Applying for Nationally Competitive Fellowships and Scholarships

Congratulations on taking the first step towards applying for a nationally competitive fellowship. This document is meant to give you a brief overview of what is involved in applying for fellowships. Whether you are applying for the prestigious scholarships like the Rhodes, Marshall and Fulbright, or applying for a summer grant or an academic scholarship, the principles involved still apply.

Application Components  The application process and requirements vary slightly for each fellowship program, but most fellowship applications share the following basic components.

•  **Academic Proposal/Statement of Purpose:** *What do you plan to do?*
  The crux of any application, the proposal spells out in detail what you want to do, why, where, how, and when you want to complete it. It is normally not longer than two pages. The proposal should show
  o  How well prepared you are to complete the project
  o  How the proposal is a continuation of what you have already been doing
  o  How the project fits into your future goals
  The project must be feasible, well researched, and carefully thought out; your proposed study must have intellectual merit and demonstrate personal commitment. The essay must be well written. Be prepared for many rewrites. Seek out as many readers as possible for constructive criticism. Proofread.

•  **Activities List:** *What have I accomplished?*
  Depending on the fellowship, the activities list may be a separate document or information provided on the application forms. Your goal is to provide evidence of yourself as a well-rounded individual with initiative, passion, talent, and leadership potential.

  **Start building your resume early in your university career:**
  •  Maintain a high GPA
  •  Take challenging classes:  Honors, a second language, independent study
  •  Cultivate relationships with faculty
  •  Seek out research opportunities: senior thesis, presentations, conferences
  •  Network
  •  Seek out leadership opportunities
  •  Volunteer
  •  Join honorary and academic societies
  •  Study abroad
  •  Keep current:  Read, travel, attend events
  •  Get involved in extracurricular activities
  •  Enter student contests and prizes: essay contests, art exhibits
• **Personal Statement: How do you stand out?**

The personal statement is your opportunity to present a picture of yourself. It is not a restatement of honors, awards, and activities, but an essay that lets the reader know what motivates you, what is important to you, your goals and dreams, your vision for yourself and the world around you, and the role you will play making that vision a reality. It is normally not longer than a page or two.

• **Letters of Recommendation: Who can write about my talents and abilities?**

Many fellowship applications require that you submit 3-8 letters of recommendation. Choose individuals who can address your academic ability, leadership potential, and civic responsibility. Choose faculty who have taught you, who know you well and who can speak knowledgeably about your talents and abilities. Provide these individual with a resume and a draft of your application and essays.

• **Transcripts**  Applications require that you submit official transcripts for all of your college/university work.

**Getting Started**

- **Plan ahead.** Fellowship applications are often due one year in advance of the start of the grant period. The UNR Office of Undergraduate Fellowships sets campus deadlines months prior to the Fellowships’ submission deadlines. Many fellowships require a university nomination, a campus interview, an endorsement from the fellowship advisor, and university submission.
- **Research fellowships and scholarships**
  - Visit the Honors Program: Fellowships website and individual fellowship websites
  - Review the guidelines and deadlines to be sure that you are eligible
  - Download and print the application
- **Visit the UNR Office of Undergraduate Fellowships**
  - Make an appointment with the university fellowship adviser
  - Complete the Office of Undergraduate Fellowships intake form
- **Gather application materials**
  - Request transcripts
  - Request letters of recommendation
  - Prepare drafts of the application, proposal, and personal statement
  - Revise application with the Office of Undergraduate Fellowships
- **Prepare for submission to the Office of Undergraduate Fellowships**