SOME TIPS FOR PREPARING FELLOWSHIP & GRANT APPLICATIONS

Here are a few suggestions for how to approach preparing a fellowship or grant application. Please be sure to consult with your advisers, as they may have tips, based on their own experience, that are more applicable to the particular sorts of grants or fellowships for which you wish to apply.

Perhaps the three most important factors affecting how your applications will fare, apart from the competition, are: (1) your project description, (2) your letters of recommendation, and (3) how many years you have been in graduate school (or, later, how many years you have been out of graduate school).

With regard to (3), the point is not about eligibility. Rather, you may be technically eligible for particular funding, but if, e.g., you have been in graduate school for many years—that is, beyond what would be considered typical for reaching the dissertation stage—your letter writers will need to craft their letters (and you will need to craft your proposal) in a way that forestalls any doubts about your progress.

With regard to (2), before you begin the process of applying for fellowships, you will obviously need to do the following things.

> Investigate the fellowships and grants you might want to apply for. See the list of grants, fellowships, and post-docs on the department's website.
> HTTP://PHILOSOPHY.ARIZONA.EDU/GRADUATE/INFO_FOR_CURRENT_GRADS/SCHOLARSHIP_OPPORTUNITIES/
> Do you meet the eligibility requirements? Depending on the fellowship, you may not be eligible until you are, e.g., at the dissertation stage or tenured, or you may be ineligible for other reasons.

> Consult with your advisers about the advisability of your applying for those particular fellowships or grants and their willingness to support your application.

Otherwise, (2) is self-explanatory.

The part of the application process over which you have the most control is the description of your research project. Aside from making sure that it is very well written—tight, punchy, and free of grammatical errors and infelicities—you should keep in mind the following.

First, your application will likely be reviewed by a committee of people most of whom are not philosophers. People outside of philosophy—even prominent and gifted academics—often do not understand what philosophers do, or at least do not appreciate why a philosophical project is interesting. As a consequence, philosophers can sometimes be at a competitive disadvantage. You shouldn't rely on there being a selection committee member or an external reviewer who can explain and sell your project for you. Your task is to write a proposal that explains your project in clear, intuitive, and engaging terms, so that smart people who are not philosophers can see why your project would be important and interesting. To this end, try to avoid jargon and excessive use of technical terminology; keep in mind that crisp examples help, as does framing the philosophical questions your project will address and the ideas you will defend in a way that makes them seem natural, while still fresh and surprising.

Second, your application is likely to be read by at least one philosopher. With this part of your usually mixed audience, you face the "oh yah; so what" problem. That is to say, you confront someone who is bound to be more skeptical, either doubting the plausibility of your claims or doubting that your project is really new or important. Your research description needs to make clear why your project (your view) is credible and why your research will be original and significant. Here, it can help to place your project in the context of the extant literature: Where does that literature go wrong? How will you do better?

Be sure to get feedback on your proposal and revise accordingly. Otherwise, good luck!