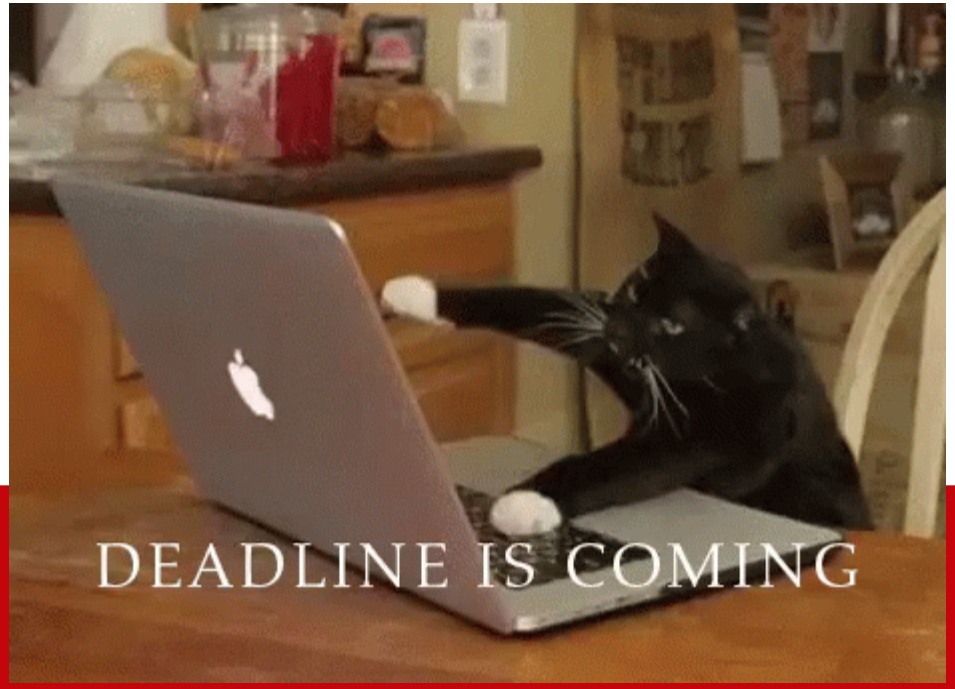
Creating a Biosketch

2025 UWCCC Cancer Research Trainee Symposium

September 24, 2025



Institute for Clinical and Translational Research
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

About me:

Home > Staff > Merems, Jen

OUR PEOPLE

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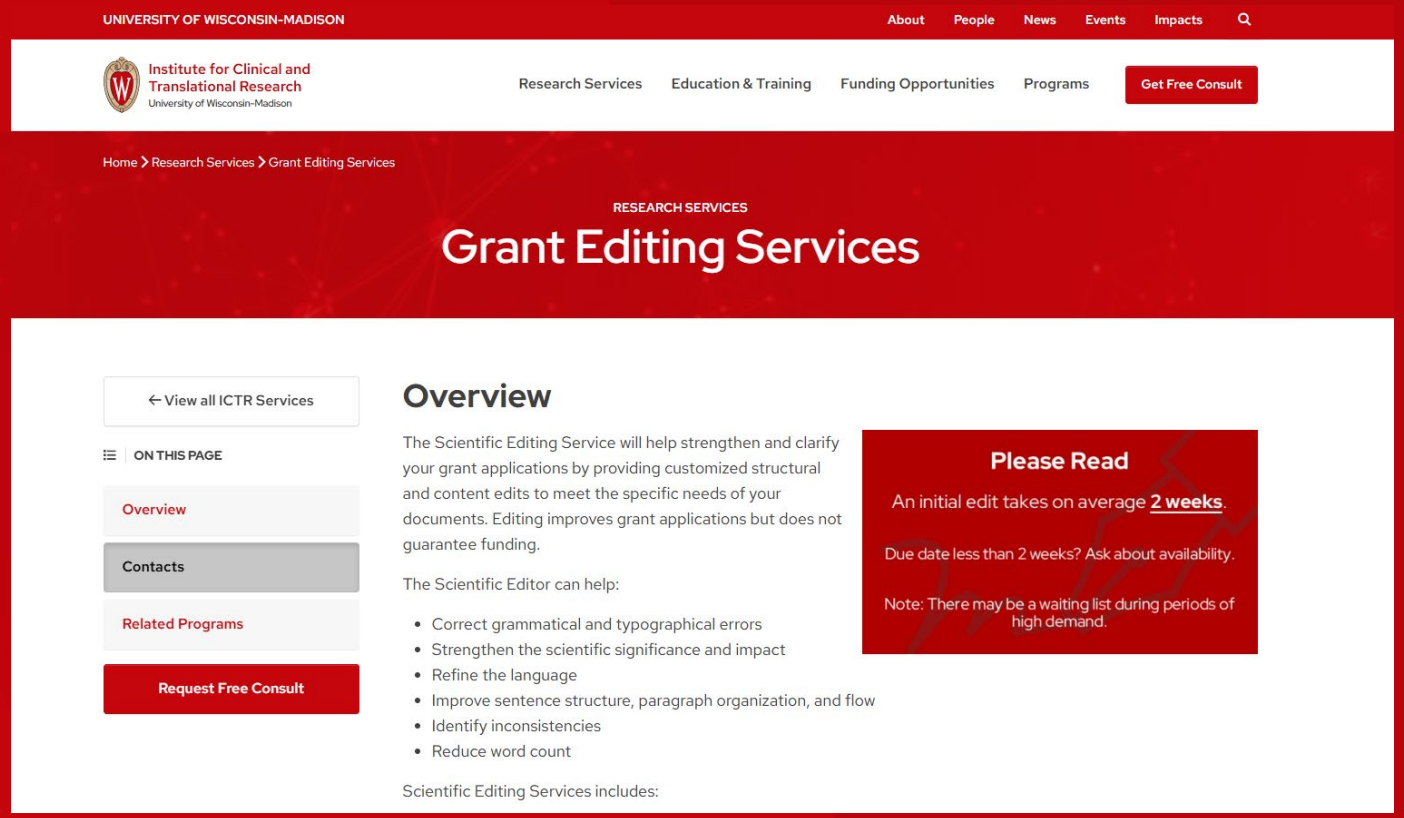

https://ictr.wisc.edu/service/grant-editing-services/

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand biosketch sections
2. Tips & Best Practices
3. Q&A
4. Time to work on your biosketch

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What is a Biosketch?

