PHS Guide to Funding

A Whole New World: FUNDING Opportunities Made EASY

Here is the good news: there are MANY funding opportunities for undergraduates especially here at Johns Hopkins University. But it does take some time to find those opportunities, figure out which ones are applicable to you and work according to the deadlines set by the funding organizations. With your course load, extracurricular activities and the surprises life tends to throw at you, this might seem like an insurmountable task. However, with this guide, we hope to help you navigate your way through the journey of the funding search by directing you towards the right methods and resources.

Step 1: Get a Clue!

Although most of us are geared towards generating an idea after finding a funding opportunity that looks interesting, you probably want to start brainstorming first! Independent research is NOT the same for everyone and the opportunity is WHAT YOU MAKE IT. Look around and take a moment to think about what you like. Who/what has inspired you over the years? Any particular area or direction you have always wanted to go? This is the time to do it. Know your dreams, develop your goals, and GO after them!

Step 2: Do your homework!

Familiarize yourself with the opportunities available.

1. Public Health Studies Website
   http://krieger.jhu.edu/publichealth/resources/funding-announcements

2. Krieger School of Arts & Sciences Website
   http://krieger.jhu.edu/research/funding/index.html

3. Johns Hopkins Career Center (Arts & Sciences and Engineering)
   http://www.jhu.edu/careers/

4. Johns Hopkins Center for Global Health, Funding and Fellowships
   http://www.hopkinsglobalhealth.org/travel_grants/index.html

5. Johns Hopkins University Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) Internships
   http://hopkinscfar.org/baltimore-hiv-collaboratory/baltimore-hiv-aids-scholars/

6. Center for Social Concern “Hopkins Community Impact Internships”
   http://www.jhu.edu/csc/

7. COS Funding Opportunities (try searching: undergraduate public health)
   http://fundingopps.cos.com/

Note: For some opportunities you will need to contact Dr. Kelly Barry (Hopkins’ Director of Fellowships and Scholarships) by email kbarry@jhu.edu. Website: http://www.jhu.edu/scholarships/index.html

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These are good starting points but there may be other sources – search them out! There is no grant too small or insignificant. And remember, you can apply for more than one at a time. Keep an eye out for opportunities in the PHS Announcements, Pre-professional, Career Center and other newsletters.

**Step 3: Narrowing Down**

Taking a general look at the opportunities available may help you figure out which opportunity best fits with your idea or mission. Also, there are some opportunities that have certain eligibility criteria that may or may not be applicable to you – for example, GPA or citizenship requirements. Be mindful of these and make sure to only apply for funding scholarships that fit you. There is nothing worse than spending time applying for something that you cannot actually receive. If you look at the PHS funding listing, you will see that there is a column describing who can apply for what scholarship/grant. Make sure to look closely at the details of all opportunities for information on the eligibility requirements.

**Step 4: Mentor…Yes, No, Maybe?**

One place students often find themselves stuck is figuring out if they need a mentor to apply for a certain grant and how to go about finding one. Funding grants for research projects are often different from typical scholarships because **THEY WILL USUALLY REQUIRE A MENTOR!** You must determine if this applies to a particular grant and start a mentor search as soon as possible.

**NOTE:** A MENTOR and a RECOMMENDER are NOT always the SAME.

Steps for finding a meaningful mentor:

1. **Know your project, understand your ideas.** You cannot hope to find an appropriate mentor if you do not have a good idea of what it is you want to work on. **You** decide this on your own. A mentor is simply supposed to guide and anchor you in the right direction. In order to do this, it is good to have a brief outline of your project idea and method of carrying it out. **What are the objectives of your project? Where will this project be done? What do you need to be successful?** Have these thoughts organized and written out for yourself and your mentor.

2. **Know WHERE to LOOK and WHO to ASK.** Always start off with people you know. This means old professors, faculty members and departmental advisors! Even if no one is directly involved in what you want to study, they may be a good lead in to finding the right people. All it takes is an e-mail and/or an appointment. Make good use of office hours and advising meetings for brainstorming. However, respect how busy people are and make sure you are flexible about scheduling an appointment. Start now!

3. **The JHSPH website and directory are your BEST friends.** Look around. What is happening at Bloomberg? Who is doing what? Anything look familiar or interesting to you? Make good use of that information. QUALITY OVER QUANTITY IS IMPORTANT HERE. Do your homework FIRST. You want to target the right people. So, take the time to research your possible mentor’s work!

   The following websites will help you learn about what research is happening where and by whom! We suggest you bookmark these sites.

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4. **JHSPH and BEYOND.** As PHS students, we know of your unfailing dedication and love for everything public health and JHSPH related. But we can assure you that there are opportunities in other areas and departments. Before you go into a permanent state of shock, hear us out. We want you to expand your search beyond 3505 N. Charles St. and Bloomberg. Many of you are interested in topics that might deal with more clinical and biological inquires. Looking at staff/faculty at the School of Medicine or faculty in the undergraduate departments of molecular/cellular biology, environmental engineering, etc., can be very helpful as well.

