GRANT PROPOSAL WRITING TIPS

There are, of course, no guarantees for success when applying for a grant. But there are a number of very basic rules-of-thumb that will ensure that your grant application is prepared competitively. The following hints are general in nature, but it is important to remember that when committees are assessing numerous applications, a clearly written and outlined proposal will be duly noted by its members.

The following hints were compiled by grant selection committee members and are reprinted from University Affairs (April 1993): Although this excerpt was written for Faculty members applying for external research funding, the same principles pertain to all students writing research proposals.

- Follow the instructions in the application to the letter & in order, paying close attention to the agency's objectives and criteria.
- Write clearly. (This may seem obvious but what it means is don't use complex phraseology or jargon.) Be succinct - more is not better.
- Check your spelling and grammar. Do not rely on spell check - it cannot tell you if words are reversed or missing, and it will not catch words completely out of context. Many committee members and reviewers may be unimpressed by poor communication skills.
- Avoid ambiguities - know what the objectives of your proposal are so that your progress can be monitored and the committee can gain an understanding of where you've been and where you're going.
- Make sure your proposal is presentable. Respect margins, use clear type face, respect limitations of font/letter size, and use of headings.
- Be honest - explain any interruptions in your career in a straightforward manner. Parental leaves and medical leaves, as well as family crises happen to everyone. Remember that your application is being reviewed by academics and they know the demands of an academic career - so be truthful.
- Spend time on your application. A last-minute application will look and read like one.

Updated: January 1998