

# ***Tips on Winning a Scholarship, Fellowship, or Grant***

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Tiffany O'Neill, M.G.A. and Michael Mueller, M.A., M. Phil.  
Office of the Vice Provost for Research  
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notes taken by Karen Huang, Ph.D.,  
Director, Office of Graduate Student Life  
<http://www.lehigh.edu/gradlife> [gradlife@lehigh.edu](mailto:gradlife@lehigh.edu)

## ***Finding Funding***

1. Identify funding sources by talking to your advisor and using SPIN, a searchable database that Lehigh subscribes to. [http://www.infoed.org/new\\_spin/spinmain.asp](http://www.infoed.org/new_spin/spinmain.asp). If you have questions on using it, contact your advisor, your college associate dean, or the librarian assigned to your area:

Roseann Bowerman, Social Sciences Librarian [rb04@lehigh.edu](mailto:rb04@lehigh.edu), 758-5605  
Brian Simboli, Science Librarian [brs4@lehigh.edu](mailto:brs4@lehigh.edu), 758-6524  
Ingrid Parson, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, [ihp0@lehigh.edu](mailto:ihp0@lehigh.edu), 758-4282  
Jean Johnson, Education Librarian [jean.johnson@lehigh.edu](mailto:jean.johnson@lehigh.edu), 758-4889  
Raymond Bell, Associate Dean of Education, [rb02@lehigh.edu](mailto:rb02@lehigh.edu), 758-3249  
Sharon Siegler, Engineering Librarian [sls7@lehigh.edu](mailto:sls7@lehigh.edu), 758-6524  
John Coulter, Associate Dean of Engineering, [jc0i@lehigh.edu](mailto:jc0i@lehigh.edu), 758-6310  
William Fincke, Business Librarian [wjf0@lehigh.edu](mailto:wjf0@lehigh.edu), 758-6524  
Kathy Trexler, Associate Dean of Business and Economics, [kat3@lehigh.edu](mailto:kat3@lehigh.edu), 758-3418  
Kathleen Morrow, Reference and Cataloging librarian, [kem6@lehigh.edu](mailto:kem6@lehigh.edu), 758-3041

- a. Set up a profile of yourself using the “smart genius” icon. You will then be available for hits from colleagues and potential employers. You will also start receiving funding announcements based on the keywords that you select.
  - b. Use the “\$ SPIN” icon to conduct advanced searches for funding opportunities.
  - c. Look at the research already funded to get ideas for your own application.
2. Don't assume that certain agencies don't have funding for your area. NASA, for instance, offers very lucrative and prestigious grants to psychology, biology and other sciences. These awards also offer travel opportunities.

## ***Winning Funding: The Application Review Process***

Your application arrives along with thousands of others. It then gets sent with batches to a committee for review. The committee is convened for a couple days during which the members sit in a hotel conference room and read through piles of application abstracts. Their goal at this first stage is to eliminate applications based on any errors, however minor. This lets them reduce the number of applications they have to evaluate. Eventually, each member chooses a proposal to advocate for, and brings it to the final session for discussion and negotiation.

## ***Writing the Application***

1. Find out the deadline and work backwards by 12-18 months.

2. Marshall all your information into an organized database and file folders (e.g., vitae, transcripts, awards, personal contacts, etc.) so you have all the information ready when an application is made
3. Attend conferences to find out what's happening in your field and to network. Lower the cost by volunteering and using GSC travel grants ([www.lehigh.edu/~ingsc](http://www.lehigh.edu/~ingsc))
4. Learn how to explain your area of expertise to a lay person in 250 words or less. There may be a person on the review panel who is not from your area of study, so you must be able to write a summary that is understandable.
5. Read the application directions carefully and follow them EXACTLY. For instance, if the application says to send recommendations by email, sending them by US mail might be counted against you.
6. Profile page: make your past experiences really shine.
7. Narrative section: Explain you're plan. This must be well-written with a natural flow and reflect sound reasoning.
8. Have your advisor and colleagues critically proofread your application several times to ensure excellent ideas and excellent writing:
  - a. Clear and eloquent sentences that are jargon-free
  - b. Total absence of errors in writing, calculations, references, etc.
9. Give your letter writers several weeks advance warning. Then stay on top of them to ensure they don't miss a deadline. You might even ask them for a letter after working on a project together, then save it for when you are making an application. This way, you have the letter ready when you need it. See #2 above.
10. Money begets money. As soon as you get ANY funding, it will be easier to win more funding because the next reviewers will think that somebody has already judged you to be deserving of funding because you are a serious scholar.
11. NSF grants are worth applying for. Even if you win an honorable mention with no money, you've added a prestigious award to your vita and it will serve the same purpose as described in #6 above.
12. Fulbright offers many different fellowships, and the level of competitiveness varies greatly.
13. Get to know fellowship/scholarship/grant program officers by sharing your research ideas with them. They can offer useful insights on how you could modify your proposal to increase your chances of getting funding. Michael, for instance, originally planned to apply for a Fulbright in Japan, which was highly competitive. When he changed the focus to a Mediterranean country per the recommendation of the grant officer, he was virtually guaranteed to win (2of 3 applicants the previous year were awarded that Fulbright), and he did.
14. The NSF has different fellowships, including one for the improvement of doctoral education. This fellowship is awarded to half of all applicants.

\*The Provost expects to hire a half-time funding consultant to help graduate students secure funding. This individual is expected to be hired by late Spring 03.

Further reading:

David Sternberg (1981): *How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation*. This book is useful in helping you analyze whether something is going to facilitate or block your progress toward finishing your dissertation.