Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship Competition 2019

Workshop - August 15, 2018  12:00 - 2:00 PM
Participants

Moderator:        Dr. Bryan Hogeveen, Interim Vice-Dean, FGSR, & Chair, GSC

Introduction:     Ms. Patricia Smith, Acting Supervisor, FGSR Awards Services

Academic Success Centre:   Dr. Kate Pratt, Advisor/Instructor, Graduate Writing Program

GSC Members: Dr. Thomas Spalding, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts
Dr. Patrick Flood, Professor, Dentistry
Dr. Bonnie Stelmach, Associate Professor, Educational Policy Studies

Panelists: Jose Guzman Quesada (NSERC): 2018-19 competition winner
Haley Schafer (NSERC): 2018-19 competition winner
William Schultz (SSHRC): 2018-19 competition winner
Andrew Woodman (CIHR): 2018-19 competition winner
Uchechukwu Umezurike (SSHRC): 2018-19 competition winner
What are the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships?

- Scholarship program administered by the Vanier-Banting Secretariat on behalf of Canada’s three granting agencies (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR).
- $50,000 x 3 years
- *The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS) program attracts and retains world-class doctoral students and helps establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning.*
- Major selection criteria: academic excellence, research potential, leadership (potential and demonstrated ability).
- International students are eligible to apply.
2019 Quotas (U of A)

The number of nominees U of A can forward to the national competition:

- CIHR – 10
- NSERC – 13
- SSHRC – 8
2019 U of A Competition Timeline

September 17, 2018
23:59 PM, Mountain Time/ September 18, 2018 01:59 AM Eastern Time
• Institutional Internal Deadline: Deadline to submit your complete application package to U of A (FGSR) through ResearchNet

October 31, 2018
18:00 PM Mountain Time/ 20:00 PM Eastern Time
• Program Deadline: FGSR submits nomination packages to the Vanier-Banting Secretariat national competition

End of March 2019
• Nominees will be notified by email when the results are available on ResearchNet
How do I Apply?

Students apply via ResearchNet (an online application portal).

A complete application includes:

- Online Application Form and Attachments: Personal Leadership Statement (2 pages), Two Leadership Reference Letters (2 pages each - must be requested from referees), Research Contributions page (1 page), Special Circumstances page (1 page), Research Proposal (2 pages), and Project References (5 pages)
- Canadian Common CV
- Two Academic Reference Letters
- Official Transcripts
- Department Nomination Letter
What are the Eligibility Criteria for the Vanier Scholarships?

Both Canadian and international students are eligible to apply.

**To be eligible, you must:**

- be enrolled full-time in a doctoral program no later than January 2020
- not have completed more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2019
- have achieved first-class average (GPA of at least 3.5 on the U of A grading scale) in each of the last two years of full-time study (or equivalent)
- be pursuing your first doctoral (including joint undergraduate/graduate research programs, such as MD/PhD or JD/PhD) degree
- not have already received a doctoral scholarship or fellowship from CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC
- Additional eligibility requirements apply. See the [Vanier website](https://www.canadianuniversityscholarships.com/vanier)s for details
Reference Letters/Dept Nomination Letter

*Request all letters early*
Submit by U of A Deadline (September 17th)

- **Department Nomination letter**: mandatory to complete your application; department submits straight to FGSR

- **Leadership Reference letters (two)**: your referees give these to you directly; you then scan and upload them to your application

- **Academic Reference letters**: you add your referee’s contact information to your application, ResearchNet sends them a request to fill out an assessment; you will be able to see whether or not the assessment is completed
Transcripts

• Ensure that FGSR has all of your original, hard-copy, up-to-date, post-secondary transcripts

  ➢ You do not need to provide FGSR with your U of A transcript
  ➢ Provide a certified translation of any transcript not in English or French
  ➢ If you have received transfer credits earned, please include the transcript from the original institution
  ➢ Include transcripts from institutions at which you only took courses
  ➢ If FGSR already has your official up-to-date transcripts, these transcripts do not need to be submitted again

• It is your responsibility to confirm which of your transcripts are at FGSR and which are not

  ➢ You can email us to confirm this information
  ➢ Provide us with: your name, Student ID number and a list of the transcripts/translations you want confirmed

• It is your responsibility to order and ensure the timely delivery of any outstanding transcripts to FGSR before September 17th

