ASSIGNMENT NAME: Personal reflection on why you are in Graduate School

PURPOSE: To produce a written list of key events in your life that will be the basis of an in-class activity next week

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Imagine that you are at some social event here at the university and you’ve just been introduced for the first time to a faculty member from the theater department.
2. They’ve just asked you why you’ve chosen to go to graduate school in your discipline.
3. What will you say?
4. Think back on your life and identify three or more “events” or “factors” that were really critical in convincing you that this is the career path you want to follow. “Events” could be a course, a research experience, a travel experience, a personal life experience, a mentor, ....
5. List three or more such “events” and for each include a sentence or two explaining their importance in your decision to go to graduate school.
6. Print out a copy to bring with you to class
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Listing Research Experiences

PURPOSE: Research experiences are very important in reviewers’ assessment of proposals. This assignment will produce a list that will be used in an in-class activity.

INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Make a list of all the different experiences you’ve had with research.
2. Annotate this list as follows:
   1. Date
   2. Institution/location where this occurred
   3. Title of the research project
   4. Description of your role in the project
   5. Skills that you learned
   6. Things that you learned about yourself personally through this experience
   7. Outcome of the project (as there, or will there be, a paper, poster, presentation... and are you an author)
3. Prioritize this list in terms of their importance in your decision to go to graduate school and the likelihood that you will be successful in graduate school
4. Print out a copy of this to bring to class
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Alternative Introductory Sentences for Personal Statement, Relevant Background and Future Goals (PSRBFG) statement

PURPOSE: Writers frequently find themselves constrained by what they have already written. As a result, they may fail to explore alternatives that would be more effective. This exercise will encourage writers to write several alternatives that will be used in an in-class activity

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Make a list of at least three alternative “introductory ideas” – different ways in which to begin your PRBFG statement. I do not mean different ways to state the same idea but different ideas entirely. For example:
   1) The family environment in which you grew up,
   2) The influential teachers you had,
   3) The intellectual idea that motivates you,
   4) A negative life experience,
   5) A specific research experience....

2) Pick your three favorites and for each, write a different introductory sentence for your PRBFG statement.

3) Print out your three sentences (and your list of alternatives if there were more than these three) and bring to class
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Complete and circulate a draft of Personal Statement, Relevant Background and Future Goals (PSRBFG) statement

PURPOSE: To solicit constructive feedback from your peers

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Be sure to follow NSF GRF Guidelines (see attached)
2) Email a Word document draft of your PSRBFG Statement to the other members of your small group at least 48 hours before your small group is due to meet.
3) Don’t be nervous about doing this and don’t be defensive
4) One of the most important lessons you need to learn is that it really pays to ask your colleagues to comment on your drafts
Personal Statement, Relevant Background and Future Goals

Please outline your educational and professional development plans and career goals. How do you envision graduate school preparing you for a career that allows you to contribute to expanding scientific understanding as well as broadly benefit society?

Describe your personal, educational and/or professional experiences that motivate your decision to pursue advanced study in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Include specific examples of any research and/or professional activities in which you have participated. Present a concise description of the activities, highlight the results and discuss how these activities have prepared you to seek a graduate degree. Specify your role in the activity including the extent to which you worked independently and/or as part of a team. Describe the contributions of your activity to advancing knowledge in STEM fields as well as the potential for broader societal impacts.

NSF Fellows are expected to become globally engaged knowledge experts and leaders who can contribute significantly to research, education, and innovations in science and engineering. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate your potential to satisfy this requirement. Your ideas and examples do not have to be confined necessarily to the discipline that your have chosen to pursue.
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Peer Response to Personal Statement, Relevant Background and Future Goals (PRBFG) statement

PURPOSE: Provide your colleagues with constructive feedback

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Complete this assignment before your small group meeting
2. Read the attached “Peer Response Guidelines” and use this to guide your responses
3. Remember your goal is to let the writer know your response to their writing
4. Be sure to avoid comments about the writer, the writer’s experiences, or the writer’s aspirations.
5. Do not edit the document. Keep your comments focused on the big picture.
6. Print out a copy of your comments to give to the writer at the next small group meeting
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Introductory Paragraph for the Graduate Research (GR) Statement

PURPOSE: To solicit constructive feedback from your peers

INSTRUCTIONS:
1) This first paragraph should be designed to appeal to as large an audience as possible. It should outline the question be asked and indicate why it is important to more than a narrow intellectual discipline.
2) Email a Word document draft of your PSRBFG Statement to the other members of your small group at least 48 hours before your small group is due to meet.
3) Don’t be nervous about doing this and don’t be defensive
4) One of the most important lessons you need to learn is that it really pays to ask your colleagues to comment on your drafts
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Peer Response to Introductory Paragraphs for the Graduate Research (GR) Statement

PURPOSE: Provide your colleagues with constructive feedback

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Complete this assignment before your small group meeting
2. As a reader from outside the writer’s discipline, did the first paragraph grab your attention and make you want to read the rest of the proposal?
3. Remember your goal is to let the writer know your response to their writing
4. Be sure to avoid comments about the writer, the writer’s experiences, or the writer’s aspirations.
5. Do not edit the document. Keep your comments focused on the big picture.
6. Print out a copy of your comments to give to the writer at the next small group meeting
ASSIGNMENT NAME: email PSRBFG draft to Instructor

PURPOSE: Opportunity for feedback from the instructor

INSTRUCTIONS:

Email a Word document draft of your PSRBFG Statement to me
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Complete and circulate a draft of the Graduate Research (GR) statement

PURPOSE: To solicit constructive feedback from your peers

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Be sure to follow NSF GRF Guidelines (see attached)
2) Email a Word document draft of your GR Statement to the other members of your small group at least 48 hours before your small group is due to meet.
3) Don’t be nervous about doing this and don’t be defensive
4) One of the most important lessons you need to learn is that it really pays to ask your colleagues to comment on your drafts
Present an original research topic that you would like to pursue in graduate school. Describe the research idea, your general approach, as well as any unique resources that may be needed for accomplishing the research goal (i.e., access to national facilities or collections, collaborations, overseas work, etc.) You may choose to include important literature citations. Address the potential of the research to advance knowledge and understanding within science as well as the potential for broader impacts on society. The research discussed must be in a field listed in the Solicitation.
ASSIGNMENT NAME: Peer Response to Graduate Research (GR) statement

PURPOSE: Provide your colleagues with constructive feedback

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Complete this assignment before your small group meeting
2. Read the attached “Peer Response Guidelines” and use this to guide your responses
3. Since you are from another discipline you can’t comment on the intellectual merits of the proposed research. However, since you aren’t from the writer’s discipline, you may be more sensitive to the clarity of the writing than an expert would be so your comments can be very helpful.
4. Remember your goal is to let the writer know your response to their writing
5. Be sure to avoid comments about the writer, the writer’s experiences, or the writer’s aspirations.
6. Do not edit the document. Keep your comments focused on the big picture.
7. Print out a copy of your comments to give to the writer at the next small group meeting