TIPS FOR WRITERS OF APPLICATION ESSAYS, PERSONAL STATEMENTS, GRANTS, AND COVER LETTERS

THE WRITING CENTER
Our tutors are happy to provide feedback. Please note that we do not have any specialized knowledge about law school, medical school, business, or other programs you may be interested in. We can, however, tell you what we found most interesting in your writing, what was confusing, what we would have liked to hear more about, and what kind of impression your essay made on us.

During busy times of year, the Writing Center enforces a limit of three (3) appointments per student per semester for personal statements, applications, and/or cover letters. In the course of these visits, we will strive to teach you skills that you can apply to all of your essays, no matter how many different ones you may be writing. Be sure to plan your use of our services accordingly so that you can make the most of each visit.

BOOKS AND HANDOUTS
The Writing Center has several books you can read while you’re here. They include How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School, Resumes that Get Jobs, Grant Application Writer's Handbook, Writing a Successful Grant Application, Resumes for College Students and Recent Graduates With Sample Cover Letters, and Essays That Worked (With Comments From Admissions Officers). The UNC Libraries also have books on these topics; many of them include advice from admissions committees/grant committees/employers and examples of different kinds of essays.

The Writing Center also offers handouts on application essays, business letters, grant proposals, proofreading, and style; you can find printed copies near our front door and electronic copies on our website, at http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/index.html.

EDITING SERVICES
If your goal is to get your writing into perfect form, you may wish to consider working with a professional editor. The Writing Center does not edit and cannot ensure that your writing is free of grammatical and mechanical errors; an editor can. We provide a “Help for Hire” space on our website where local editors can advertise their services: http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/helpforhire/

Be sure that you determine whether your audience will accept work that has been edited. Many schools require that you acknowledge any assistance you have received with your writing, and some specifically require that you not work with editors. Check with the person or program you are writing for to be certain you know what is permitted.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF
* What kinds of things do you think your audience (admissions committee, employer, grant sponsor, etc.) is looking for in an applicant?
* What do you think your readers will learn about you from your essay?
* What kinds of things do you think your readers hear frequently? How have you distinguished yourself from other candidates?
* If you are including multiple materials (e.g. a resume, cover letter, and essay), does your main essay repeat any information unnecessarily? (Does it mostly restate things that are already listed elsewhere?)
* What is the most important message you would like to get across?
* Who might be able to give you further feedback on your writing?