Note from the Student Newsletter Editor and GSC Communications Officer

By: Deborah O'Malley

Welcome! Bienvenue !

Hello! Welcome to an all-new edition of the CSEP Student Newsletter, featuring interesting articles from talented writers: Shilpa Dogra, Natalie Dies, Amanda Rossi and Andrew Levy.

Since now is the time when a lot of us are applying for grant and scholarship applications, this edition is here to serve as a helpful resource for you.

So, when you’re pulling out your hair trying writing an award-winning application, take a break and consult our helpful guide. We might just have the answers you need.

We welcome any questions or comments.

Enjoy!

Deborah O’Malley

And Now Introducing Team GSC 2008...

By: Shilpa Dogra

The General Manager: Melissa Thomas (Chair)
Home Team: University of Calgary (Ph.D.)
Name of the Game: Aging and Muscle Function

Important Stats:
Like any good GM, Melissa schmoozes the big guys with a good game of golf, especially on those days she changes her proposal. She shows her team spirit with the occasional green hair day. After a tough day of researching muscles in older adults, she likes to watch an episode of Bones…. ironic?
Head Coach: Lianne Dolan (Chair-elect)
Home Team: University of British Columbia (Ph.D.)
Name of the Game: Clinical exercise physiology (breast cancer)

Important Stats:
With the eventual goal of beating her brother to world domination, Lianne is currently working on proving that chocolate is the world’s next superfood. She is also working on trying to make jokes that people will laugh at… Lianne lets loose by going “world cup crazy” and like any big soccer fan, she plays the game too…in addition to mountain biking, skiing, field hockey, tennis and snowshoeing! Her busy lifestyle and BC style expenses prevent her from watching TV, but we venture to guess she’ll have her Ph.D. proposal done and cable connected in time for the Vancouver Olympics…any betters?

Team Captain: Deborah O’Malley
Home Team: Queen’s University (MSc)
Name of the Game: Eye tracking technology and message-framing

Important Stats:
With a sense of humour that only “Deb O’Malley” gets, Deb hopes to become just like her lab GM, Dr Amy Latimer. In the meantime, she is passing the time by working on Facebook, and bouncing balls around the lab. She also bounces a ball around the squash court when she’s not cheering on the Queen’s Squash Team. While contemplating her MSc proposal, Deb will be working on her VJing career…. anyone having a party soon?

Player: Justin Boyer
Home Team: Laurentian University (MSc)
Name of the Game: The role of plakin crosslinking proteins in muscle

Important Stats:
A true Habs fan, and avid Sportscentre viewer, Justin is a hard-working man who puts in 40-60 hour work-weeks. Like any good academic, he spends a lot of that time doing ‘research’ on the net while listening to the Dean Blundell Show on 102 The Edge. A man who has always dreamed of being a successful scientist, Justin is starting off his career trying to prove something he has always strongly believed in: that he is good looking…shall we start the voting?

Player: Andrew Levy
Home Team: University of Waterloo (Ph.D.)
Name of the Game: Integrative Vascular Biology and Cardiovascular Physiology

Important Stats:
This compulsive email checker is still wondering what he wants to be when he grows up. Although Einstein is the number one option for now, he wants to prove that the earth is flat first. As any other big Toronto Maple Leafs fan, Andrew is only able to cope with his team’s constant failure by pretending to be the
psychopathic murderer DEXTER. In the meantime, he is trying to answer the age-old question: is running a sport?

**Player: Amanda Rossi**  
**Home Team**: Concordia University (MSc)  
**Name of the Game**: Cardiovascular & Muscle physiology

**Important Stats:**  
When she’s not out grabbing a bite with her fellow grad students, Amanda is tirelessly working on looking people up on Facebook, catching up with friends on MSN, and of course, checking NHL scores. A super Habs fan, Amanda is still holding on to the dream that the Montreal Canadiens will win the Stanley cup someday. In the meantime, she likes to Bend it like Beckham, Pele style. At the end of a tiring day, Amanda whips up gourmet meals that her grandma taught her to cook, and settles in for a good episode of Sex and the City. For someone who has changed her Master’s proposal numerous times, she has collected all of her data from Denmark because Canadian ethics wouldn’t allow such invasive work... anyone interested in signing up as a subject for her Ph.D. work?

