Graduate Student Fellowships

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Types of Funding for Graduate School

- Fellowships
- Assistantships
- Grants
- Loans
Fellowships

- Can be internal (awarded by the university or department) or external (awarded by a federal agency or foundation directly to the student).
- Internal fellowships are usually awarded when you first apply to a program, except for dissertation fellowships, which are awarded after you pass qualifying exams.
Assistantships

- The most common source of support for graduate students is from the major department in the form of assistantships.
- If you don’t receive a departmental assistantship in the first year, check with the graduate school to see if there are university-wide assistantships you can apply for.
Assistantships (cont.)

- Usually awarded for teaching or research, although some universities have staff or administrative assistantships.
- Many universities limit the number of years you can receive an assistantship.
- Some universities limit the number of students admitted to a graduate program to the number of assistantships available.
Assistantships (cont.)

- If you don’t receive an assistantship your first year, position yourself to receive one in your second year:
  - Make yourself known to the faculty in your department.
  - Attend all colloquia, symposiums, etc.
  - Show your commitment and professionalism.
  - Excel in your coursework.
Teaching Assistantships

- Requires delivering lectures, leading discussion groups, grading papers or supervising laboratory sections. Experienced teaching assistants may have responsibility for an entire class.
- Typical work loads are 1-2 classes per semester or 14-20 hours per week.
- Usually pay a stipend plus a full or partial waiver of tuition and fees.
Research Assistantships

- Research assistantships require the student to help a faculty member with her research. The typical work load is 20 hours per week.
- Students on research assistantships typically are hired by an individual faculty member, usually with grant funds.
Research Assistantships (cont.)

- Usually pay a stipend plus full or partial waiver of tuition and fees. In general, research assistantships pay more than teaching assistantships.
Grants

- Grants are financial aid awards that do not need to be repaid.
- Ask in your department and graduate school to see if your school offers grant competitions for graduate students.
Education Loans

- 3 major categories
  - Student loans.
  - Parent loans.
  - Private student loans.
- Federal loans are made through the Direct Loan Program.
- FinAid.org provides an excellent overview of the various types of education loans.
Why Apply for a Fellowship?

- Funding allows faster completion of program.
- Writing the application builds skills you will use throughout your career.
- Helps focus dissertation research.
- Great way to build up CV/resume.
- Brings prestige for you, your advisor, your university.
National (External) Fellowships

- Start early.
- You typically need to apply nine months to one year in advance.
- Many fellowship programs have deadlines in the fall for the following academic year.
- It may take several submissions to get funded.
International Students

- Most federal fellowships require that you be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Some industry fellowships are available to international students.
- The GRAPES database at UCLA allows you to search by citizenship status.
- [http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm#search](http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm#search)
Sources of Information

- Your department.
- The graduate school.
- Library research.
- Networking with faculty and students.
- Online databases.
Sources of Information

- UNC Charlotte Graduate School Website:
  - Links to many sources of information.
  - [http://www.graduateschool.uncc.edu/funding/external-funding](http://www.graduateschool.uncc.edu/funding/external-funding)
Sources of Information

- Hall Center for the Humanities at the University of Kansas
- http://www.hallcenter.ku.edu/funding-resources
Sources of Information

- University of California at Riverside
- http://graduate.ucr.edu/list_finaid.html
Sources of Information

- COS/Pivot
- Anyone can search Pivot from a UNCC computer.
- Contact Susan Robinson for help: ssrobins@uncc.edu or 704-687-1869.
Gather Application Materials

- Once you have identified potential funding sources, gather the application materials.
- Most national fellowship programs have application materials online.
- Use the most current program announcement.
Program Solicitations/Guidelines

- Each national fellowship program is announced by a solicitation.
- Names vary depending on the sponsor.
- Program Announcements (PA), Requests for Proposals (RFP), Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA), Broad Agency Announcement (BAA).
Program Solicitations/Guidelines

