



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

# Achieving Scholarship Success

## Graduate Science Education

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***In the spirit of reconciliation, The University of Calgary and the City of Calgary are located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (consisting of the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.***

# Agenda

- Introductions
- The scholarship year
- Tips and trick for setting up for scholarship success
  
- Slides will be made available after the workshop
  
- Quick poll: MSc? PhD? Applying for awards?

# GSE Scholarship Team

- Cameron Vanderwey: Scholarship and Stipend Officer
  - Procedural aspects of scholarship applications (transcripts, how to apply)
  - Gets you paid
- Rebekah DeVinney: Director of Scholarships
- Erik van Tilburg Bernardes: Student Lead
  - Scholarship application writing support
  - Coordinate internal review



# Overview of Award Opportunities

- Federal Scholarship Opportunities:
  - Canadian Graduate Scholarships (CGS)-M, CGS-D/PGS-D, Vanier
- Provincial Scholarship Opportunities:
  - Alberta Innovates, AbSPORu; Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES) Research
- Non-profits societies
- University Scholarships/Special Awards Funding:
  - Graduate Award Competition (GAC)
- Institute/Faculties/Departments
- Program recommended Awards

# Graduate Awards Timelines



Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Vanier: PAF Due June 8 Citizenship: Unrestricted				AbSPORu						
	CIHR/NSERC/SSHRC PhD Citizenship: CDN/PR									
			CIHR/NSERC/SSHRC CGS Masters Citizenship: CDN/PR							
					Indigenous Citizenship: Canadian only					
					Entrance Citizenship: Unrestricted					
					Graduate Awards Competition (GAC) Citizenship: Unrestricted					
					Alberta Innovates-Technology Citizenship: Unrestricted					
Travel Awards Citizenship: Unrestricted										
Faculty, Institute and Program-specific awards										

# Tri-Council Awards



- Three granting agencies
  - CIHR: Health-related research
  - NSERC: Basic sciences that are NOT health related
  - SSHRC: Social sciences
- Awards
  - Tri-Council Doctoral
  - Canadian Graduate Scholarship-Masters
  - Top tier awards-very competitive but worth applying for if eligible
    - Time in program
    - First class marks (>3.5) in last two years
    - Open to Canadian Citizens/Permanent Residents
- Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement
  - Tri-council winners, up to \$6k to get international research experience

# Tri-council awards

- Tri-council awards
  - PhD: \$35,000/yr, 3 yrs
  - MSc: \$17,500, 1 yr
- Deadlines
  - PhD: Early October
  - MSc: Early December
- CIHR also offers travel awards for presentations at conferences
  - Often institute based



# Vanier

- Supports world-class doctoral students. Top tier award
  - Academic excellence
  - Research potential
  - Leadership
- \$50,000/yr, for 3 yrs
- Students submit a Preliminary Assessment Form to FGS
  - Deadline is in early June
  - Selected students receive application support through FGS and GLC
  - International students are eligible

# Alberta Innovates

- AI-Technologies Futures
  - Thesis based research related to Information and Communication Technologies, Nanotechnology, or Omics
  - Doesn't support medical or health related research
  - Doctoral and Masters awards
  - Apply through GAC awards
- AI-Data Enabled Innovation
  - Health research included
  - Examples include: Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, quantum technologies
  - Doctoral and Masters awards
  - Apply through GAC

# Alberta Innovates-Health Solutions

- AbSPORu Graduate Studentships
  - Fund patient-oriented research
  - Can only apply in first year of Masters or Doctoral degree
  - Strict criteria for patient-oriented research
  - Agency deadline mid-October
    - FGS may set internal deadline, check their website

# Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES)

- Masters (\$11K) and Doctoral (\$15K) Awards
- AGES Research-Competitive awards
  - Tri-council applicants scoring highly but not funded
  - Applicants expected to apply in next competition where eligible
- AGES-Program Recommended
- AGES-Indigenous
- AGES International
  - Apply through GAC competition
- Program is undergoing review so this may change!

