DEMYSTIFYING THE FORD FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

Mon. Oct. 29, 2018 at 12pm, SRB Multipurpose Room

14 attendees

**Panelists**:

* Adrienne Tsikewa, (Linguistics)
* Rosie Bermudez (Chicana/o Studies)
* Professor Vilna Bashi Treitler (Black Studies)
* Moderator: Professor Miroslava Chavez-Garcia (History; Faculty Dir. Graduate Diversity Initiatives)

**NOTE:** Make an appointment with Robby@ucsb.edu - the Writing Specialist, by sending an email if you want 1:1 consultation.

**Purpose of the fellowships**:

Diversifying the academy; There is no one way to write this but the elements must be included.

* for the first three years of your work (Pre-Doc), not when you are about to finish
* Doctoral must be more defined in a plan

**Advice on Personal Statement:**

* Add relevant information that fits the application regarding diversity – personal, volunteer, or academic experience
* Share how you are serving underrepresented groups at your university. What have you done to make inclusive spaces? What have you done to help others make great strides in their academics / pursuits
* How will you accomplish Ford’s objective of diversifying the academy?
* Set yourselves apart – who are you? What is unique about you? What obstacles or barriers did you overcome to get to higher education?

**Statement of Previous Research:**

* How does your research tie or contribute to broader global issues? Then frame into smaller research question. Find that connection and significance.
* Write for a broad general audience, not disciplinary jargon. For example, start broad then go narrow, and read again broadly – to see if it is reading well.
* Don’t just list things – explain through connections and links how this becomes a broader academic or research trajectory.
* You will have a diverse group of readers – experts and non-experts.

**Proposed Plan of Study**

* A mini proposal for dissertation, a very pared down proposal
* The more polished the more you know the more competitive you will be
* What are the main questions that you are addressing
* How you will analyze and assess your sources
* What is unique about your approach
* Intervention in the literature, contribution to the literature
* Statement of concluding thoughts about why this is important
* What within the university or UC system do you have access to that helps you do this work
* What professors can provide for you academically, and as a mentor, not just as advisor role

**Dissertation Abstract**

* Capture the reader with your first two lines then get into what your project is about quickly
* Include major claims, major arguments, methodology and sources
* Make sure abstract is different (not copied and pasted from the body of your other chapters or drafts)
* What are your major contributions to the field
* Do not give up the prime (paper) real estate on someone else or another project; focus on you and your work
* Stay away from Chapter summaries – this should not be your abstract
* Can consider putting in your research question(s)

**Dissertation Completion Plan**

* Show that you are going to be able to get the dissertation done
* Describe project, arguments, and methodology
* What parts of the research have you already done?
* What parts are left to be done?
* Provide a chapter outline, with explanations of what each chapter is about
* You are giving them a structured and plausible plan, including your writing plan.
* Direct, not passive in voice – don’t sound like “maybe” – say this “will be done” etc.
* Red Flag in proposals 🡪 “writing a chapter per month” – shows you have not started writing or not really engaging with the other parts of your work.
* The plan is integrating yourself in the process of collecting, analyzing and writing etc.
* The plan is note solely a list of dates of when you plan to get something done.

**Annotated Bibliography** (primarily for the dissertation application)

* This is the section where to add the people you are referencing – don’t need to cite in personal statement.
* Show that you know what you are doing based on understanding the literature in your field
* This list show what academic/ literature conversation are you jumping into
* Why are you writing or referencing these people?
* Why is this important – don’t just name drop – how does it apply to your work
* Same thing – don’t just mention the reference – link to why it is relevant to your work.

**Letters of Recommendation**

* Needs to be from those that really know you well – consider how strong of a recommendation is the person giving – if average, find someone else
* How does the recommender know this student
* Do they feel comfortable writing you a strong letter of recommendation
* If the application asks for three letters – ask four people – need back-up because things can happen: someone is late, or sick
* The extra letter of recommendation can go in “additional materials”
* If your advisor or faculty members can make other suggestions on who else may make a strong letter for you – consider those folks too.
* Ask early
* For pre-doctoral – at least two letters from current institution, the other can be from your old institution – but you want to show that you have started to establish roots and that you actually have support at the current institution.
* Must get a letter of rec from your advisor – if you don’t or can’t – you have the wrong advisor.
* Look at the letters as a package – not that letters say the same thing about you – how can the recommender share something about you in other scholarly areas as well.