The 1st opportunity to show the reviewers details about *you* and *your qualifications* for *your role* in this application

Comes long before your Specific Aims and Research Plan in the application

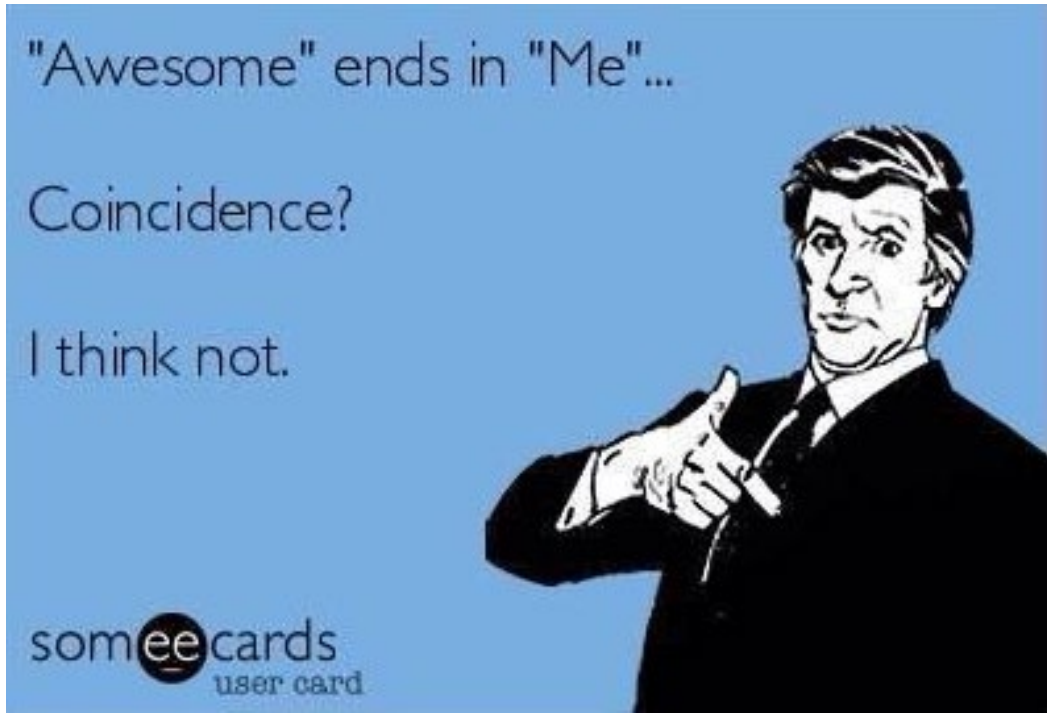
Set a positive about yourself to the reviewers

What is a Biosketch?

An area for applicants to…

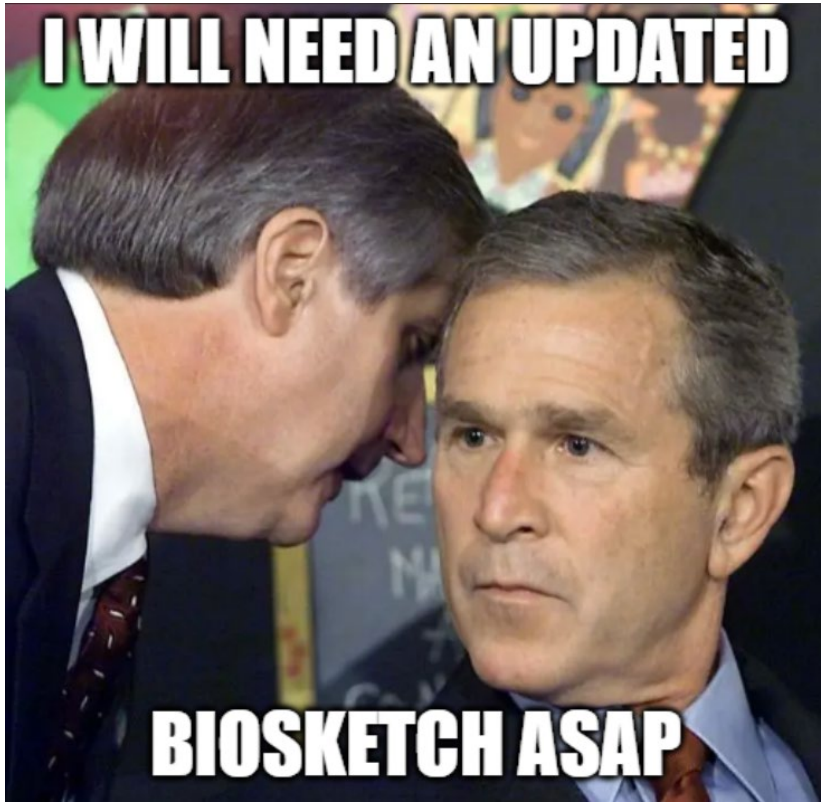
- Describe the magnitude and significant of their scientific contributions (including publications)

- Provide detailed information about their research experience in the context of the proposed project



What is a Biosketch?