- Read all application materials carefully.
- If you have a question about whether you fit the eligibility criteria, call the agency and talk to a program officer.
- Read and follow all directions. Pay special attention to the deadline.
- Re-read directions as you are writing and again before you submit.
Before You Write

- Try to find samples of successful proposals.
- Talk to faculty advisors, department chair, graduate coordinator.
- Talk to students who have received fellowships.
- Use the internet: many samples available online.
- Discuss your research ideas and get direct feedback.
Most graduate fellowship proposals will require at least three elements:
- Personal statement.
- Research statement.
- Letters of recommendation.
Personal Statement

- What is your motivation for pursuing an advanced degree?
- What is your potential as a team leader?
- What is your potential as a team member?
- What have you done to advance your skills beyond classroom work?
Personal Statement

- What are your long-range academic goals?
- How do your academic goals relate to your career goals?
- Have you made personal contributions to society (community-based learning, volunteer service, public outreach, etc.)?
Research Statement

- State your research question or hypothesis succinctly.
- State the significance of the research in the first few paragraphs.
- Describe the gap in knowledge you will fill or the debates in your field to which you will contribute.
Research Statement

You can contribute to new knowledge by:
- Filling a gap in the research literature.
- Uncovering new material.
- Reassessing a topic.
- Looking at well-known material in a new way.
- Researching a topic that hasn’t been studied before.
Research Statement

- Demonstrate knowledge of previous work in the field.
- Be innovative.
- Emphasize your qualifications.
- Offer evidence that you are likely to complete the project.
Research Statement

- Be specific about your work plan, objectives, methodology, and procedures.
- Prove you have the necessary skills to conduct the research.
Letters of Recommendation

- Choose your recommenders carefully.
- Must be someone who knows your work as a student.
- Make sure they can write you a strong letter.
Letters of Recommendation

- Give them information about your project or a copy of your proposal so they can address your planned research.
- Give them plenty of time.
- Remind them of your deadline.
Keys to Success

- Hot research topic or important issue in your discipline.
- Realistic timeframe for research project.
- Applicants have some prior experience with research.
- Strong, highly specific letters of recommendation.
Reasons Proposals Are Declined

- Applicant didn’t follow the guidelines.
- Applicant didn’t explain why the project is important.
- Research methodology or work plan was vague.
Writing for Review Committees
Writing for Review Committees

- Find out how your proposal will be reviewed.
- Most foundation proposals are read by the board of directors.
- Most federal agencies use peer review.
- Graduate fellowship proposals will most likely be read by an interdisciplinary committee.
Writing for Review Committees

- Knowing who will review your proposal helps you know how to write it.
- If you are writing for non-experts, you will need to carefully explain all key concepts, avoid jargon and define all discipline-specific terminology.
Understanding Proposal Writing

Conventions
Writing Conventions

- Writing conventions are the generally accepted standards for written English.
- Examples include spelling, punctuation, verb tense, grammar, capitalization, sentence structure.
Grant proposals have their own set of writing conventions.

Most of these conventions are intended to make the reviewer’s job easier.
Proposal Writing Conventions

- Reviewers are busy people who have volunteered for a difficult task.
- They will be asked to read many proposals.
- It’s your job to write in a way that makes it easy for the reviewer to find and remember your most important ideas.
Proposal Writing Conventions

- Use short, direct sentences.
- Use action verbs.
- Avoid jargon.
- Write to the review criteria.
Proposal Writing Conventions

- Use section headings to help reviewers find important ideas.
- Use bolding and italics to emphasize important ideas.
- Use white space to break up text.
Does Spelling Count?
Does Spelling Count?

- Yes! Careless editing can sink an otherwise good proposal.
- You don’t want to leave the reviewers with the impression that you do careless work.
The Importance of Editing

- Leave time carefully proofread and edit your proposal.
- Use formatting to make your proposal easy for reviewers to read.
- Use headings, bolding, underlining to emphasize important points and to distinguish the different sections of the proposal.
Other Readers/Internal Review

- At a minimum, your advisor should review your proposal before you submit.
- The more readers, the more input, the better.
QUESTIONS?