**Suggestions**

* Consider that the selection process is not just about you – it is about who is reading it as well, and the readers are very conscientious about a good proposal and application.

**Q & A: Audience**

* What is a good letter? One that shows you have promise, is working hard, committed in different areas. It also looks good to the institution and the recommender if you get the fellowship. Another perspective is, don’t worry too much about the letter – all the other components are just as important to the application. Sometimes the letters are backing up that you can get this done.
* Avoid letters from directors of programs? Part of McNair Scholars Program – should reconsider asking them/ the Director? Determine if the Director guided you in a scholarly way and can they speak to your scholarly potential. If so, then yes, ask them for a letter. Otherwise, no, find someone else to ask – because it will be an empty shell. You are not looking for someone who says you are a great person. You want someone who can speak to you doing research and finish a research project. Or consider someone who can trace your scholarly development – even if it is a past person you’ve worked with.
* For a first year, how much should a project be specific or nailed down? Nail down what you know, but don’t pretend you know something – ok to not know everything yet. Show that you have a handle on everything, what you know and don’t know. This is what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. You want your package to say – look what I can do with these resources – and how much more I could do.
* Are the applications reviewed internally at UCSB before getting sent out? No, not at UCSB. You can have others read it. Basically, the faculty here have served as readers for Ford in the past. There is not a UCSB process. It is all done at Washington D.C. and some faculty at UCSB have been invited to be readers. Some of the readers will not be in your discipline, so don’t include jargon.

FORD FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP – STEM Session

Wed. Oct 31, 2018 10:00am - Elings 1601

10 attendees

**Panelists**:

* Miguel Daal (Dissertation Fellow in Physics)
* Simone Stewart (Honorable Mention in Engineering)
* Ashlee Kalauli (Predoctoral Fellow in Mathematics)
* Prof. Miroslava Chavez-Garcia (Department of History, Past Ford Postdoctoral Fellow), moderator

**NOTE:** There are other workshops next month (Nov.) going through the application materials and components, and a modeling workshop through a sample application. Make an appointment with Robby@ucsb.edu - the Writing Specialist, by sending an email if you want 1:1 consultation.

**Purpose of the fellowships**: diversifying the academy, the professoriate – and provide access to academia; not for wanting to go to industry; the focus is on being a professor in academia.

**Overview**

* Is this program for you? Be sure to see specific eligibility and selection criteria
* Open to DACA applicants
* Predoctoral – need 3 years before taking oral exams – can’t be near comprehensive or proposal defense
* Dissertation – last year of dissertation writing, can reapply for dissertation
* Ford funds half of it and the Department funds the other half
* Can’t defer if you receive the award
* You become part of the Ford family, a very strong established network that stays with you for a long time
* You get to go to Ford conference

**Application Format**: Whether STEM or non-STEM application is the same.

**Advice on Personal Statement:**

* Before it was two pages, but last year (2017) they let you submit three pages.
* Talk about life experiences and people in academia who have shaped you in attempting to work towards the overall goal of diversity, your commitment to issues of diversity, and dedication to your field.
* Ok to talk about struggles and how it shaped you as a scholar and your studies
* A place to talk about who you are – there are other areas or components (waited equally) of the app allows you to expand on the other stuff – your personal statement is what sets you apart maybe from others.
* Can set the tone for the rest of the application
* How did you make the things in your life work for you, regardless of struggles
* Look on the website about the outline or questions that they would like answered
* Answer why you want to pursue being a professor – how did all these things lead you to wanting to be a professor

NOTE: Consider that this application, whether awarded or not, helps with writing or applying to other fellowships. There is a long list of questions that they ask.

NOTE: Sometimes difficult to brag about yourself – but you should do just that. Say it. Say what you did. Highlight yourself, not a time to downplay your accomplishments. Positively brag about yourself in an eloquent way.

**Statement of Previous Research:**

* Talk about things you have done as an undergrad, with a professor or in a lab – that helps you gain and develop research skills – this is different from discussing the plan of study.
* Include interdisciplinary or pedagogy knowledge. This sets people apart because it shows understanding that you are teaching others as a professor.

