

DEVELOPMENTAL DISCOVERY DAYS, PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY [Aug13-Aug14]

Panel: EXTERNAL FUNDING

Panelist #1 (current graduate student who previously received an NRSA):

- you can apply for this at a later stage when you are thinking about the future and what you're going to do beyond (usually in your 3rd or 4th year), compared to NSF which you can apply for slightly early

Panelist #2 (current graduate student who previously received an NSF):

- only U.S. citizens are eligible
- can apply before grad school – worth it to apply as you apply to grad school because materials are similar (personal statement and 3 letters of rec), deadline is a month before grad school – can modify your materials in between
- once you're in grad school you can apply in your 1st or 2nd year, but not both
- NSF is focused on basic work, do not talk about clinical work – “mechanisms” and processes linking brain and behavior, NOT about clinical outcomes and interventions
- personal statement is 2-pages single spaced, research statement is 4-pages single spaced (NRSA is much longer and involves more paperwork)
- get feedback from lots of people – faculty members and grad students, examples of statements online, reach out to people in the field

Panelist #3 (current faculty member):

- NSF pays for your graduate experience – it is an honor, but also has multiple benefits
- Things the NSF factors heavily
 - o Grades
 - o Both statement
 - o GRE (is this still required?)
- Research statement is most important
 - o understand who your readers are – may or may not be in your field. NSF tries their best to match apps with experts, but not always possible
 - o grant writing is a formula
 - o you get one page or 1.5 pages, very brief
 - o structure is incredibly important (shape should be an hour glass)
 - start very broad, what is the relevance to society
 - then start to narrow, what is the gap that you are going to fill
 - HOW are you going to fill it – methods and predictions
 - and then expand out again – broader implications
 - and connect to top of hour glass

Q & A

- Does funding get transferred to the lab? How does the funding work?
 - o NSF pays for your stipend, NSF gives it to the institution and then institution gives it to you (logistics differ across institutions)
 - o PIs can reallocate funds and accept more students if NSF replaces their contribution to your stipend
 - o NSF does not ADD to your stipend, just replaces it – may be slightly more funding than usual
 - o NSF does not fund your research, it pays your stipend – funds you, personally

- you are proposing specific studies but if you get the money you do not have to do exactly what you said – the money is for you
 - NSF stipend is always the same, but may be a substantial increase in certain places - depends on university and cost of living
- Are there any disadvantages to applying for the NSF?
 - No disadvantages to apply, not just prestige – there are doors for other opportunities, start building your grad CV
 - When to apply is a good question – you get free chances before grad school, and then you can only apply once IN grad school
 - Apply when you have incredible grades. If you have ok grades and then improve during grad school, apply later rather than sooner
- Are there any similar opportunities for non-U.S. citizens?
 - Foundations
 - Panelists shared links in the chat
 - Rhodes Scholarship, does not fund Phds, but funds Masters or post-undergrad study
- What should the app look like before grad school? Should it focus on undergrad research projects or grad projects?
 - Talk about the research that you WOULD do, PIs you want to work with
 - You can apply as many times as you want before grad school
- Is there a product they are looking for? Do they check up on you?
 - Yearly progress report, very minor – just ensures nothing has changed
- Can you defer the fellowship?
 - Possibly, you can choose when to start the budget period. But depends on university structure - NSF just hands over money but distribution structure is at the next level
 - Might be harder to defer the award if you're also deferring grad school
 - You have to be accepted to grad school to receive the funds
 - You cannot always teach or TA
 - If you're teaching – your stipend comes from university
 - If you're doing research – your stipend comes from NSF
 - Institution dependent !!! NSF pays for 3 years, how you distribute that depends on what else you're getting paid to do at the university
- Do you have to sound convincing or like an expert in your NSF application?
 - Use your mentors, it is formulaic so bounce off ideas with your PI/mentor (set reasonable expectations because infrastructure matters)
 - 2 or 3 studies, mini-program
 - Specify intellectual merit (how will it contribute to science?)
 - important discovery, NOT clinical-related
 - Will you have the resources? Is it feasible?
 - Specify broader impact (why is your study going to be important?)
- For NIH – innovative, methodological feasibility, tie your study to the goals of the foundation, identify a novel question, look for absences
- 50% intellectual merit and 50% broader impact – what is the difference?

- If you want to do clin research or focus on interventions, should you apply for a different grant?
 - You can do basic science in a clin psych program – so you can still apply for NSF
 - NIMH is more focused on treatments or interventions, so that may be the better option
 - NSF finds everything interesting but they have limited funds and want to contribute it to basic science, they might steer you toward NIMH for pathological research. NIMH is more appropriate for applied or translational work

- NIH vs. NIMH?
 - NIH is broad and NIMH is an umbrella
 - Ppl do not really apply to NIH before grad school, it is something you do later on
 - What NSF posts on their website as the questions they want you to answer and then what they tell the reviewers to judge you on – you have to do background research before writing. You should be able to find the answers quickly when you read your proposal. Common mistake is not understanding who you're writing for – become familiar with what NSF is saying
 - Don't use "I" or "interesting" or "fascinated" – too valanced. Lacking scientific rigor