# Graduate Awards Competition (GAC)

- Big campus-wide competition
- Hundreds of awards, one application
- Application portal opens in early Nov
- Deadline in January (early-mid)



# Awards Offered through GAC

- **Open to all eligible U of C graduate students**
  - Doctoral Entrance Scholarships
  - Izaak Walton Killam Doctoral Scholarships
  - Open Doctoral Scholarships
  - Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarships
  - Special Awards
  - Some Indigenous Awards
  - Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES) - International

# New since 2021: Scholarships offered through CSM and Institutes

- CSM Scholarship
- Achievers in Medical Science Doctoral
- Eleanor Mackie Doctoral
- WH Davies
- ACHRI Graduate Scholarship
- Libin Cardiovascular Institute Scholarships (12)
- Department of Medicine Scholarships
- Charbonneau Institute

# CSM and AIMS Doctoral Eligibility

- CSM Scholarship
  - In first year or first semester of second year at award start date (May)
  - M.Sc. and direct entry to Ph.D. in thesis-based programs
  - Supervisor has a primary appointment in CSM
  - Citizenship is unrestricted
- Achievers in Medical Science Doctoral
  - First year direct entry to Ph.D.
  - Citizenship unrestricted
  - Students must be registered in a CSM graduate program

# Eleanor Mackie Doctoral Scholarship in Women's Health And WH Davies Medical Research Scholarship

- Eleanor Mackie
  - Doctoral students in CSM graduate programs
  - Research area: Microbiology and Immunology pertaining to women's health
- WH Davies
  - Full time students thesis based graduate programs
    - Students cannot hold more than \$3,000 in award funding (includes monetary awards, scholarship, studentships, etc.) in Fall 2022-Winter 2023 academic year
    - Students must have a GPA equal to or higher than 3.3 (B+) over the graduate courses taken to date

# International Students

- Eligible for AGES International, GAC and Alberta Innovates, Vanier awards
- Many program and special awards unrestricted
- Country-specific awards
  - Science Without Borders (Brazil, entrance award)
  - China Scholarship Council
- International student travel awards
  - Presentations at international and national competitions
- More information here:  
[https://grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/international\\_students](https://grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/international_students)



# Awards offered through professional societies

- Disease or discipline-specific awards
- Examples include
  - MS Society
  - Canadian Lung Association
  - Canadian Alzheimer Society
  - Cystic Fibrosis Canada
- Degree stream, citizenship requirements vary
- Talk to your supervisor!

# Indigenous Awards

- Indigenous Graduate Award (provincial)
  - Masters and Doctoral awards
  - Open to self-identified indigenous students from Canada
  - Separate competition
- Other awards
  - External awards
  - Special Awards (U of C)
    - ii'taa'poh'to'p Graduate Scholarship
    - Captain Nichola K S Goddard Memorial Graduate Scholarship
    - Metis Scholar Graduate Award
- <https://grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/award-opportunities/search-awards>

# Program Specific Awards

- Vary by program
- Travel, thesis, publication and entrance awards
- Talk to your Graduate Program Administrator or Program Director for more information

# Setting up for success

# Top Reasons Good Students Don't Get Funded

- General:
  - Not applying or giving up after the first attempt.
  - Not following instructions – i.e. addressing criteria/stretching rules.
  - A generic letter of reference. The letter is positive but gives no specifics and does not address criteria.
- Application material:
  - Frustrating evaluators by making material hard to find.
  - Diluting genuinely important/impressive material by describing generic material at length.
  - Content, context and/or impact of research not clearly stated or lacking detail.
  - Not addressing possible weaknesses in the application.