   Expand your resource pool!

5. **Have a list of possible candidates.** Just like you, these professors and administrators are busy. Although they are usually willing to help students, they do not always have time to do so. In order to avoid disappointment, have a list of possible mentors. In case one person says no, you can move on to the next! Having a list of three to five possible mentors is reasonable. Make sure you give them time to respond. If you are waiting, we recommend at least one week before contacting the individual a second time.

6. **Initiate communication.** This does not simply mean e-mailing them and hoping for an answer. Send a detailed but concise e-mail, ask for an appointment and try to facilitate conversation with this mentor. A mentor has to be someone you feel comfortable with and someone who understands your goals for your project. It is important that you feel that they understand you. If not, think twice about whether or not you want to proceed with having his/her help.

7. **Give yourself [and your mentor] AMPLE time!** Mentor searches take time; there is no way around that. Make sure to start early and plan for how you want to approach the process.

**Step 5: You’ve got it all figured out… But wait… IRB?!?**

One of the biggest hurdles that nearly every Public Health Studies student will eventually run-up against is IRB. IRB stands for “Institutional Review Board”. As you proceed in your journey towards being a public health professional, you will find yourself wanting to carry out your own research projects. Do not fear… this is natural! Unfortunately for you [or maybe fortunately] you cannot simply carry out these projects without some sort of ethics review. That is the purpose of IRB. The nature of public health research sometimes requires the use of human subjects to carry out a study. These uses can range from clinical to observational. Either way, in order to
ensure the safety of these subjects and your own safety, IRB approval or exemption is NECESSARY. There are several ways to navigate this process. This includes:

1. **KNOWING KEY INDIVIDUALS**, i.e. Ms. Carley Benham, the Director of Homewood Institutional Review Board. She will help you navigate your way through the IRB process regardless of how you choose to go about it.

   Ms. Carley Benham  
   HIRB Director  
   AMR 003  
   Johns Hopkins University  
   410-516-4820 (office phone)  
   410-516-0150 (fax)  
   cbenham1@jhu.edu  
   http://web.jhu.edu/Homewood-IRB/

2. **PROPER ALLIANCES!** For first time researchers, it is a good idea to get your feet wet by aligning yourself with an ongoing project. More likely than not, the topic you are interested in is already being researched and worked on by some department at Hopkins. All you have to do is find where to plug yourself in – this way you can avoid the IRB process because these institutions and projects have already been approved. A good place to start is at the JHSPH website (www.JHSPH.edu). When you find an appropriate project, find the principal investigator and begin communication.

3. **AVOIDANCE!** Frankly, the **best** way to navigate the full-board IRB process is to avoid it. If you are sure that you cannot join in with an existing study and accomplish your idea, a good strategy is to create a research topic that would allow you to file for IRB exemption. This process is much easier and increases your chances of being able to carry out your project in the time frame you have projected for yourself. Remember no organization will give money to fund a project that has not been thought out and approved or exempted by the IRB. Make an appointment with Ms. Benham to discuss details of what qualifies as exempted research.

**Step 6: How to keep the ball rolling?**

Funding is a multi-layered process that requires you to work on more than one thing at once. While emailing and waiting for replies from faculty members, become familiar with the application process.

What do you need to include in your application?

- official transcript,
- recommendation letters,
- writing samples,
- résumé,
- more?

Your application essay is extremely important - It can MAKE OR BREAK your application so pay attention to it. Begin those essay drafts now and utilize resources such as the Writing Center to help you get it together [http://sites.jhu.edu/writingcenter/about.html]. Be sure to get more than one pair of eye on it – professors or TAs may also be willing to review for you and provide feedback.
In addition to your essay, work on your résumé and cover letter – the Career Center can help review these for detailed proofing and maximum impact! You can gear them towards your application to make sure they highlight your strengths and promote the reasons why you are the perfect candidate for this funding.

DO NOT SELL YOURSELF SHORT!

NOTE: Be careful to find out whether or not you need a separate recommender for a particular funding opportunity. A mentor is NOT necessarily a recommender. If not, this is a perfect time to look for and contact a proper recommender.

SAMPLE:

Dear Dr. ________,

My name is __________ and I am a sophomore Public Health major. You have spoken in two of my classes in the past semester and both talks have had a significant impact on me. I volunteer at a Baltimore City transformation school called Civitas and your lectures encouraged me to ask the students about the negative environmental factors they encounter on their way to school and within their communities. I was amazed by how much these factors influenced their decisions to begin drug or alcohol use. Given that, I began to read more about your DIVE study and I spoke with __________ and __________ about their involvement in your project. Their enthusiasm for your work motivated me to read some of the literature pertaining to the study.

Specifically, I am interested in the role faith communities play on collecting data and implementing interventions through your study. Currently, I am involved with the JHU Interfaith Center and I will be working as an intern there next year. Everything I have read and heard about your work has roused my interest and I would love to be a part of your project. I can begin this summer and I can work without pay if necessary. Please let me know if there are any positions I can fill, especially anything related to data collection, and possibly...
interfaith work.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,