- Each senior/key personnel and other significant contributors on a grant application must submit a biosketch



- Some funding opportunities/programs may request biosketches from additional personnel like participating faculty for institutional training awards

- **Always check your RFA!**

Biosketch Basics – Key Components

Section A. Personal Statement

Section B. Position, Scientific appointments, and Honors

Section C. Contributions to Science

Section D. Scholastic Performance **

- Was required for a fellowship-focused biosketch
- Check to see if your fellowship-type grant still requires it

Section A: Personal Statement

- Opportunity to tell a compelling, but short, story about you to sell yourselves to the reviewers.
  - Limit to 1 page, but 0.5 page will suffice

- Think about starting with:
  - “I am uniquely qualified to lead this (K08, F32, R01, etc.) proposal because…”

- Show your strengths

Section A: Personal Statement

Briefly describe why you are well-suited for your role(s) in this project.

Relevant factors may include:

- Aspects of your training
- Previous experimental work on this specific topic or related topics
- Technical experience
- Collaborators or scientific environment
- Past performance in this or related fields

Section A: Personal Statement

Relevant factors may include (cont.):

- Factors that affected your past productivity
  - Family care responsibilities
  - Illness/Disability
  - Military service
  - Industry employment
- Published or created research products under another name
- Specific contributions to science that are not included in Section C.

Note: You may include information on ongoing and completed research projects from the last 3 years

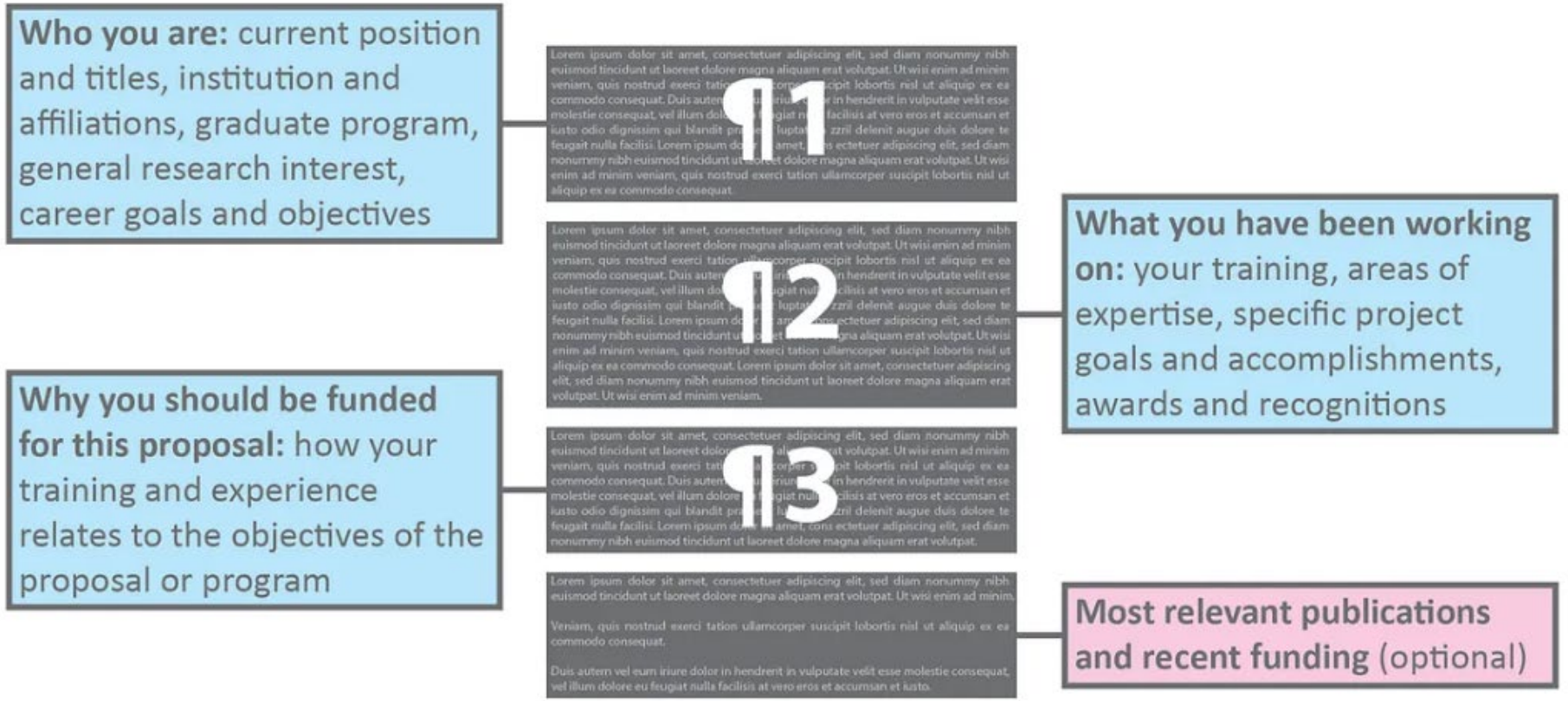
Section A: Personal Statement

Cite up to 4 publications or research products

- Research products can include, but not limited to:
  - Audio or video products
  - Conference proceedings (abstracts, posters, presentations)
  - Patents
  - Data and research materials
  - Databases
  - Educational aids or curricula
  - Instruments or equipment
  - Models
  - Protocols
  - Software or netware
  - Interim research products (i.e., preprints)