**Player: Craig D. Steinback**  
**Home Team**: University of Western Ontario (Ph.D. Candidate)  
**Name of the Game**: Cardiorespiratory interactions and autonomic control

**Important Stats:**  
A retired runner waiting to be called up to the Masters Games, Craig fantasizes about becoming a street cleaner driver. When he awakes, he finds himself in the lab working on becoming just like his lab’s head coach, Dr. Kevin Shoemaker. In the event that ethics becomes a thing of the past, Craig would love to do some full paralysis studies in conscious humans, but his real drive is to prove that OJ did it (not the Las Vegas thing, the wife thing). This man may like watching a lot of sports, but he is also in touch with his feminine side: he watches the Shopping Bags on W-network... ladies, any questions on the best available lipsticks on the market?

**Player: Erik Groves**  
**Home Team**: University of Calgary (Ph.D.)  
**Name of the Game**: Cardiovascular and exercise physiology

**Important Stats:**  
Another team player who wants to head to Europe for invasive research, this man hopes to be as engaging, passionate and inspiring as Dr. Fenwick (U of O) one day. He may be a bit of a comedian, but he’s “all business” in the lab. Although he is still hoping to become an astronaut someday, Telemark skiing is the highest height he is hitting for now. Erik likes to laugh his stress away by watching Steve Carell’s crazy antics on the Office. Most importantly, Erik believes that Elvis still lives... anyone else?
Player: Shilpa Dogra
Home Team: York University (Ph.D.)
Name of the Game: Exercise in Asthmatics

Important Stats:
This athletically challenged, lame joke maker spends hours chatting up her labmates and checking her email. Although her academic goals at this point are to be able to stick with a research proposal for more than 8 weeks at a time, the long term plan is to prove that her mother does indeed have eyes on the back of her head. A big Tampa Bay Lightning fan, she admits to nothing in writing just in case Lecavalier’s lawyer comes across this website. This once aspiring carpenter has the amazing ability to quote episodes of Seinfeld at the perfect instance…just not at this particular moment…

Player: Natalie Dies
Home Team: Brock University (MSc)
Name of the Game: Physiology - Thermoregulation, Environmental Ergonomics

Important Stats:
A woman who truly believes that a rectal probe is not “that bad,” Natalie hopes to learn everything about being stuck in cold water from one Michael Tipton. Watching Home Improvement helps get Natalie all riled up to cheer “Tim the Tool-man Taylor” style for her team the Vancouver Canucks. A present tennis player and future ping-ponger, this woman truly believes that her dog was human in her last life…don’t we all?

Player: Julia Totosy de Zepetnek
Home Team: University of Waterloo (MSc)
Name of the Game: Bone Physiology

Important Stats:
This soccer and squash playing woman hopes to be a very successful researcher, a fantastic teacher, and a wonderful person, just like Dr. David Westwood at Dalhousie University. In the meantime, she’s getting some great research ideas by watching House…once again, don’t we all?

Congratulations to Graham Holloway-2007 CSEP Graduate Student Award Winner

By: Natalie Dies

Extended congratulations to the 2007 CSEP Graduate Student Award winner, Graham Holloway!

Graham is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Guelph in Human Health and Nutritional Sciences.

The exceptional research that Graham presented during the CSEP London conference highlighted how obesity affects long chain fatty acids (LCFAs) oxidation.

Graham’s research found that obesity has a negative association on the skeletal muscle, impairing LCFA oxidation capability. While several studies have suggested a dysfunction in mitochondria as a potential mechanism, Graham’s finding had not previously been measured and
was only inferred from various enzymatic ratios.

Therefore, Graham sought to determine if whole muscle LCFA oxidation was decreased as a result of less mitochondria, or because of an intrinsic alteration within mitochondria, or a combination of these mechanisms.

In addition, his study aimed to determine if reductions in the protein content of various transcription factors and cofactors that are known to induce mitochondrial proliferation could be potential mechanisms.

His investigation showed that: 1) mitochondria in obese individuals does not contain an inherent dysfunction; however 2) obesity is associated with a reduced mitochondrial content; that 3) cannot be explained by reductions in the content of transcription factors known to regulated mitochondrial biogenesis.

Coinciding with his research success and award, Graham is currently planning a post-doctorate in Arend Bonen's lab at the University of Guelph.

On behalf of the CSEP Graduate Student Committee, we wish the very best of luck to Graham Holloway in his future endeavors!

Graduate Student Survival Guide

How to write award-winning applications

By: Amanda Rossi

The survival guide is back and better than ever! This issue, we're talking about grant writing and scholarship applications, a topic near and dear to all grad students' hearts.

