Application Tips for Presidential Dissertation Completion Fellowship Applicants

The following suggestions are based on common missteps we observed in applications to the initial competitions for the Presidential Dissertation Completion Fellowships. We hope these tips are useful to applicants to the next round of Dissertation Completion Fellowships.

These tips are not applicable to the Presidential Postdoctoral Extension Awards; instead, please consult the call for applications.

IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A COMPELLING CASE FOR NEED
1. Remember that these fellowships are focused on need and circumstances beyond your control that have slowed your time to completion, not the merits of your research like in other proposals.
   ● Keep your Statement of Need focused on your delay(s) and need for funding.
   ● When talking about your research, remember most reviewers won’t be in your discipline. It’s your job to help them understand your delay in progress and need for funding in your disciplinary context.
   ● Be sure your advisor is aware of this, too, so they can write the strongest support letter possible.
2. When making your case regarding need, keep in mind that these awards are NOT focused solely on delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nor does the existence of the pandemic automatically mean you are delayed. It is up to YOU to address any circumstances beyond your control that slowed your progress toward degree completion and make a case for your need for additional funding.
3. We recognize that it can be awkward to share personal concerns in your Statement of Need. While reviewers don’t need every personal detail, they do need enough information to understand the reasons behind your delays and how this award will help you reach degree completion.

WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE
1. Is your Work Plan realistic? Be sure to have a frank discussion with your advisor about how you can finish your degree by the end of the funded period if selected. An overly ambitious Work Plan that seems unrealistic may concern reviewers that the award will not actually help you finish. This is one of the biggest pitfalls we see!
2. Be sure all of your dates match up! There were several situations in which the anticipated date of graduation given by the advisor did not match up with the one provided by this student. This confused reviewers and could lead them to conclude that you are not delayed and therefore not eligible.

OVERALL APPLICATION TIPS
1. Be sure the essays are your work and not that of your advisor. The reviewers want you to tell your story from first-person point of view, although we also expect that your advisor will have reviewed all of your materials.
2. Present a polished and professional product! Proofread all of your documents carefully. If you need assistance, ask a faculty member or fellow student who is detail oriented.
3. Follow all submission instructions carefully and adhere to formatting guidelines, page length, etc. Direct questions to fellowships@stonybrook.edu PRIOR to submission if necessary. Once you have submitted, you will not be allowed to make changes to your application.
4. To help reviewers, be sure to address all of the information requested within the appropriate essays.
5. If you require assistance structuring your essays, the Writing Center staff can provide guidance.