Section A: Personal Statement

Potential Structure Example 1

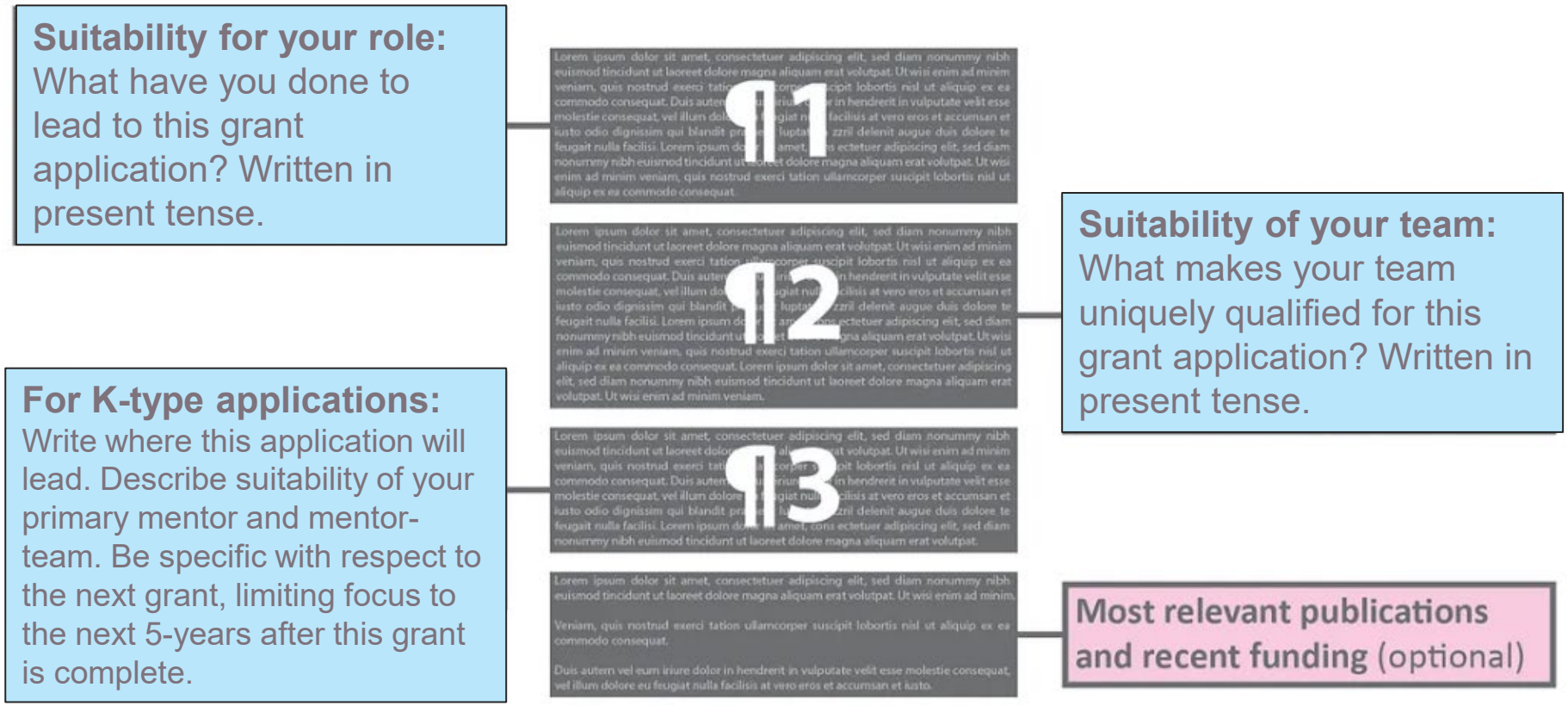


**the content of this paragraph will completely change for each application

The NIH Biographical Sketch: Variations on a Theme by Robert Lawrence 2024

Section A: Personal Statement

Potential Structure Example 2



Albertine at Yale, Write a compelling NIH Biosketch; Personal Statement

Section A: Personal Statement

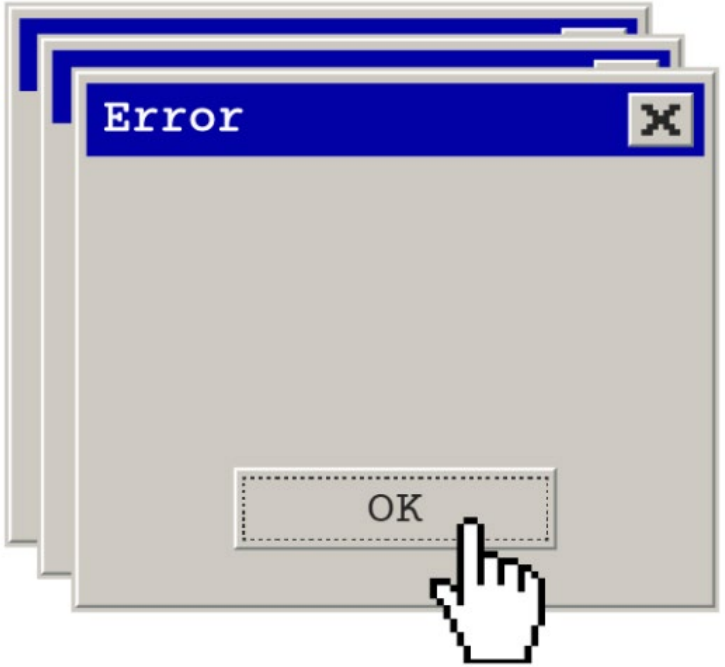
Common weaknesses

Written about:

- Grant application instead of your qualifications
- Generically – information provided not tied to application
- Chronological events not tied to this application

Failure to:

- Write qualifications of your research team, primary mentor, and/or mentoring team
- Follow instructions (e.g., listing more than 4 publications)
- Using vague qualifiers like “hope”, “believe”, “wish”, etc.

