

2015 – Gilliam Fellowships for Advanced Study General Application Feedback

While HHMI doesn't provide reviewer comments to applicants, we can offer a general overview of the observations of reviewers that separated the applications they considered outstanding from those they considered very competitive. Reviewers were asked to comment on the four parts of the application (personal statement, research proposal, mentor letter, and nomination letter) but their overall assessment need not represent an equal weighting of the components.

Evaluating the Personal Statement

The best applications provided evidence of commitment to diversity in the sciences. They described experience and activities in service of a diverse community of scientists.

Weaker personal statements were fragmented and/or didn't tell a story to give the reviewers confidence in the applicant's commitment or experience.

Evaluating the Research Proposal

The best applications were well presented and had creative approaches to interesting problems. They listed anticipated outcomes and alternative strategies. Many had good progress to date, in some cases with publications.

Weaker applications explored standard questions or were not well explained. They had no back up plans or preliminary data.

Evaluating the Mentor's Letter

The best letters had a good mentoring plan tailored specifically for the applicant, often explicitly using an individual development plan (IDP). If the mentor were junior, there was a more experienced co-mentor. It was explicit that there were resources available to support the proposed research.

Weaker letters did not provide a mentoring plan, although they might have described a generic training plan of individual meetings, lab meetings and journal clubs. An inexperienced mentor with no co-mentor or mentors without research funding were also considered weaknesses.

Evaluating the Nomination Letter

A solid nomination letter addressed the strength of the mentor and the commitment of the program. Strong letters provided details about the success of recent efforts to recruit and develop graduate students from diverse backgrounds.

Weaker letters provided little detail about the program or an articulation of current diversity efforts and outcomes. They did not mention why the proposed mentor would be good for the particular candidate and diversity in general.

Additional information can be found at: <http://www.hhmi.org/gilliam>

If you have questions or comments email Gilliam@hhmi.org