TIPS ON CREATING A WINNING APPLICATION

BEFORE YOU APPLY:

❖ Get organized. Support yourself in your own efforts to succeed! Take the time to set up a good system (a spreadsheet, calendar, or wall chart) to track deadlines, application requirements, contacts & tasks.

❖ Find programs or funding opportunities that match your interests and goals. Plan on doing some serious research to find them. Don’t just apply for the money. Apply because you want the degree or the experience. Show that your professional goals are in line with program guidelines. Pay careful attention to restrictions about who can apply.

❖ When applicable, connect with the faculty member you want to work with.

❖ Plan ahead. Research your university’s system for requesting transcripts; give the authors of your letters of recommendation enough time; plan on following up before it’s too late to make a difference.

IN YOUR APPLICATION:

❖ Cover the basics. Fulfill all the elements of the application. Meet deadlines with time to spare. Demonstrate that you can follow directions.

❖ Pay attention to details. Make your application reflect the high level of care and consideration that you’ve put into preparing it:
  - Double check for spelling and grammar errors. Get friends, professors & mentors to proof your work. Use your campus career and writing centers!
  - Be consistent in how you report your name. The name on your SS card, your application, and your application support materials should be identical.
  - Make sure your email, phone & address will be active when offer letters go out.
  - Check your email regularly! This is how most programs will follow up.

❖ Use your resume, essays and personal narrative to show who you are. Show your leadership potential with evidence that you have made a difference already (previous or other experiences). Show interest, enthusiasm & motivation. Show relevant background, skills or experience. Deliver a consistent message. GPA & standardized test scores are important, but don’t let average or low numbers stand in your way.

❖ Demonstrate strong writing skills and show proficiency in the English language. Use your campus career and writing centers!

❖ Know how to get strong letters of reference. Choose references carefully: seek out recommenders who can speak to your skills, ambition and work ethic. Contact references early and provide them with a copy of your resume or CV.

AND LASTLY:

❖ Keep trying – if you don’t get an award one year, apply again next year!

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