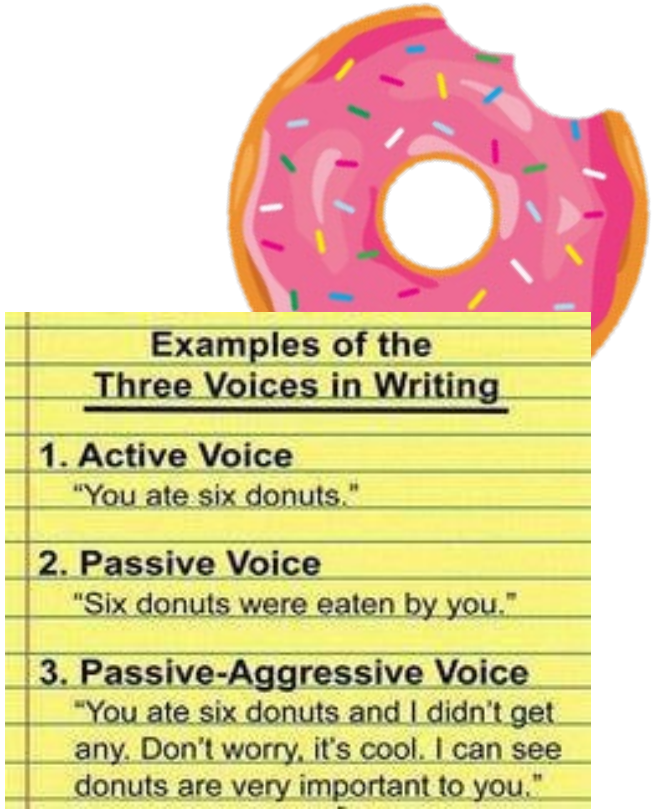


Section A: Personal Statement

How to write:

- Make it engaging to read
- Be enthusiastic!
- Use active language
- Be precise
- Do not use jargon
- Avoid abbreviations (if used, define them)
- Seek input and revise

  Then revise again… and again… and again!



Section B. Position, Scientific Appointments, and Honors

List relevant academic and professional achievements and honors.

Students, postdocs, junior faculty	Clinicians
Scholarships, traineeships, fellowships, development awards	Information on clinical licensures and specialty board certifications

B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors

Positions and Scientific Appointments

2019 – Present	Postdoctoral Researcher, Michigan State University
2015 – 2018	Predoctoral Fellowship for Minorities, Ford Foundation
2013 – 2019	Graduate Research Assistant, Georgetown University
2012 – Present	Member, National Society for Bioinformatics and Biotechnology
2010 – Present	Member, Association for Women in Science
2010 – 2012	Engineer, The IBeam Group Program
2009 – Present	Member, Sigma Xi

Honors

2013	B.S. awarded with high honors, Wake Forest University
2013	Paula F. Laufenberg Award for best senior project in the Department of Engineering, Wake Forest University
2013	STAR award for public service in engineering, The IBeam Group
2010 – 2011	Scholarship, National Merit Scholarship Pr
2009 – 2011	Scholarship, Daughters of Hawaii Society

Section B. Position, Scientific Appointments, and Honors

List in reverse chronological order

List all current positions and scientific appointments

- Include both domestic and foreign (entities and governments), titled academic, professional, or institutional appointments, (e.g., full-time, part-time, or voluntary; including adjunct, visiting, or honorary)

B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors

Positions and Scientific Appointments

2019 – Present	Postdoctoral Researcher, Michigan State University
2015 – 2018	Predoctoral Fellowship for Minorities, Ford Foundation
2013 – 2019	Graduate Research Assistant, Georgetown University
2012 – Present	Member, National Society for Bioinformatics and Biotechnology
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2010 – 2012	Engineer, The IBeam Group Program
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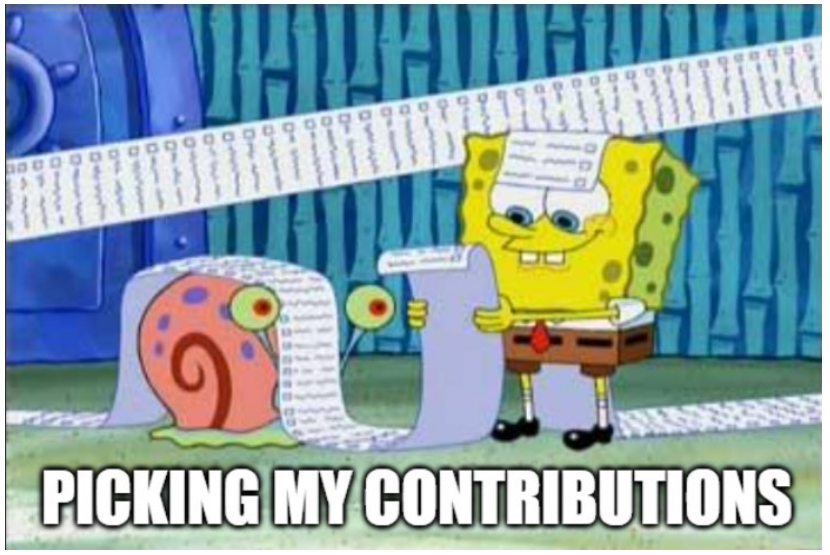
2013	STAR award for public service in engineering, The IBeam Group
2010 – 2011	Scholarship, National Merit Scholarship Pr
2009 – 2011	Scholarship, Daughters of Hawaii Society

Section C. Contributions to Science

Briefly describe up to 5 of your most significant contributions to science.

