Help ensure the vitality of the human resource base
- Recognize and support outstanding students
- Provide substantial financial support

Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF)

Ford Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Program (National Research Council)
OTHER FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

• GRFP and Ford are exemplars.
• 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
• 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
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
  - Second year of graduate school in Summer or Fall 2013
  - More than 12 months graduate school with interruption of at least 2 consecutive years

Three-year annual stipend $32,000 and $12,000 cost of education stipend
FORD (PREDOCTORAL) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

• U.S. Citizen, national, or permanent resident; or deferred status under Childhood Arrivals Program
• Commitment to a university faculty career
• Enrollment in a research-based (dissertation required) Ph.D. program (or planning to enroll)
• At least three more years to complete Ph.D.
• No prior doctoral degree of any kind

Annual stipend $24,000 for three years
VISIT WEBSITES

• Register on NSF Fastlane or NRConline 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

http://nrc58.nas.edu/nrconline/ford/login/login.asp
TRANSCRIPTS

• 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
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.
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**
– Share your goals and accomplishments – if they don’t know them, they can’t support them in writing
– Discuss your plans
  o Bring a résumé
  o Allow 3-5 weeks for letters to be written and uploaded

ESSAY SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION

- Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement
- Graduate Research Plan
- Note: Ford separates Relevant Background and combines Future Goals with Research Plan

Tips
- Integrate the essays into a singular theme
- Address review criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in each essay for NSF
- Address goals of Ford in each essay
- Write multiple drafts – allow time for review & re-writing
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
A personal statement is about:
• who you are
• what has influenced your career path
• your professional interests
• your plans

• Essential points
  – What makes you unique
  – Why you are interested in particular opportunity
  – Why you are interested in the organization to which you are applying
SELLING YOURSELF: CRAFTING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your Statement of Purpose should

• Explain your understanding of the opportunity
• Describe why you are interested in this opportunity
• Differentiate yourself from other applicants
• Describe your career plan and how the opportunity relates to that career plan
  – For Ford, this goes in the research plan
• Commitment to the goals of the program
• Capacity to respond in pedagogically productive ways to the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds
• Sustained personal engagement with under-represented communities
• Likelihood of using diversity as an educational resource
• Membership in an underrepresented group (see website for list)
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
  • 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.
REVIEW OF PERSONAL ESSAYS
REVIEW CRITERIA

• **Content**
  – Alignment of applicant’s goals with opportunity
  – Distinguishing characteristics of applicant
  – Concrete experiences/examples that support skills and capabilities
  – How compelling is the essay in describing the applicant’s interest in graduate studies? Career path?

• **Mechanics**
  – Clarity
  – Organization
  – Grammar
  – Appropriateness of detail
ACTIVITY-1

Read and critique the essay.

(10 minutes)
REVIEW CRITERIA

• **Content**
  – Alignment of applicant’s goals with opportunity
  – Distinguishing characteristics of applicant
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  – How compelling is the essay in describing the applicant’s interest in graduate studies? Career path?

• **Mechanics**
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  – Organization
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ACTIVITY-1

Share critique with partner and come to agreement (15 minutes)
ACTIVITY-1

Large Group Discussion
ACTIVITY-2 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.
Ask questions and share ideas to enhance items on worksheet.
(12 minutes and switch)
NEXT STEPS: ASSEMBLING A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION
DEVELOP A TIMELINE

• Register:
  – GRFP: Fastlane
  – Ford: NRCOnline

• 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

• Faculty 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/PGA/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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