The initial (and most crucial) step in putting together a successful application is PLANNING. First off, you need to know what documents need to be submitted, so make yourself a check-list. If you need for example letters of reference or official copies of your transcripts, you have to make sure to give your referees, registrar's office, etc. enough time to prepare these documents and have them sent out. You also need to give yourself enough time to design and compose your project proposals, letters of intent, update your CV, gather ethics information, etc. Basically, you should get organized, because if you don't keep things in order, we promise it will get messy, you'll lose track of what's going on, and ultimately, your application won't be the best it could possibly be.

Next up is the BRAINSTORMING. This is the only part of the process where a bit of disorganization is warranted. Grab a notepad or open up a blank Word document and just scribble. Jot down random words, phrases, ideas... anything!! You should do this 2-3 times. Then put it all together and organize the mess. Break up the scribble, divide the bits into the parts of the application where each idea belongs, or perhaps into different sections of your letter of intent, however you wish. Never throw out your notes! Something you might eventually choose to exclude from this application may serve you in another down the line. Brainstorming is also an activity you could put aside time to do weekly, monthly, etc. It is always good to get ideas on paper... or on the screen! Another way to help yourself through this process is to constantly be updating your CV or keeping some record of the different activities and events that you have participated in. You should train yourself to do this routinely. This way, when you sit down to write, you'll have everything ready in front of you.

Check out these tips for putting together the body of your letter of intent and grant proposals

Quick Tips for Letters of Intent:

1. Respect the limits: if the guidelines state that you are allowed a maximum of 2 pages, then
2 pages it is. Any more than the 2 pages will at best annoy reviewers, and reduce the chances of your application being accepted. And, at worst, cause your application to be rejected. Get creative; use the header and footer space to include your coordinates.

2. Sell yourself: focus on the positive and completely ignore the negative... but most importantly, focus on yourself. Avoid belittling or comparing yourself to fellow students. In the end, this negativity towards others will reflect more on your character than all of your accomplishments.

3. Set yourself apart from others: at this point in your academic career it’s safe to say the other students you will be competing against all have high GPA’s and outstanding academic credentials. So explain why you are so deserving of this award. Highlight which of your accomplishments are different from those of other students. You should even mention any hardships you’ve endured-just remember, the application is not a pity party, so mention such events, do not dwell on them.

4. No Slang: do not “Yo yo, s’up?” the reviewers. It’s unprofessional and will not be well received.

Quick Tips for Grant Writing:

1. Respect the limits: again, do not annoy the reviewers by exceeding the space allotted to the project details. Be specific and concise.

2. Know your reader: have an idea of who your audience is. Are you submitting this application to a government agency? To your institutions ethics committee? To a faculty review board? It is important to know who you are writing to. This will help determine how detailed and intricate your descriptions need to be. If your intended audience is a panel of experts in your field, then show them what you’re made of and pull out all the stops. Give them all the information they could possibly need. Do not leave any question they may have unanswered. On the other hand, if you know that your reviewing committee may have diverse backgrounds (and we do not mean diverse as in obesity vs. diabetes, we mean physiology vs. fine arts) then give them sufficient detail to understand the project, the goals, the procedures, etc. Avoid overusing jargon in these cases. If the reviewer cannot understand what you are trying to describe, they will become irritated and disfavor your application.

3. Sell the project: you have to make your project seem worthwhile. If agencies are going to be investing money, they have to know why. Beyond the immediate purposes of discovering new molecules or validating new exercise testing methods, you need to make it clear how these will contribute to the “big picture”. One or two sentences describing how your work fits into the grand scheme will show reviewers that you believe in your work, and that it is a valuable and sensible undertaking.

Make sure to stay on top of things. Check in with the referees who are writing letters of reference on your behalf (see the Student Survival Guide in the July 2007 Newsletter for more info on letters of recommendation and dealing with referees). CONFIRM they have indeed help up their end of the bargain because you definitely do not want to have an incomplete dossier when the deadline passes. Have other people REVIEW your application; fellow students (you should pick someone who has not applied for the same award-they might be your friend, but this is business), your supervisor, other department faculty members, etc. They all have experience with these applications, so listen to their advice. In the end, whether you choose to follow it is up to you, but you should at least welcome their input. Make sure you have all your work done well before the deadline. This will give you time to put it aside for a few days, then come back to it for a final REVIEW with a fresh outlook and you will also have given yourself sufficient time for everything to be mailed and delivered. Last tip: It’s a good idea use old documents, letters, proposals, etc. as a template to work from. But keep in mind that each application you submit will be unique, you will have different reviewers and separate guidelines to follow. You should customize each application them accordingly.