- For each contribution, indicate the following:
  - Historical background that frames the scientific problem
  - The central finding(s)
  - Influence of the finding(s) on the progress of science or the application of those finding(s) to health or technology
  - Your specific role in the described work



Section C. Contributions to Science

For each contribution:

- No longer than half a page, including citations
- Cite up to 4 publications or research products that are relevant to the contribution
- If you are not the author of the product, indicate what your role or contribution was
- Note that while you may mention manuscripts that have not yet been accepted for publication as part of your contribution, you may cite only published papers to support each contribution
    - You are allowed to cite interim research products (i.e., preprints)

Section C. Contributions to Science

Organization:

Trainees may organize contributions according to training periods

- 1. Undergrad project, 2. Grad project, 3. Postdoc Project

Those more advanced in their careers have the flexibility to organize according to distinct projects

C. Contributions to Science

1. **Early Career:** My early career contributions were focused on applying my knowledge of structural engineering to improving the design and integrity of tensile structures. More specifically, I worked with a team of engineers at the IBeam Group to develop concrete with a higher tensile strength that could be utilized in large structures such as suspension bridges. My particular role in the project was to identify candidate polymers, determine the ultimate tensile strength of these polymers, and make recommendations as to which polymer would afford concrete the most structural integrity under various stresses.
    a. **Hayes S**, Janessa AJ. Redesigning the Golden Gate bridge. National Undergraduate Symposium on Science and Engineering; 2011; Baltimore, MD.
    b. Lorentson C, **Hayes S**, Sauer N, Mehta S. Use of high-tensile concrete in cantilevered structures. J Applied Engineering. 2012; 63:413.
2. **Graduate Career:** My graduate research contributions focused on transcriptional gene regulation in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Results from my research were highly relevant as they provided new details into the workings of complex biological systems and allowed for further extrapolations into the development of certain diseases and their progression. I originally developed a novel protocol for the purification of components of large protein complexes. A subsequent publication, in which I isolated and characterized a long sought-after transcription complex, challenged a key paradigm of transcription elongation and was a featured article in a major journal.
    a. **Hayes S**, Schneider K, Chen M, Auguri T. Rapid isolation and characterization of the most novel transcription complex in Saccharomyces cerevisiae and its role in transcription elongation. CSHL Meeting on Mechanisms of Eukaryotic Transcription; 2015 August; Cold Spring Harbor, NY.
3. **Postdoctoral Career:** As a postdoctoral fellow, my research has provided a compelling link between mutations arising in stress response proteins and the development of various autoimmune diseases in humans. Previous studies have shown dysregulation in the innate immune response lead to autoimmune diseases in humans. A few Rtc homologues have now been identified in humans and appear to play a role in the regulation of genes in the innate immune response. My research is focused on the transcriptional regulator Rtc from Drosophila melanogaster.
    a. **Hayes S**, Yager LN, Murray GC. Rtc is an essential component of the Drosophila innate immune response. Genetics. 2019; 145:884.

C. Contributions to Science

2. **High School Research:** I spent two summers doing research in the laboratory of Dr. Indira Creative at University of Hawaii, funded by a NIH Diversity Supplement award. Dr. Creative has developed several new anti-fungal drugs that might protect against skin infections. Over the course of two summers I set up in vitro cultures of skin cell lines and conducted a wide range of toxicity assays. We were excited to find that one of the new agents showed almost no toxicity, even at fairly high doses. Dr. Creative is now testing the drug in animals exposed to different types of fungal infections, including *Candida albicans*.
    1. Footman B, Eisser JK, **Simmons-Gonzales, L**, Creative IM. Testing XXH for toxicity in vitro. University of Hawaii Research Symposium; 2012 May; Manoa, HI.
3. **Undergraduate Research:** I was part of a project in the laboratory of Dr. Daniel Richardson at Purdue University. Dr. Richardson's laboratory studies the mechanisms of action of small molecules for cancer treatment. During my time in his lab I was looking at how a new small molecule, Gen Y, is able to target cancerous cells. My contributions to this work were included in a publication recently accepted in Cellular and Molecular Biology. The work was particularly exciting because it looks like the mechanism of action of Gen Y might be completely novel, making it a potential candidate for treating patients afflicted with colon cancer. Dr. Richardson was recently awarded a patent for this new drug.
    1. Nieman PY, **Simmons-Gonzales L**, Richardson, D. Gen Y: a novel small molecule with cytotoxic abilities targeting colon cancer cells. Cellular and Molecular Biology. 2018 June. 7(20):13672-78.
    2. **Simmons-Gonzales, L**, Richardson, D. Testing the ability of a small molecule, Gen Y, to target colon cancer cells. Advances in Cancer Research and Therapy; 2019 September; Denver, CO.
4. **Graduate Research**: My ongoing predoctoral research is focused on transcriptional gene regulation and signaling impacting motility of cancer cells. I believe the results from my research will likely be highly relevant to human health as they will provide new details into the workings of complex biological systems, which will allow for further extrapolations into the development of several types of cancer and their progression. I am currently developing a novel protocol for the identification of transcription complexes involved in cancer signaling pathways, which I hope to submit as a first author publication in the next few months.
    1. **Simmons-Gonzales, L**, Green, N. A tandem identification approach for transcriptional complexes involved in the signaling and motility of cancerous cells. Genetics and Molecular Biology Virtual Meeting; 2020 September

Section C. Contributions to Science

You can include your My Bibliography at the end of this section if needed.

Complete List of Published Work in My Bibliography:
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/myncbi/1VgYzYESn3Nke9/bibliography/public/

- If you don't have one, set it up a MyNCBI account
- *It is not required!* Only useful once you start to have a collection of manuscripts later in your career

Section D. Scholastic Performance

This section is for

- Applicants for predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships
- Applicants to dissertation research grants (e.g., R36)
- Candidates for research supplements to promote diversity in health-related research from the undergraduate through postdoctoral levels

Predocs (including undergrads & post grads)	Postdocs
list by institution and year all **undergrad and graduate** courses, with grades	list by institution and year all **graduate scientific and/or professional courses** with grades

NOTE

- Explain any grading system used if differs from a 1-100 scale (i.e., A,B,C,D F system or a 0-4.0 scale)
- Indicate the levels required for a passing grade.