• IMPORTANT: Transcripts submitted to clear your Conditions of Admission may not be acceptable for Vanier purposes as they may not be up-to-date.
Application Resources/Information

Vanier Website:
• Competition Overview
• Full Eligibility Criteria
• Detailed Instructions to Applicants (read in detail)
  ➢ Selection Committee Guide (explains how your application will be evaluated at the national competition)
  ➢ Presentation Standards (explains how to format your attached documents)
• Information for Referees (please provide this information to your referees)
• Information about the Review Process

FGSR Website:
• U of A specific competition information
• Internal U of A Vanier deadlines
• Application Resources (U of A Vanier Application Process, Vanier Application and Document Checklist, 2019 Vanier Nomination Letter Memo)
Who do I ask for help?

Vanier:
• Technical help with the online application portal (ResearchNet)

FGSR (U of A) can:
• Clarify your eligibility (if you are still unsure after reviewing Vanier requirements)
• Confirm completeness of your transcript records (based on information you provide to us)
• Help you fill out the administrative details of your application, if you are unsure what to write (e.g. filling out your “months in program”, or the tenure of an award you list on your CV)
• We **cannot** pre-calculate your GPA

For advice on how to best present the information in your application (e.g., how to write your research proposal):
1.) Review the detailed Vanier application instructions
2.) Seek advice from members of your faculty/department (supervisor, grad chair, etc)

For writing support:
Academic Success Centre
[www.ualberta.ca/current-students/academic-success-centre](http://www.ualberta.ca/current-students/academic-success-centre)
Centre for Writers
[http://c4w.ualberta.ca/](http://c4w.ualberta.ca/)
Contact Information

Vanier Technical Help:
Phone: 1-888-603-4178 or 613-954-1968
Email: support@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
07:00 to 20:00 Eastern Time

Vanier Program Help:
Email: vanier@cihr.irsc.gc.ca

FGSR Awards Services:
Phone: 780-492-9460
Email: gradvani@ualberta.ca
https://www.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/awards-and-funding
ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTRE
Dr. Kate Pratt
What We Offer

• We work with graduate students across disciplines and at any stage of the writing process
• We conduct one-on-one writing consultations and run writing workshops
• We offer a suite of workshops on writing a variety of documents, including thesis chapters, journal articles, and funding proposals
• We are running a workshop called “Writing an Effective Funding Proposal” this summer
Writing an Effective Funding Proposal

Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon
Date: Tuesday, August 21st
Instructor: Rob Desjardins, PhD
Location: TBA
Focus of Workshop

• The focus of the workshop will be on the research proposal component of the application
• The workshop is open to all graduate students crafting a proposal
• This workshop will use the Vanier competition as a case study
Core Challenge

At the beginning of the workshop, we’ll address the core challenge facing proposal writers: conveying to non-specialist readers a clear understanding of, and a sense of urgency and enthusiasm toward, a research project.
Other Components

During the remainder of the workshop, we will look in detail at various strategies for tackling three common components of the research proposal:

• 1) The problem/purpose component, which must engage readers’ interest and usher them effectively towards an understanding of the project

• 2) The methods component, which must be clear, fluid and comprehensive

• 3) The statement of research implications, which must be vivid, concise, and compelling
Strategic Considerations

We’ll also consider other strategic considerations:

• Techniques for vivid sentences
• Effective use of white space
• Value of seeking expert input
Approach

The session won’t be general and abstract; it will be practical

- We’ll devote time to examining sample proposals critically to understand the authors’ choices and consider how and why they have succeeded
Register

To register for the workshop, please call the Academic Success Centre:

Phone: 780-492-2682

Our main office is located in 1-80 SUB
REFERENCE LETTERS
Dr. Thomas Spalding
Vanier Letters

• Vanier is a special competition--you don’t want a generic letter, recycled from other competitions.
  – Faculty members, no matter how much they want to give a good letter, will recycle under time pressure.
  – Vanier puts a LOT of emphasis on demonstrated and potential LEADERSHIP
    • Being a great student is not enough.
    • Being a great junior scholar is not enough.

• Start project and leadership statements EARLY

• Give your referees TIME and let them know exactly what you are proposing and exactly why you fit the criteria (particularly leadership)
How to help your referee

• Give them the criteria and explain how Vanier is different
  – Don’t assume they will check or know

• Give them a clear project and leadership statement (again, EARLY)

• Offer to meet with them to discuss anything unclear, particularly with leadership, what’s on paper might not be clear. Your referee can explain it in letter, but this gives you feedback for improvement, too.

