THE ART OF WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT:
TIPS, TRICKS, AND TECHNIQUES
GradGrants Center

- Databases for funding searches
- Resources for grant-writing
- One-on-one consultations
  - Proposal consultation appointments
  - Search/Mapping appointments
- Walk-in hours and workshops
  - Grant Writing Questions
  - Budget Writing Assistance
  - Internal Funding
- SAA Vacancies
- Twitter page with up-to-date funding opportunities @IUGradGrants

Wells Library, East Tower, 5th floor, E544
FULBRIGHT FRIDAYS

- IUCARE (Competitive Awards and Research, OVPUE)
- Identical presentations about Fulbright US Student Award
- Students will hear from past and current Fulbright recipients.
- All presentations are 3:30 - 4:30pm, Room 108, Hutton Honors College
  - Friday, March 25
  - Friday, April 1
  - Friday, April 15
  - Friday, April 29
- Can't make it to a presentation?
  - Email an adviser for presentation slides
- Graduate students contact Kathleen Sullivan, University Graduate School (ugsawrd@indiana.edu)
- Summer GGC Fulbright Bootcamp: TBD
WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

- FULBRIGHT FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES:
- This **1-page narrative** is designed to give the reviewers a picture of you as an individual.
- It is an opportunity to tell the committee more about the **trajectory that you have followed** and **what plans you have for the future**.
- Whereas the **Statement of Grant Purpose** focuses on what you will be doing in the host country, the Personal Statement concentrates on **how your background has influenced your development** and how that relates to the Fulbright opportunity.
- The statement can deal with your **personal history, family background, intellectual development**, and the **educational, professional, or cultural opportunities** to which you have or have not been exposed; explain their impact.
- This should **not be a reiteration of facts** already listed in the Biographical Data sections or an elaboration of the **Statement of Grant Purpose**.
**WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?**

- **Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship**
  - A **personal statement** regarding your planned use of the FLAS fellowship. This is a one-page, single-spaced, essay describing why this language study is essential to realizing your study and career goals.

- **NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)**
  - **Note name, length, and pertinent questions.**
Let’s put this into perspective!

You should assume...
- Everyone is going to have good recommendations
- Everyone is going to have an interesting research project
- Everyone is qualified

The reviewers need...
- to be able to set you apart
- a narrative (what motivates you?)
- to know why you are the perfect person for the research
They are not just funding the project,

They are **funding the researcher**!
GET TO KNOW THE GRANT

- Review *all* of the resources about the specific grant.
  - Know the format
    - Length, Font size, Headers, Footers, etc.
    - What components are needed?
  - All grants have specific review criteria
    - Fulbright, NSF, Boren, Soros, etc.
    - Who is reviewing the grant application?
      - Know your audience
Strategies for Unlocking Personal Statement Potential

- Don’t leave personal statements until the last moment!!!

- Reflect.
  - What interests you about the work? How did you become interested in it?
  - What past experience makes you particularly suited to your chosen subject?
  - Do you have a career goal? (e.g., faculty member, researcher, non-profit sector)
  - What skills do you have? (e.g., leadership, communication, problem solving, desire to learn)
    - Can you provide evidence?
  - What responsibilities have you undertaken? Do you have special successes?
  - Why should you be chosen above other applicants? How are you unique?

- Outline/Draft/Talk it out

- Get feedback [Writing is a social process]
  - Don’t wait until you think it’s ready. Just get feedback!
Begin with a “grabber”
- Personal Anecdote
- Provocative Question
- Engaging description of a scene
- Shocking Statistic

Provide context (personal/academic) for your interest
- What motivates you in this work?

Discuss experiences that have shaped you.
- Make clear why those experiences are relevant.
Example “Grabbers”

1. I decided I wanted to be a scientist while I was still in elementary school, but even in high school where I was praised for my academic successes, my relatives were still against the whole idea.

2. At the age of ten, I visited my parents' home country Lebanon. Confined to my grandfather's home due to a heavy Syrian military presence (and the drivers are particularly wild), I decided to use the elevator and get a view of the world outside. As the slow Otis elevator ground to a halt, the doors opened to reveal an entire story that was no longer in existence.

3. My grandparents have touched many lives: former drug addicts, refugees, neighbors, and my own.
Use active voice.
  - Avoid forms of the verb “to be”
  - Avoid phrases like “I hope to...” or “I would like to...”

Show, don’t tell!
  - Use concrete examples to illustrate your ideas.

Weave a narrative (with relevant material).

If discussing a setback or problem:
  - State the facts then move on to positive statements
  - What was learned? How did you grow from the experience?
    - Provide a character arc.

Be sure that the personal statement is part of the total proposal package.
The reviewers need to know:

- Who you are.
- How you think.
- Why your past experiences are what they are.
- Why you are the perfect person to carry out the research.
- How you plan to reach your future goals.
DON’T LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU!

- Common Pitfalls
  - Whiney tone
  - Fanatical, extremist
  - Inappropriate humor and clichés
  - Annotated CV, Chronological life story, resume in sentence form

- Questions?
April 6, 2016 at 1:00pm (SSRC)

“Budgeting for Research”
- Why might a funder require a budget?
- What expenses are commonly included?
- How are budgets presented?

See you then!!