Section D. – Example

D. Scholastic Performance

YEAR	COURSE TITLE	GRADE
	GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY	
2013	Seminar in Molecular Biology	P
2013	Basic Biomedical & Biological Sciences	P
2014	Model Systems	P
2014	Statistics for the Life Sciences	P
2014	Current Topics in Molecular Genetics	P
2015	Ethics in Biological Research	CRE
2015	Biochemistry	P
2015	Physiology	P
2016	Seminar in Systems Biology	P
2016	Protein Chemistry	P

Except for the scientific ethics course, Georgetown University graduate courses are graded P (pass) or F (fail). Passing is C plus or better. The scientific ethics course is graded CRE (credit) or NC (no credit). Students must attend at least seven of the eight presentation/discussion sessions for credit.

Tips & Best Practices

Institute for Clinical and Translational Research
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Compliance

Make sure the biosketch has not expired!

OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 01/31/2026)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors.
Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.**

NAME:

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login):

POSITION TITLE:

EDUCATION/TRAINING *(Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.)*

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE *(if applicable)*	Start Date MM/YYYY	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY

Compliance

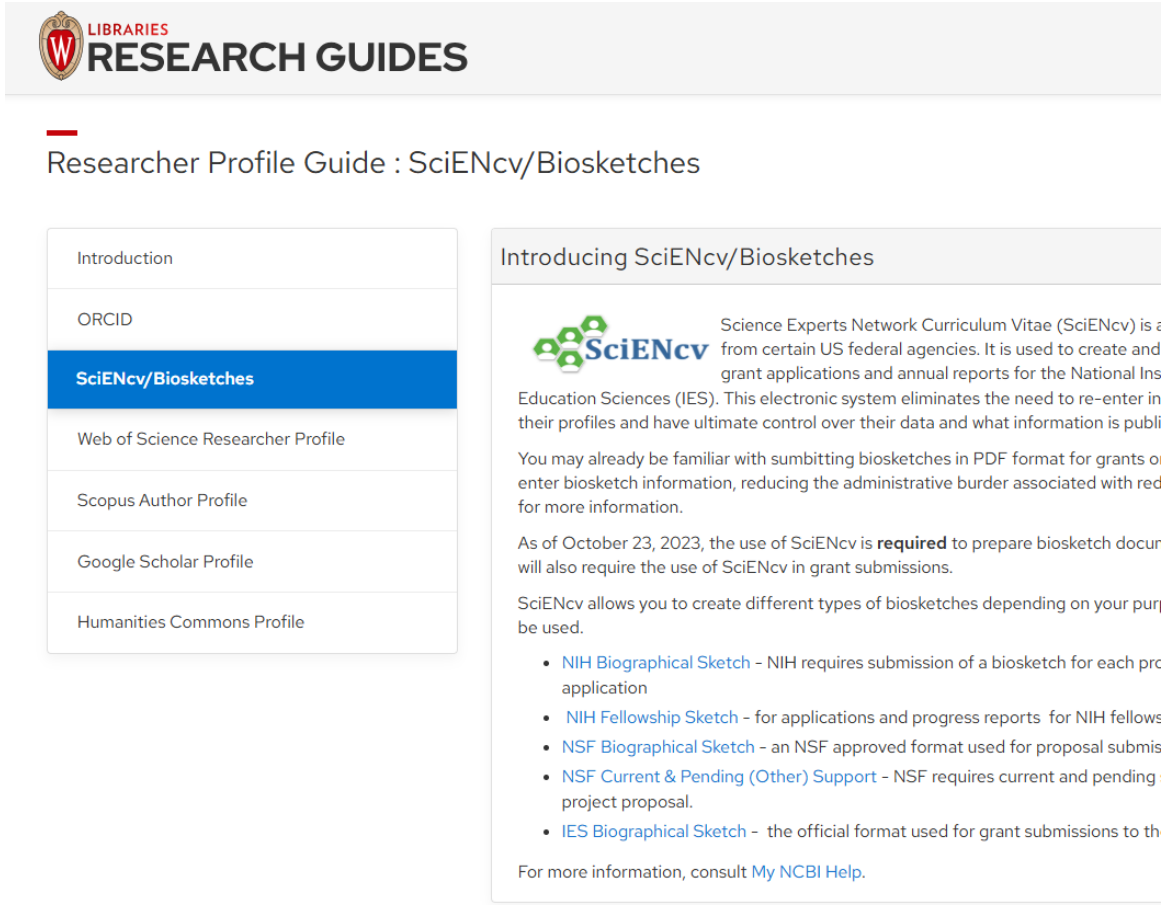
Must use PMC reference number (PMCID) for all applicable papers

*Merryle, R. & **Hunt, M.C.** (2020). Randomized clinical trial of cotinine in older people with nicotine use disorder. Age and Aging, 38(2), 9-23. PMCID: PMC9002364*

- If PMCID is not yet available then PMCID: PMC Journal – In Process
- Track PMCIDs by adding the paper to My NCBI
- ID Converter tool: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/tools/idconv/

SciENcv: Science Expert Network Cirriculum Vitae

- Tool researchers can use to create and maintain biosketches
- Automatically format your biosketch according to NIH requirements, or easily reformats across organizations
  - e.g., old NIH format to new NIH format; NIH format to NSF format



