

## GUIDE TO FUNDING: WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN APPLYING TO A GRADUATE PROGRAM

Applying to graduate school can be an overwhelming process. Because selecting programs, deciding on where to apply and carefully developing applications can be a lengthy process, many students do not look for funding before they are accepted to a program.

Many funders, on the other hand, are expecting students to apply for funding while they are applying to graduate school. Making funding decisions takes time, and two year programs go quickly. It is important for students to be aware of funding deadlines even before they are accepted to a program.

Some simple tips to stay ahead of the funding game:

- **Know how well-funded your discipline is.** Some areas, particularly in the health and hard sciences, are very well-funded and a good program will be able to fully fund their graduate students. Understanding funding in your discipline will help you know what to expect from your graduate program.
- **Be aware of how your prospective schools notify students of funding opportunities.** Many schools use electronic resources, such as listservs, that you can join before being accepted so that you can see what fellowship or assistantship opportunities are available.
- **It's never too early to start looking for funding.** Fellowship and scholarship deadlines are often in the fall from September through December for the **following** academic year. That means to maximize your funding opportunities for the 2009/10 academic year, you need to be applying in the fall of 2008!
- **Stay organized!** It is common to find things while you're searching that may be more appropriate for you to apply for in the future. Don't brush them aside – create an organization system for yourself so that you don't have to search all over again later. Some ideas for organizing funding opportunities are:
  - Accordion files organized by due date
  - del.icio.us bookmark tags for different kinds of funding opportunities
  - Spreadsheets saved in Google docs
  - A dedicated flashdrive for all of your funding search information

Following these tips will help you understand more about the funding landscape, what opportunities are available to you, and how to manage applications to ensure you are well-funded during your graduate career and beyond!