

Roger S. Smith Information Session

February 3, 2015
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm
L3 Humanities Centre

1. **Opening Remarks** (Associate Dean Research, Mike O'Driscoll)
 - There are 15 awards to give out
 - To be eligible you must have a minimum GPA of 3.3, and be continuing as a full-time undergraduate student in the Faculty of Arts in the Fall of 2015.
 - Deadline for application is March 15th.
 - Applicants will be notified by the end of April.
 - This is not intended to be a full-time job (or slave labour!). The terms of the award stipulate students are expected to spend a total of 320 hours, or 22 hours per week on their projects.
 - Don't forget that both the applicant and supervisor need to fill out sections of the application.
 - Supervisors need to understand that it is not a normal reference letter they are writing – it needs to highlight why they think you are the one to do the project and what they are going to do to support you.
 - Make sure you and your supervisor directly to respond to the things that are asked for.
 - It is important to the committee that this project is about you and that you are not just photocopying for your supervisor's project.
 - We want to support creative work.

2. **Past Roger S. Smith Participant** (Jonathan Chau)
 - Pick the right project!
 - There is no one to hold you accountable so make sure it's something you are interested in and you want to do.
 - Pick the right supervisor.
 - Spend a lot of time working on your proposal. It needs to be clear and concise with no jargon. The committee will know if you threw it together at the last minute.

3. **Roger S. Smith Supervisor** (Lise Gotell)
 - Start early!
 - Your supervisor should be someone you've at least taken a class with, but don't be afraid to approach a potential supervisor you don't know.
 - Come prepared with a plan. A professor is not going to be interested in supporting a student who doesn't at least have an idea of what they want to do for a project, and a rudimentary plan.
 - Be prepared to work. Results are expected at the end of the research term.

4. **Other comments and Q & A**
 - Comment/Tip: The very first sentence of your application should say what you plan to do. Adjudicators don't want to read to the bottom of your application to find out what your plan is. This is very good practice for grad school and for future research in academia.

- Q: Are there examples of past music topics?
 - There have been some in the past on comparing different interpretations of different scores, and one project which involved recording oral folk music in Saskatchewan.

- Q: Do author names count as jargon?
 - No.

- Q: Do working/research hours need to be completed on campus? Is there a specific amount of time you need to spend on your project?
 - All of this is project-dependant and should be discussed with your supervisor, but typically no, you don't need to spend all your time on campus provided you have a means of excellent regular communication between yourself and your supervisor, and you working off campus is not going to be a detriment to the project.
 - The award stipulates a student is required to spend 330 hours (or ~ 22 hours per week) on their project. Our expectation is 20 – 24 hours per week. Some spend a lot more time than this.

- Q: Is there an attempt to diversify research projects? Are there a certain number chosen from each department/discipline?
 - No, projects are chosen on merit, and how well the proposal is written. GPA is also taken into consideration.

- Q: What if a professor is hesitant to supervise me as they have had students get rejected in the past?
 - Explain to them that there are many reasons an application may have been turned down (low GPA, very stiff competition year, poorly written proposal, etc.). It may be useful to get in touch with past award winners or supervisors and ask how they were successful.

- Q: If I don't already have one in mind, how do I find professors who do research in the field that I want to work in?
 - There should be listings of Faculty members on department websites that provide fields and disciplines that they work in (<http://www.foa.ualberta.ca/Departments-Institutes-and-Centres.aspx>). If you can't find what you are looking for online, contact the department and ask them.

- Q: Is it bad to be too ambitious?
 - Yes. This must be a project that you can complete, and do it well, within the allotted 15 weeks. It may be useful to ask your supervisor what they think about your timeline. Make sure you are well-focused and will have something concrete at the end of the summer.

- Q: Can it be ongoing research from supervisor?
 - No. Your project should be related to your supervisor's field of research, but it must be something that was your idea and something that you are responsible for completing. The purpose of this grant is not to make you a research assistant for your professor. You must be undertaking your own project and learning something valuable from this experience.

- Q: How many applications are received?
 - Between 35 and 45 applications are normally received each year. Can be more, can be less.

- Q: Can the project be independent.
 - Yes, we definitely expect this to be an independent project. We do not want students doing work FOR their supervisors.

- Q: Expand on focus – be clear what you're doing. How clear?
 - Be as succinct as possible.
 - Samples of successful applications are on the website. Suggest writing as many paragraphs as it takes to say what you need to say, then delete it all and start over. There is a word limit. You must adhere to it.
 - Start your application early!
 - Remember your application will be adjudicated by a multidisciplinary team who very well may have no idea what your area of research is about, so don't use jargon when describing your project. If the committee cannot understand what your project is about or the importance of the question you are trying to answer, they will dismiss your application.

- Q: Do you need to specify how you spend the money?
 - No.

- Q: If you're successful, when do you get the money?
 - You're paid by the Registrar's office bi-monthly over the 15 weeks. If you are successful in your application, the Registrar's office will contact you with further payment details.

- Q: Do you need to include potential hypothesis?
 - Tread carefully here. You don't want to propose a project you already have the answer to. Proposing a project for which you already have the answer will not get you funding.
 - If you've done a lot of background reading and have a potential hypothesis, sure, you can include it to highlight you've done your homework.
 - If you don't have a hypothesis, don't worry about it, as long as you have a plan.