National Fellowship Personal Statements

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What is a "personal statement"?

- NOT a research statement
- NOT an autobiography
- Does tell reader several things:

    I'm technically/educationally qualified to do this work

    I have the personal characteristics to succeed in this program (perseverance, tenacity, attention to detail, intl. exp., ability to work well with diverse others, etc.)

    I have the passion, desire, and drive to complete this goal

    If chosen, I will be a positive "face" for your organization (professionalism, poise, confidence, sociability, etc.)

GRFP Applications

What to include? Where to begin?

<u>Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:</u>

1. Why are you fascinated by your research area? (passion)

2. What examples of leadership skills and previous experience do you bring to your chosen field? (technically/educationally qualified)

3. What personal and individual strengths do you have that make you a qualified applicant? (positive personal traits & professionalism)

4. How will receiving the fellowship contribute to your career goals? (ROI)

5. How does the information in your Personal Statement address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

Merit Review Criteria

- When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit**: The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and

- **Broader Impacts**: The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

From: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13584/nsf13584.htm (Section VI-A)
See Also: http://www.nsfgrfp.org/how_to_apply/merit_review_criteria

Intellectual Merit

Panelists...may consider the following with respect to the **Intellectual Merit Criterion**: the potential of the applicant to advance knowledge based on a holistic analysis of the complete application, including the personal statement, relevant background, future goals, graduate research statement, strength of the academic record, description of previous research experience or publication/presentations, and references.

In Personal Statement:

How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project?

From: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13584/nsf13584.htm and http://www.nsfgrfp.org/how_to_apply/merit_review_criteria

Broader Impacts

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. **Such outcomes include, but are not limited to:**

- full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM);
- improved STEM education and educator development at any level;
- increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology;
- 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;
- and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

From: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13584/nsf13584.htm and http://www.nsfgrfp.org/how_to_apply/merit_review_criteria

Broader Impacts (cont.)

Panelists may consider the following with respect to the **Broader Impacts Criterion**: the potential of the applicant for future broader impacts as indicated by

- personal experiences,

- professional experiences,

- educational experiences and

- future plans.

From: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13584/nsf13584.htm and
http://www.nsfgrfp.org/how_to_apply/merit_review_criteria

NRSA Applications

Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) **Institutional Research Training Grant**

(Parent T32)

Recruitment and Retention Plan to Enhance Diversity

Competing continuation and non-competing applications must include a detailed account of experiences in recruiting individuals from underrepresented groups during the previous funding period. Information must be included on successful and unsuccessful recruitment strategies including aggregate information on the distribution of:

- Students or postdoctorates who <u>applied for admission or positions</u> within the department(s)/programs(s) relative to the training grant,
- Students or postdoctorates who were <u>offered admission</u> to or a position within the department(s)/program(s),
- Students actually <u>enrolled in the academic program</u> relevant to the training grant,
- Students or postdoctorates who were <u>appointed to the research training grant</u>.

"Applications without a diversity recruitment and retention plan will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed"

See: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-14-015.html#_Section_IV._Application

Plan for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research

All applications must include a plan to fulfill NIH requirements for instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). The plan must address the five, required instructional components outlined in the NIH policy:

1) Format - the required format of instruction, i.e., face-to-face lectures, coursework, and/or real-time discussion groups (a plan with only on-line instruction is not acceptable);

2) Subject Matter - the breadth of subject matter, e.g., conflict of interest, authorship, data management, human subjects and animal use, laboratory safety, research misconduct, research ethics;

3) Faculty Participation - the role of the program faculty in the instruction;

4) Duration of Instruction - the number of contact hours of instruction, taking into consideration the duration of the program; and

5) Frequency of Instruction –instruction must occur during each career stage and at least once every four years….The plan should be appropriate and reasonable for the nature and duration of the proposed program…..All participating faculty who served as course directors, speakers, lecturers, and/or discussion leaders during the past project period must be named in the application.

"Applications lacking a Plan for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research will not be reviewed."

See: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-14-015.html#_Section_IV._Application
(Especially Section V, #1 for Application Review Criteria checklist)

Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) **Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research**

(Parent F31 - Diversity) (PA-14-148)

Research Training Plan

- **Research Strategy→** Applicants must describe a <u>well-defined research project</u> (typically hypothesis-driven) that is <u>well-suited to his/her stage of career development</u>. The applicant should describe
  - the background leading to the proposed research,
  - the significance of the research,
  - the research approach (design and methods) for achieving the Specific Aims,
  - the rationale for the proposed approach,
  - potential pitfalls,
  - and expected/alternative outcomes of the proposed studies.
  - It may be beneficial to include pertinent preliminary data to demonstrate feasibility.
- **Responsible Conduct of Research→** All applications must include a plan to fulfill NIH requirements for instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). The plan must address the five, required instructional components outlined in the NIH policy (see slide 12)

See: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-14-148.html#_Section_IV._Application

Additional Information

- **Goals for Fellowship Training and Career** → Discuss how the proposed research project and activities enhance the applicant's development and relate to the applicant's career goals as a productive, independent research scientist. Discuss how the proposed research training plan will enhance his/her knowledge and technical and professional skills, and facilitate his/her transition to the next career stage

- **Activities Planned Under this Award** (i.e. "Research Training Plan")→ ... should be individually tailored and well integrated with his/her research project. Describe the skills and techniques that the applicant intends to learn as well as any planned, non-research activities (e.g. those relating to professional development) during the award period. The applicant should provide a timeline for the proposed research training and related activities.

See: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-14-148.html#_Section_IV._Application
(Especially Section V, #1 for Review Criteria checklist)

In Summary:

- Make it easy to read—use headings/subheadings, etc. that mirror their requirements.
- Make it unique (it is, after all, a *personal* statement). Your "voice" and personal passion should be evident.
- Link personal statement to other application documents (research statements, future goals, etc.) ….all documents should have a unified theme.
  - E.g. Your unified theme might be: "This project has Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts and I, personally, have the capability and desire to carry it out."
- Write, edit, revise, write, edit, revise, write, edit, revise, etc.
- Get as many different critiques as possible! (Professors, Career Center advisor, Writing Center tutor, previous grant winners in your network (GRFP Resource Persons), etc…….)
- Respect word/page limitations! 1 pg means ONE PAGE!!! If no length guidelines are provided, address questions as concisely and systematically as possible (longer essay does not always equal better, just more work!)

What Now? Come see me!

- Graduate Walk-In Hours:
  - Monday and Friday: 8:30-11:00 AM
  - Wednesday: 1:30-4:00 PM
- Career Coffee Chats: Harvest Coffee Bar, downtown Bryan, Sundays 7-9pm
- By Appointment: Call 979-845-5139
- Email me: kstober@tamu.edu