\*\*\*How do you avoid these pitfalls?\*\*\*



# Setting up for success

- Be prepared!
  - You might learn of an opportunity on short notice
- Keep your CV updated
  - This is not a resume
  - Record of ALL your academic life

# Common themes: Research accomplishments and potential

- Write a one page “generic” proposal
  - Introduction, hypothesis and aims, methods, significance
  - Can be edited to fit award terms of reference
- Think about how the data you have can be presented or published
  - Conference? Research Day?
  - Contribute data to colleague’s work (co-authorship)
  - Talk to your supervisor



# Research Proposal

- Quality of your proposal:
  - Specific, focused, feasible and clearly stated research questions/objectives/hypothesis.
  - Methodology explained clearly.
  - Significance and expected contributions to research.
- Think about:
  - What is new and important about your work?
  - What is the key question and how will you address it?
  - How does your work fit into the bigger picture?
  - What does success look like for your project?



# Research Proposal – student perspective

- Research Proposal (Thesis-based)
  - Make your hypothesis and aims clear and easy to understand.
  - With each aim provide an alternative route if it does not work.
    - Important to show foresight.
  - What makes your research novel?
  - Who and how will your research findings provide benefit?
    - Ex. Society? Research community?
    - Should be beneficial whether you prove or disprove your hypothesis.
  - Be reasonable with your aims and objectives.
    - Time frame and quantity of findings.



# Research Proposal – student perspective

- Hook your reader early:
  - Introduction at “newspaper” level—more general.
  - State importance of work quickly.
  - Minimize use of jargon.
- Lay abstract is important!!!
  - Do not use this as the introduction to your proposal.
  - Non-scientist should understand this abstract.
    - Ask for a non-scientist friend/family member/partner to read.



# Research Proposal – student perspective

- Summary of do's and don'ts:
- **DO:**
  - Have multiple audiences review your proposal (Eg. colleagues, friends, partners).
  - Make sure your supervisor reviews the proposal.
    - If possible, meet in person to discuss.
  - Make each section clear and easy to follow.
    - Should have a flow regardless of its divided up.
- **DON'T:**
  - Use complicated or field specific jargon (better to use simple phrasing).
  - Use very small font to allow yourself to have an extremely long proposal.
    - Should be concise. No one wants to read 100 long proposals.



# Research ability and potential

- Training: academic, lived experience, traditional teachings
- Research experience and achievements relative to stage of study, lived experience and knowledge systems.
- Quality of contributions: discipline specific
  - Published papers, abstracts.
  - Presentations: podium and posters.
  - Patents and IP.
- Demonstrate:
  - Critical thinking, judgement.
  - Ethical conduct.
  - Enthusiasm for research.
  - Ability to communicate.

# Publications and Other Research Contributions

- Publications include manuscripts, review articles, book chapters, abstracts published in journals:
  - Provide as much background as possible, your reviewers may not know the important journals or conferences in your field.
- Other contributions include:
  - Presentations (posters, talks) at conferences.
  - Abstracts in conference booklets.
  - Patents.
  - Scientific reports.

# Publications and Other Research Contributions

- Early stages of graduate career (most contributions are helpful):
  - Non-refereed publications (e.g. working papers).
  - Conference presentations – including small local conferences, student conferences, etc.
- More advanced students (quality of contribution also taken into consideration).
  - Refereed journals are most highly valued.
  - International conference venues.

# Relevant Experience and Achievements

- Academic record:
  - Transcripts.
    - Program requirements, courses taken, course load.
    - Relative standing (if available).
- Scholarships, awards and distinctions:
  - Amount of award, duration, prestige.
- Professional, academic and extracurricular activities
- Evidence
  - References.
  - Personal statement.
  - Transcripts

# Relevant Experience and Achievements

\*\*\* This is your chance to tell your story\*\*\*

- Professional, academic and extracurricular activities:
  - Collaborations.
  - Teaching, mentoring, supervising and/or coaching.
  - Project management, organizing conferences.
  - Outreach to community, science/research promotion.
  - Charing committees.
- Participation in department/institute organizations.
- Agencies fund the student, not just the project.