• Make sure your materials make the best, clearest case that you are a good fit specifically to the Vanier criteria so your referee has a lot to work with.
How to help yourself

• Hardest thing:
  – You are a great student/junior scholar, or you wouldn’t be thinking of it, but…
  – Are you REALLY appropriate for this award?
    • Look at the criteria carefully, and realistically
    • Talk to your supervisor about the criteria, maybe talk to experienced people in your department, or Faculty, or at FGSR.
    • I’ve seen lots of letters where the writer did not really seem to think the student was a good fit for Vanier, and that is a kiss of death in this competition.

• If you aren’t a good fit, don’t waste your time!
  – Instead, look to remedy your weaknesses and apply next year or the year after.
RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Dr. Patrick Flood
Research Proposal

- Provide a detailed description of your proposed research project in **2 PAGES**
- Provide background information
- Be specific
- State the objectives, hypothesis, research question and your specific role.
- Outline the experimental or theoretical approach to be taken
- Describe the benefit conferred by undertaking your research at the nominating institution
- Make sure you address ethics
- If your potential or current PhD supervisor is unable to provide you with a reference letter, briefly explain why.
- Include information on diversity
- As you write your research proposal, employ the citation style common to your field of research.
General guide to preparation of a research proposal

• Get off to a good start – make sure it’s a strong opening
• Be as precise as possible: limit language -
  – Must be “readable”
• It should be clear and focused – avoid vernacular
  – This is not a novel
• Emphasize feasibility and merit
  – Why am I and my advisor the best people to do this, and why here?
• Emphasize significance and impact
  – Would I spend my own money on this project? Why?
• Be honest about the limitations of your research
  – Don’t make vast predictions from half-vast approaches
• Don’t be afraid to strongly state your case
  – “it ain’t bragging if it’s true”- Will Rogers
• Write the review for the reviewer
• Define your role in the proposal
• Delineate the important statements
  – Judicious use of boldface, underline, or italics
• Get feedback from a number of different sources
  – Don’t assume because you understand it the reviewer will as well
Helpful Tips

• Develop a precise vocabulary: describe things using scientific language.
  - Define your terms. Don’t assume reviewers know your field’s vernacular

• Be as consistent as possible:
  – Once you've labeled an activity, a molecule, a condition, or a time period, use that label consistently throughout the proposal. Consistency is more important than creativity.

• Give the reader just enough information to come to the same conclusions that you did (or to come to different conclusions)
  – Include all the information the reader needs to understand your approach
  – Remember, the key to all successful scientific discourse is that it have impact. Have you presented enough information clearly enough that the reader could understand the context of your proposal in your field of study?

• When you use numbers, use them judiciously and effectively. Don't present them so that they cause more work for the reviewer.
Helpful Tips (Continued)

• If you include data, make sure we put it in context of your study objectives, and emphasize how it contributes to the significance of the proposal.

• Research your format and citations

• Run a spellcheck and proofread carefully. Read your paper out to yourself aloud, and/or have a friend look over it for misspelled words, missing words, bad English, confusing sentences, etc. Run it through a program that checks for plagiarism.

• Understand that the reviewers are likely NOT in your field – write for a scientist - not specifically for a biochemist

• Emphasize both the importance of the proposal and its importance to your development as a scientist
LEADERSHIP STATEMENT
Dr. Bonnie Stelmach
"I always tell people you never know what you can do and what you can survive when you're faced with that choice... And if you truly believe in something, you will fight for it, and for me, I really truly love the ocean and it's worth fighting for."

Source: http://www.cbc.ca/radio/outintheopen/after-escape-1.4474473/the-aftermath-of-escaping-a-shark-attack-1.4474538
Why are you here?
What Counts as Leadership?

- **Leadership (Potential & Demonstrated Ability)**

Three “C” Framework of Leadership: Character, Competencies and Commitment

Mazutis et al. (2011)
Panel Discussion and Q&A

**SSHRC**
*William Schultz,* Sociology  
*Uchechukwu Umezurike,* English and Film Studies

**CIHR**
*Andrew Woodman,* Pharmacology

**NSERC**
*Jose Guzman Quesada,* Earth and Atmospheric Sciences  
*Haley Schafer,* Civil and Environmental Engineering
Thank you!

Please tell us how we can make this workshop better by filling out the feedback survey before you leave.