Don’t

Don’t use jargon

Don’t delete any text from the template

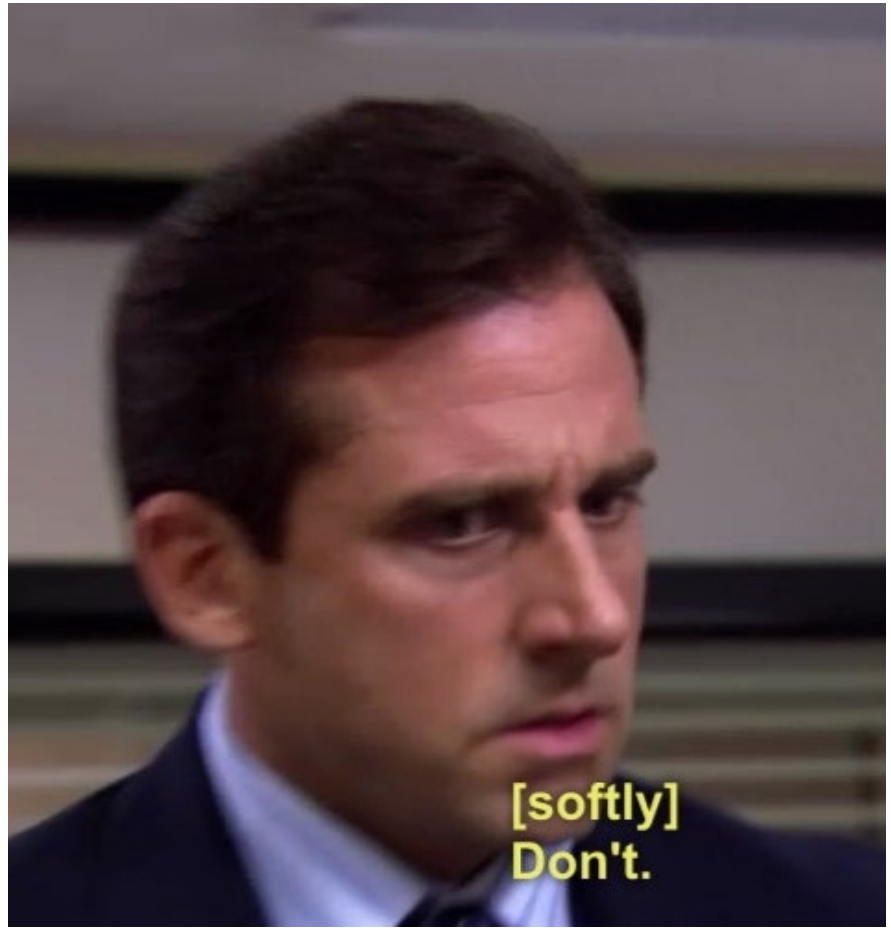
Don’t add any sections or rename them

Don’t exceed 5 pages

Don’t include hyperlinks or URLS, except your link to .gov website for full publication list

Don’t add figures, tables, graphs

Don’t embed or attach files



Do

Do use first person (I, me, we)

Do use active voice

Do use past tense

Do use font size 11 point or larger

Do use at least 0.5 inch margins

Do use recommended fonts: Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, or Palatino Linotype

Do bold your name where it appears in citations

Do check NIH website for updates before every submission!

Reviewers Perspective

- Are you qualified to do the job?
- Is there a good match between your track record and the proposed research aims?
- Are you a good match for the type of grant you are submitting?
- History of publications
- Impact

Final Tips

- Tailor your biosketch, **every time!**
- Use language that makes your role on the project clear
- Your personal statement must reflect your role on that specific project
- Make it personal
- **Review** and **REVISE**
- Lastly, **sell yourself!**

Any Questions?

Feel free to contact me

Email: merems@wisc.edu

Institute for Clinical and Translational Research
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Section A. – Example

A. Personal Statement

My academic training and research experience have provided me with an excellent background in multiple biological disciplines including molecular biology, microbiology, biochemistry, and genetics. As an undergraduate, I conducted research with Dr. Xavier Factor on the mechanisms of action of a new class of antibiotics. As a predoctoral student with Dr. Tanti Auguri, my research focused on the regulation of transcription in yeast, and I gained expertise in the isolation and biochemical characterization of transcription complexes. I developed a novel protocol for the purification of components of large transcription complexes. I was first author of the initial description of the Most Novel Complex. A subsequent first author publication challenged a key paradigm of transcription elongation and was a featured article in a major journal. During my undergraduate and graduate careers, I received several academic and teaching awards. For my postdoctoral training, I will continue to build on my previous training in transcriptional controls by moving into a mammalian system that will allow me to address additional questions regarding the regulation of differentiation and development. My sponsor Dr. I.M. Creative is an internationally recognized leader in the transcription/chromatin field and has an extensive record of training postdoctoral fellows. The proposed research will provide me with new conceptual and technical training in developmental biology and whole genome analysis. In addition, the proposed training plan outlines a set of career development activities and workshops – e.g. grant writing, public speaking, lab management, and mentoring students – designed to enhance my ability to become an independent investigator. My choice of sponsor, research project, and training will give me a solid foundation to reach my goal of studying developmental diseases in humans. During my second postdoctoral year in Dr. Creative's lab, my father had a severe stroke that eventually ended his life. I was out of the lab for six months dealing with my father's incapacitating illness and end-of-life issues. This hiatus in training reduced my scientific productivity. I am confident this proposed research project and training plan will enhance my scientific portfolio and will help recuperate my scientific productivity. My long-term research goals involve becoming an independent researcher and developing a comprehensive understanding of key developmental pathways and how alterations in gene expression contribute to human disease.

1. **Hayes S**, Schneider K, Chen M, Auguri T. Rapid isolation and characterization of a novel transcription complex in Saccharomyces cerevisiae and its role in transcription elongation. Journal of Cell Biology. 2016; 128:770.

Background

Aspects of training

Previous work on topic

Collaborators

Factors affecting past productivity

Section C. – Example

C. Contributions to Science

1. **Early Career:** My early career contributions were focused on applying my knowledge of structural engineering to improving the design and integrity of tensile structures. More specifically, I worked with a team of engineers at the IBeam Group to develop concrete with a higher tensile strength that could be utilized in large structures such as suspension bridges. My particular role in the project was to identify candidate polymers, determine the ultimate tensile strength of these polymers, and make recommendations as to which polymer would afford concrete the most structural integrity under various stresses.
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    b. **Hayes S**, Schneider K, Chen M, Auguri T. Rapid isolation and characterization of a novel transcription complex in Saccharomyces cerevisiae and its role in transcription elongation. Journal of Cell Biology. 2016; 128:770.

Historical Background

Influence of Findings

Role

Central Findings