**Proposed Plan of Study**

* Think of it as a pared down proposal. If you are predoctoral, can talk about coursework you have left, what are the main arguments you are studying, and main questions you will be answering. Talk somewhat authoritatively that the proposed plan is viable.
* Tie back in your very specific research question into the broader contribution to the field or the world.
* You need to be aware of the time you have and make it a realistic plan. For example, you must convince the panel you can finish the dissertation in one-year because it is a one-year award.
* Ok to include long term goals but be sure to always link specific research to broader significance.

**Letters of Recommendation**

* Ask “How comfortable do you feel about writing a strong letter of recommendation for me?”
* Ask, especially if you have a good relationship with you, “can you write a letter on my behalf focused or related to Ford’s mission of diversity?”
* Recommenders may see these specific asks as helpful for them to on what to focus on within the letter.
* The letter can also be an extension of things you were not able to include in other components of the application. Maybe your recommender can add other things about your or speak specific to something that wasn’t in the rest of your application. This is a strategic way of having all components paint a broad picture of you.
* This process of asking for letters of recommendations also cultivates relationships with your mentors as well as pave the way for asking for future applications.

**Dissertation Completion Plan**

* Explain when do you plan to do what, to advance your dissertation
* Include what are you doing now, and what you plan to do during the dissertation/ fellowship year
* Show that you have a clear understanding of what your timeline and tasks look like – and that it is feasible to finish
* STEM person added a gant chart (project management tool) to show timeline of tasks; not required but another way to present information

**Annotated Bibliography** (primarily for the dissertation application)

* STEM does not use an annotated bibliography – this through me off (STEM) – usually for humanities field. Interestingly, I’ve used the annotated bibliography when mentoring undergrads.
* Consider that the annotated bibliography helps predoctoral in preparing for comprehensive exams or orals
* Of all of your sources, there are a few (up to 10) that are the most important ones and is significant for your research – primary sources, and then secondary sources

**Dissertation Abstract**

* Add main comments, question, methods, and future contributions to the field
* Capture the audience’s attention right away – make a bold statement about your work
* Draft one and keep revisiting it repeatedly to make it a concise one-pager
* Don’t have this paragraph or one-pager be a duplicate of something else on another component

**Q & A: Audience**

* To what extent can I rely on Ford to put together a panel that knows my field? How do they put together a review panel? How much can we assume that the panel knows what we are writing about? There are specialists in your field (e.g. history) and there are those in the first phase that read it off-site, generally those in academia. The second phase reading is on-site (in DC) and then that phase is with more specialized readers. Some may be asked to read as an interdisciplinary expert within humanities or within STEM. Write for an educated professor who knows nothing about your research.
* How do you get comments back? You can log back into your account, button “see reviewer comments” and see Reviewer A said XYZ, Reviewer B said DEF. But not everyone comments. Start getting comfortable with asking for feedback or comments for any fellowship. This “see reviewer comments” may be new as of 2017. Reviewers can make notes for themselves, not seen by applicant, or comments that they allow applicant to view. The on-site reading gets 5 reviewers per application.
* Ok to ask for letters of recommendation from non-UCSB masters mentors or have to be UCSB mentor, if I’m a new 1st year student? Yes, it is ok. Ask anyone who can speak to your academic work and potential. You would still want your current UCSB advisor’s letter – because some reviewers see it as a red flag if it is not included. That UCSB mentor decided to take you on as a student, so have that discussion about the letter. If you ask community-based people, be sure that community orgs mission is related to Ford’s mission or what Ford is looking for.
* What if I request 5 but only get 4? The letters appear at the end of the application. And the three is the minimum.
* How does the predoc and dissertation differ from postdoc? They want to give postdoc those who already have a faculty job and are going for tenure. Postdoc fellowship not eligible for those who just finished the PhD. Consider the UCOP postdoc which is for those just finishing PHD vs. those who already have a (faculty) job.
* How does a reviewer weigh in TAing, mentoring, or volunteering etc.? Should I TA more? Should I mentor more? It is all good stuff. Reviewers are looking at your experiences within those contexts. It supports your application well to be teaching or mentoring groups that Ford considers of diverse populations.
* How much do you weave in your experiences into the dissertation work? Don’t force it, make it come natural. It may fit in personal statement or CV. Or now current application may just ask you to input it manually in the online application.
* Is it a good idea, in the plan of research (dissertation), integrating undergrads mentorship in the dissertation fellowship year plan? Does this help show the scale of the project and that other younger scholars can be trained during the dissertation year? Yes. The application asks you to explain how your future research will improve diversity in the field.