GOOD LUCK!!
Tips for Successful Scholarship Applications

By: Andrew S. Levy

That time of year will be upon us soon, scholarship application time. While it may seem like it is still months away (because it is), it is important to think ahead. The following are some tips for completing these applications.

Tip #1: If you don’t apply, you definitely will not get the award
It may seem like a long shot, but learning the process of writing a scholarship application, even if you don’t think you will get an award, is a valuable experience. But most importantly, if you don’t apply, you won’t get it. As well, certain agencies (ie CIHR) provide applicants with feedback so you can see what areas need to be improved for next year’s application.

Tip #2: Read the instructions and guidelines carefully
This is common sense, but when the application says one page, they mean one page. It’s really important to adhere to the guidelines because not following them may result in having your application automatically rejected.

Tip #3: Different scholarships have different focuses
Different funding agencies exist because they have different focuses. Just because your project would fit really well into both NSERC and CIHR, the way you write your application and focus should be different (even though you can’t apply to both agencies). NSERC typically funds more mechanistic studies while CIHR typically funds more applied studies. To determine which agency you should apply with, talk to your advisor; chances are your advisor can help you determine with funding body that will best suit your project.

Tip #4: Be clear and concise
The average reviewer reads many scholarship applications. Why take three sentences to say something that could be said in one? Being brief and concise allows you more space to elaborate on important points and “hook” the reviewer.

Tip #5: Do not overextend your abilities
Reviewers (who are typically professors) know the way things work. Make specific goals and have a specific timeline in mind. This lets the reviewer(s) know that you are not just “B.S.ing” what you can accomplish.

Tip #6: Now is not the time to be modest
Make yourself stand out. While you can’t always list publications in preparation on your list of academic accomplishments, there may be other places within an application to sneak them in. Use your accomplishments as an opportunity to set yourself apart from the crowd.

Tip #7: References
Always ask a potential reference if they would feel comfortable giving you a reference letter. Once they say yes, offer them a copy of your CV. It will help them craft a more specific reference letter rather than a generic one. Also, give them plenty of heads up when it comes to due dates!

Tip #8: Proof read the application
That’s just common sense. Look it over several different times and allow a few days between reads to ensure you catch any typos or errors.

Tip #9: Start early
The earlier you start your application, the less pressure you will feel and the more time you can spend having your advisor/peer/editor read your application.

Tip #10: Information sessions/advice
Typically there are information sessions regarding scholarship applications. Go to them! This is a great opportunity to ask questions in person, rather than trying to do it via email. Just remember, many of the professors within your department are on the committees (or have been). Ask for their advice on what the reviewers are really looking for. Also, ask colleagues/lab mates...
who have awards to see theirs; every little bit helps

Good luck!

CSEP 2007 Graduate Student Symposium XIII - Advice for Young Investigators: Student Professional Development Seminar

Chair:
Dennis Jensen, Ph.D.(c), Queen's University and Chair, GSC

Panelists:
Bill Sheel, Ph.D., University of British Columbia
Arend Bonen, Ph.D., University of Guelph
Maureen MacDonald, Ph.D., McMaster University
Michael Stickland, Ph.D., University of Alberta
Richard Hughson, Ph.D., University of Waterloo
Jerry Dempsey, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin–Madison

The first student symposium took place in November at the CSEP AGM meeting in London and was very well received by students. A comment from one student is listed below. The symposium was recorded and is posted online for students to listen to if they were unable to attend the session.

Download the podcast! (mp3 format 63MB)

Testimonial:
"Without any doubt, of all the conferences I have attended in the past 3.5 years, this was by far the most captivating and useful symposium I have ever seen. I have to tell you I have been raving about it to everyone since we left. The issues raised during the symposium gave us material for discussion for the entire drive back to Kingston. The people I spoke to after the symposium felt the exact same way, and some are planning to listen to the audio with their partners, their families, etc. to help them understand many of the issues that are core to the ambivalence many of us and those close to us experience regarding the academic life. For a graduate student at any level, I simply cannot imagine a 2 hour segment of time which was as illuminating as last night. I even have quite a few things to talk to my supervisor about based on the important advice that I heard last night. It is critical that such an event be scheduled for next year, with a new panel and maybe some different topics of discussion. This symposium should be held earlier in the week at a time when no other talks are occurring - I simply can't stress enough how important I believe it is for every student and new investigator member of CSEP to participate in such an event in the future. Please feel free to use my email to report to the CSEP board of directors regarding the success of the session and I eagerly look forward to next year's CSEP. You should be proud of the impact the session had on everyone present."

Piled Higher and Deeper