# Relevant Experience

- Use examples from academic and personal life.
  - Academic: TA courses, your lab, workshops, etc.
  - Personal: community volunteering, committees, mentoring, etc.
- Don't try and stretch things too much.
  - Give solid examples, not 'fluffy' ones.
- Try to be diverse.
  - Ex. Leading workshop, volunteering at homeless shelter, vice-chair of a committee.



# Relevant Experience

Beyond just listing these...

- What did you learn from these experiences?
  - What skills did you learn that could also benefit you in research?
  - How these experiences fit within your research goals?
- Have referees address achievements/setbacks in a way that is positive.



# Allowable Inclusions

- You can't change your past; only how you communicate it
- When appropriate, outline extraordinary circumstances that may have delayed or interrupted:
  - 1) your completion of degree(s),
  - 2) record or research achievement, or
  - 3) your research career.
- Extraordinary circumstances include care of **family members, illness, disability or other exceptional factors.**
- Many agencies are allowing students to explain how COVID-related shutdowns affected research or course of study.

# Letters of Reference

- **Choose referees wisely. Think about:**
  - Supervisory committee members
  - Course instructors

**Do not just ask** someone for a reference. Be proactive and make it easy for your referee to write a good assessment:

# Letters of Reference

**\*\* How to support your referee to write a good assessment \*\***

- Provide the review criteria
  - Ask them to address the criteria (provide examples).
- Provide transcripts and a CV
  - highlight accomplishments or details you wish to have covered in the assessment.
- Meet to discuss.
- Be strategic in choosing your referees in terms of covering the criteria.
- Ask them to address information in Allowable Inclusions

# Letter of reference

- Ask early!!!
- Ensure referee confirms receipt of email request.
  - It may end up in the junk/spam folder!
- Send guide on writing a reference (Website: Tips for success).

**\*\*\* Follow up – Don't be shy! \*\*\***

- Remind your referees of the deadline a week or more before the reference is due.
  - Make sure correct deadline is selected on reference request form.



# Putting it all together

- **Start early:**
  - Writing a good application takes time and planning. Also, multiple review rounds.
  - Good idea to discuss timeline with supervisor.
- **Know what you are applying for:**
  - Read the terms of reference to confirm you meet the eligibility criteria and understand what is required to complete the application.
- **Follow the rules:**
  - Reviewers check this (they really do!).
- **Write to a broader audience:**
  - Reviewers are diverse and will likely not be experts in your field.
- **Know how you are being evaluated:**
  - What are the selection criteria and how are they weighted.



# Application Support

# Graduate Science Education

- Scholarship and Stipend Officer: Cameron Vanderwey
  - Assist students in finding opportunities and interpreting and navigating application guidelines and processes.
- Internal review and peer-mentors
- Drop in sessions
- Scholarship Specific Workshops (CGSM, GAC)
  - Tri-council Masters. Oct 14, 1-2:30, O1500
  - Graduate Awards Competition. Nov 18, 1-2:30, O1500

# Application support: FGS

- FGS Workshops:
  - [Graduate Leaders Circle.](#)
- [MyGradSkills Workshops.](#)
- [FGS Awards Website.](#)
  - [Tips for preparing your application.](#)
- GRADpost:
  - Important Updates, Important Deadlines, Awards, and MyGradSkills sections.

# Resources:

- Graduate Science Education:
  - <https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/gse/current-students/scholarships>.
  - Internal review, Peer mentors, Workshops.
- Faculty of Graduate Studies:
  - Scholarship office: [gsaward@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gsaward@ucalgary.ca)
  - Associate Dean Graduate Studies: Dr. Donna-Marie McCafferty  
[dmmccaff@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmmccaff@ucalgary.ca)
  - Graduate Leaders Circle [gradlead@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gradlead@ucalgary.ca)
- Student Success Center: writing workshops/one-on-one  
<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>