August 21, 2009
SFSU
Grant-writing ideas
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FastLane Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP).
http://www.nsfgrfp.org/

program announcement page:

Reference Submission Deadline

December 1, 2009 (Tuesday)
Due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time

Applicant Deadlines

Due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time

November 2, 2009 (Monday): Interdisciplinary Fields of Study

November 4, 2009 (Wednesday): Computer and Information Science and Engineering

November 4, 2009 (Wednesday): Mathematical Sciences

November 5, 2009 (Thursday): Geosciences

November 5, 2009 (Thursday): Psychology

November 5, 2009 (Thursday): Social Sciences

November 6, 2009 (Friday): Life Sciences

November 10, 2009 (Tuesday): Chemistry

November 10, 2009 (Tuesday): Physics and Astronomy

November 12, 2009 (Thursday): Engineering

Questions about the Application Process for the Graduate Research Fellowship Program should be directed to:
GRF Operations Center
Suite T-50
1. Look up former fellows in your field of interest:
Look up their personal websites.

2. Read the program announcement and the Applicant User Guide very carefully.
Download the Program Announcement (as pdf, html or txt) from:
3. Find the Applicant User Guide at:
https://www.fastlane-beta.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do
LOOK ON THE LEFT FOR A LINK TO THE USER GUIDE
This takes you to Fastlane Help.
Find the menu on the left and scroll down to GRFP User Guides

As part of the application you must write a few essays, as follows:

1. Personal Statement (2-page limit; 12pt Times New Roman)
   describes personal, professional, and educational experiences
2. Previous Research Experience (2-page limit; 12pt Times New Roman)
   describes experience in research activities
3. Proposed Plan of Research (2-page limit; 12pt Times New Roman)
   describes in detail the research plans

These essays must all address NSF’s review criteria (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact).

In addition, those candidates who have completed more than 12 months of graduate study
must write the following essay:
4. Eligibility Essay (1 page limit; 12pt Times New Roman)

NSF Merit Review Criteria
NSF merit review criteria are listed below. Following each criterion are potential
considerations that the reviewer may employ in the evaluation. These are suggestions and
not all will apply to any given proposal. Each reviewer will be asked to address only
those that are relevant to the proposal and for which he/she is qualified to make
judgments.
Criterion 1: What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?
How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.) To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?

**Criterion 2: What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?**

How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding? What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

PIs should address the following elements in their proposal to provide reviewers with the information necessary to respond fully to the above-described NSF merit review criteria. NSF staff will give these elements careful consideration in making funding decisions.

**Integration of Research and Education**

One of the principal strategies in support of NSF’s goals is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions provide abundant opportunities where individuals may concurrently assume responsibilities as researchers, educators, and students, and where all can engage in joint efforts that infuse education with the excitement of discovery and enrich research through the diversity of learning perspectives.

**Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs, Projects, and Activities**

Broadening opportunities and enabling the participation of all citizens -- women and men, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities -- are essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

**Concrete Advice**

1. Start early, and make a detailed weekly schedule for your writing effort. Give yourself concrete assignments and deadlines:

   1. Ideally you would have a “good research idea” for your fellowship application, and should be able to write a convincing 1 page summary 3 months before the deadline (i.e. TODAY).

   2. From this idea/page will evolve the Proposed Plan of Research essay. This essay is very important. DO NOT LEAVE TO THE LAST MINUTE.
3. Do not underestimate the other requirements (GRE, references etc.). Aim to have those ready 1 month before the deadline so that the last-minute rush is devoted to the science.

4. The Proposed Plan of Research evolves from the Previous Research Experience, and from the Personal statements. Make a clear distinction between previous work, preliminary data and future proposed research.

2. **Proposed Plan of Research**: State a clear, not over-ambitious hypothesis, accompanied by long-term goals (beyond the term of this grant) and specific aims (i.e. short-term goals) for this proposal. Make sure that things are feasible and have good chances of success. Don’t be over-optimistic; it is better to cut down on the aims, and show that you have thought thoroughly on those that make it into the grant. Specific aims should be very clear. Specify exactly what you propose do, how you propose to do it and, if there are other PIs specify who will do what.

3. **Relevance**: your problem needs to be an important one

4. **References**: the list needs to be thorough and current. However, citations and references fall within the 2 page limit for each essay.

5. Broader impacts: education, reach to minorities & women, interdisciplinary aspect, impact on other fields, course design, conference, workshops. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT, MAKE SURE TO ADDRESS IT.**

6. Have someone (your mentor?) proofread your grant (or at least the proposed research essay), 1 month before the deadline.

**Additional Notes**

Failure rates are high: do not be discouraged and continue pursuing your dream.

**FORMAT!!** Your proposal may be turned down without revision if the format is off. READ THE GUIDELINES.

Aim to write a little bit every day, between now and the deadline.

**VERY IMPORTANT**: make your narrative as structured and easy to read as possible. A referee has very limited time for each application; if the ideas are not written clearly he/she will certainly not spend extra time trying to read your mind. Read the review criteria for the NSF, address each of the points stated there as clearly and conspicuously as possible.

Good luck on your NSF Graduate Fellowship!