

Selecting and Mobilizing Your Advisor

Your strongest letter of recommendation must be the person who is already your advisor or will be during your fellowship.

Finding an Advisor

Good advisors meet with students frequently; allow you to infuse your interests into their research; and give timely feedback on your work.

Rising Seniors:

- If you're going to stay at the same school, you probably have a relationship with an advisor. Ask them to help design your proposed research project.
- If you plan to change schools to study with a particular person, make contact and discuss projects that would interest you. Ask them to make specific comments on your proposed research essay.
 - If all goes well, ask this person for a letter of support. Even if they don't know you well personally, they can still comment on such things as: (1) your readiness for the research project (by emphasizing the skills you've acquired); (2) how your particular interests are important to advancing knowledge and broadening impacts.

Incoming Grads:

- If you've come to study with a particular person, discuss projects of mutual interest. Remember, though, that they are not formally committed to you yet – so ask directly for help on the fellowship applications
 - During this process, you'll learn if you're a good team!
- If you haven't already identified someone:
 - Consult with the department chair or grad chair.
 - Find folks with common interests.
 - Ask their students about what it's like working with them.
 - Meet with potential advisors, discuss how your interests intersect with their research, and ask one to advise on your fellowship application.

Continuing Grads:

- If you don't already have an advisor, follow the advice for incoming grads!

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Getting Advice on the Research Project Design:

You need answers to the following questions:

1. Why is it important?
2. How should I position my research's contribution within the field?
3. Are there any relevant studies that I have missed and need to catch up on?
4. Will my descriptions make sense to people who aren't in our subfield?
5. Is my methodology appropriate?
6. What objections should I anticipate?
7. What problems might I encounter? Do any require a contingency plan?
8. What skills will I need? How can I acquire those I lack?
9. What conference or publications would be good venues to present my research?
10. What practitioners, policymakers, institutions, or consumers would benefit from my research findings, and could I involve them?

Clarify Expectations

Summarize your understanding of due dates and work products needed to submit a competitive application.