# the HUB

## THINK. WRITE. SPEAK.

**Writing for Applications: General Tips**

When writing for applications (i.e., jobs, scholarships, fellowship programs), you're competing against many other applicants, so your writing needs to be direct and focused, and you need to explain clearly 1) why you're interested, 2) what you can add to the organization, and 3) how you see the organization's needs, values, and expectations aligning with your own experiences, values, and goals.

**Know the mission statement:** Read the organization's mission statement carefully. You need to show your audience that you're aware of their values and that you see how your values and experiences align with theirs. Provide specific examples that demonstrate how your experiences and/or goals align with the organization's mission.

**Know the application details and/or job description:** Study this carefully. Look for key words and phrases that highlight what the company expects of applicants. What do applicants need to do? What experiences are expected? Then use clear examples to show how you fit the organization's needs and expectations. Do not simply say you're a good fit; show through examples and explanations that you are.

**Be reader-friendly:** Imagine someone who needs to read lots of applications quickly. That's your audience. Do not make this reader work to fill in blanks about what you might know regarding the organization, how you might fit in, or why your experiences or goals make you an ideal candidate. Provide specific examples and reasons to demonstrate clearly why you and the organization are a good match and use examples to show you've made a conscious decision to pursue this job, fellowship, etc. Explain the following: Why *this* opportunity, *this* organization, and you?

**Be organized:** Use focused paragraphs. Do not, in other words, throw a lot of different points at your reader in a single paragraph. Stick to one main idea and develop it in a detailed and specific way.

**Be confident:** Make your writing determined and enthusiastic. Rather than writing <u>*might*</u> or <u>*hope*</u> or <u>*would like to*</u>, write <u>*will*</u> or <u>*can*</u> or <u>*plan to*</u>.

**Be concise:** Avoid wordy phrases. Look for sentences that are in the passive voice, that begin with "It is" or "That is", or that have a lot of prepositions in them. Change those. In other words, don't write like this:

> *It is because of my past experience with environmental science that I find I would be a great match for the research program in El Salvador.*

Write like this instead:

> *My past environmental science research makes me a great match for the El Salvador program because…*

**Be clear:** Avoid abbreviations that are not clear outside of an SCU context. For instance, write out full titles rather than using CF or LEAD or RLC.

**Be precise:** Typos matter—and not in a helpful way. Proofread carefully.