Tips for Applying for a SDSU Department of Anthropology Scholarship

Applying for a scholarship is important, not only for the financial support, but for the recognition of your excellence as a scholar. This is even more true if the recognition comes from your own Department. Even a small grant shows other potential funders that you are a person worth noting.

Below are five important questions to consider when applying for a scholarship or grant.

1. **Do I qualify?** The first thing to check out is whether you qualify. If you do not meet the qualifications specified for a particular grant, then your application cannot be considered for it. There is no point in applying for a grant you do not qualify for, since it is unlikely that the panel reviewing applications will even see your application. If you are not sure about whether you qualify, ask the scholarship office or program officer.

2. **When is the deadline?** Generally, applications received after the deadline are disqualified and not considered. So, be sure to note the deadline and prepare your application in plenty of time to meet it. Include last-minute glitches in your calculations – e.g., printers that don’t work, overwhelmed websites that can’t cope with a sudden onslaught of applications.

3. **What does the application ask for?** You need to supply all the information asked for in the application or you will likely be disqualified. It is especially important to address the questions asked in any kind of essay or personal statement. A detailed description of your past history is not useful if the question is about your goals for the future. If the application asks you about your research topic, goals, and methodology, address all three of those. A brilliant essay about your philosophy of life, why you decided to become an anthropologist, or how badly you need the money will do you no good if the question is about research design. If the essay prompt asks you to describe your research, then use this as an opportunity to sell it! Be sure to address what your research questions are, the methods you will use, and the significance of your project. In other words, think: What? How? Why?

If an application asks you to address (a), (b), and (c), then do so in that order, and let your readers know which question you are addressing. Make your application is as reader-friendly as possible for those determining who gets the grant. Note that if you are applying for a Departmental grant, you should not rely on your general reputation as a good student. Even if the panel knows your work, they must make their decisions based on what you put in the application.

4. **Should I get feedback from others before submitting my application?** Absolutely. You should have peers edit your work and, if possible, a mentor. It is important for your application to be comprehensible to the non-expert. The composition of the scholarship committee crosscuts the sub-fields, so your application should be accessible to an anthropologically educated but non-expert audience.
5. Why not me? If you meet the qualifications for a grant, go for it! Why shouldn’t you be considered along with others? Even if it is a small grant, the return on your effort of a few hours can be tremendous. Even if you don’t get this particular grant, you will have sharpened your skills and clarified your statements in ways that can be adapted for successful applications in the future. There are many grants out there. You should know how to navigate the University’s Scholarships page to learn about them. The people who award grants want to give out the money. They’re just looking for you.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE ANTHROPOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY
[499 words]

Note that Norton Allen instructions call for: "a 500-word essay that describes your research (including the purpose, methods and significance) and how it relates to your career goals." Rules for other scholarships are going to be a little bit different. Be sure to read the rules for the scholarship for which you are applying!

**Purpose.** My research explores ‘citizen science.’ It focuses on parents developing cannabis-based treatment regimens for children with pharmaceutically untreatable epilepsy. Uncontrolled seizures can have devastating outcomes both for the child and his/her family. Some families therefore are turning to cannabis. My project investigates:

- How parents gain and generate knowledge regarding cannabis use for epilepsy, including what methods they use for evaluating outcomes, and why
- How parent labor may be incorporated into evolving biomedical research and care practices

**Background:** Interest in cannabis for intractable epilepsy can be traced to publicity given to Charlotte Figi who, at age five, had significant motor and cognitive delays and experienced up to 50 seizures daily. Charlotte’s mother was driven to do her own literature review and reconnaissance regarding potential treatments; as a result, she began to administer an oral cannabis preparation. Charlotte regained a good deal of function and her seizure rate dropped to two to three per month. News spread and other families followed suit.

Due to its uncertain legal status and the lack of clinical evidence regarding its use, parents who want to try cannabis therapy have very little formal support for procuring, dispensing, and monitoring treatments. They rely on word of mouth, online resources, and dealer promises as they work out dosage and other aspects of their child’s cannabis regimen. Understanding how they manage this is crucial, not only to better serve them but to enhance our understanding of how regular citizens contribute to biomedicine’s knowledge base and therapeutic tool kit.
**Methods.** Pending IRB approval, I will use word of mouth to recruit 35 parents for interviews. These will take place in parents’ homes (i.e., where treatment takes place); field notes will be taken throughout as a supplement to audio-recording. After asking about the parent’s introduction to cannabis for epilepsy, I will ask more **focused questions regarding how parents gain and generate knowledge regarding the treatment regimen, and their evidentiary standards.** To characterize the sample demographically, a 5-10 minute survey also will be completed. Further, I will attend relevant community events for background knowledge (e.g., informational meetings). For the analysis, I will apply standard techniques for identifying, grouping, and coding disparate concepts or themes (e.g., Ryan and Bernard 2003)

**Significance:** The analysis will contribute to a **more sophisticated understanding of how parents engage in and with science,** and **how citizen science can foster changes in healthcare.** It will also increase our understanding of how prepared lay citizens are for doing their own research and evaluation; which has broad ramifications in light of healthcare’s present emphasis on patient/parent engagement and self-education. Additionally, the research will generate concrete suggestions for healthcare providers that accurately reflect local parents’ experiences and expressed needs. The proposed research is therefore not only academically justifiable but a practical necessity with great potential to make a real difference for affected families. This research is crucial to my **career goal** of securing employment within a healthcare organization serving families where I can work to bring an anthropological sensibility to care.