How To Manage Your Project

Time Management

Basis for Advice

Student research projects assigned in classes

      Qualitative Research Methods

      Survey Research Methods

Student individual research projects

      Semester Long

      Year Long

Research Projects: Types of Tasks

Bibliography

Research Design

Data Collection

Data Notes

Data Analysis

Write Up

Research Projects: Types of Tasks

Abstract Tasks

Example: Identify a research topic

Tend to require a lot more concentration and should be undertaken when you are rested and not distracted

Generally take as much time as you can give

Can usually be improved or tweaked

Concrete Tasks

Example: Generate a bibliography

Can be accomplished when you are tired, multi-tasking, or even while relaxing watching television

Generally accomplished in a finite period of time

Need to be checked twice and then move on

Common Obstacles

Related to how the student deals with first research projects

- Reluctance to commit to prior decisions in the research process
- Not knowing when to stop thinking and to start acting
- Not managing competing obligations
- Its just not working out like I thought it would

Common Obstacles

Related to the nature of research

- Underestimating the amount of time a task will take
  - Due to your own choices
  - Due to complications outside of your control
- Spending too much time on data collection, data notes, and analysis and not enough time on writing
- Not backing up notes and computer records

Research Projects: Unrealistic Attitudes

I work best when I can start and finish a project in a single day.

I'm not really a planner I just like to see how it goes.

I can finish anything in 12 hours or less.

That deadline is flexible, right?

Oh, did you want a real bibliography?

Research Projects: Realistic Attitudes

The best project is a done project.

Sometimes you just have to say its "good enough" and move on.

This is not my dissertation, this is my undergraduate research project.

My project depends on a lot of other people so I have build in extra time.

Best Practice: ONLY PIECE OF ADVICE

Assuming you have established research goals that are feasible ….

Create a REALISTIC project calendar

- Hold yourself accountable to deadlines on calendar
- Build in time to modify calendar
- Communicate clearly and honestly about progress to your mentor

How do you organize your time?

On Campus Resources

      Free and Accessible

Paper Planners

Electronic Planners/Organizers

      HP Users: One Note

      Mac Users:

Best Practices for Students

Develop a REALISTIC project calendar!
  Examples of 3 Students

  Student 1   Student 2   Student 3

Merge your project calendar with your regular calendar.

Make modifications based on realistic use of time.

- 3 exams in one week means no work on project during the week and probably weekend
- Family weekend with visitors means no work on the weekend and probably limited work the following week

Estimating Project Time

How much time should it take to complete?

    Ask your mentor

    Ask another student

How much time do you have to dedicate?

    Think about other classes, family, work, personal well-being, social commitments

How do your work habits vary from the traditional student?

      If you know you procrastinate….

      If you know you set deadlines….

Allocating Time to Tasks

Determine the parts of the project

Identify critical tasks within each part

Create a timeline for each part

Build in ERROR—random and systematic

Example: Engaged Learning Proposal
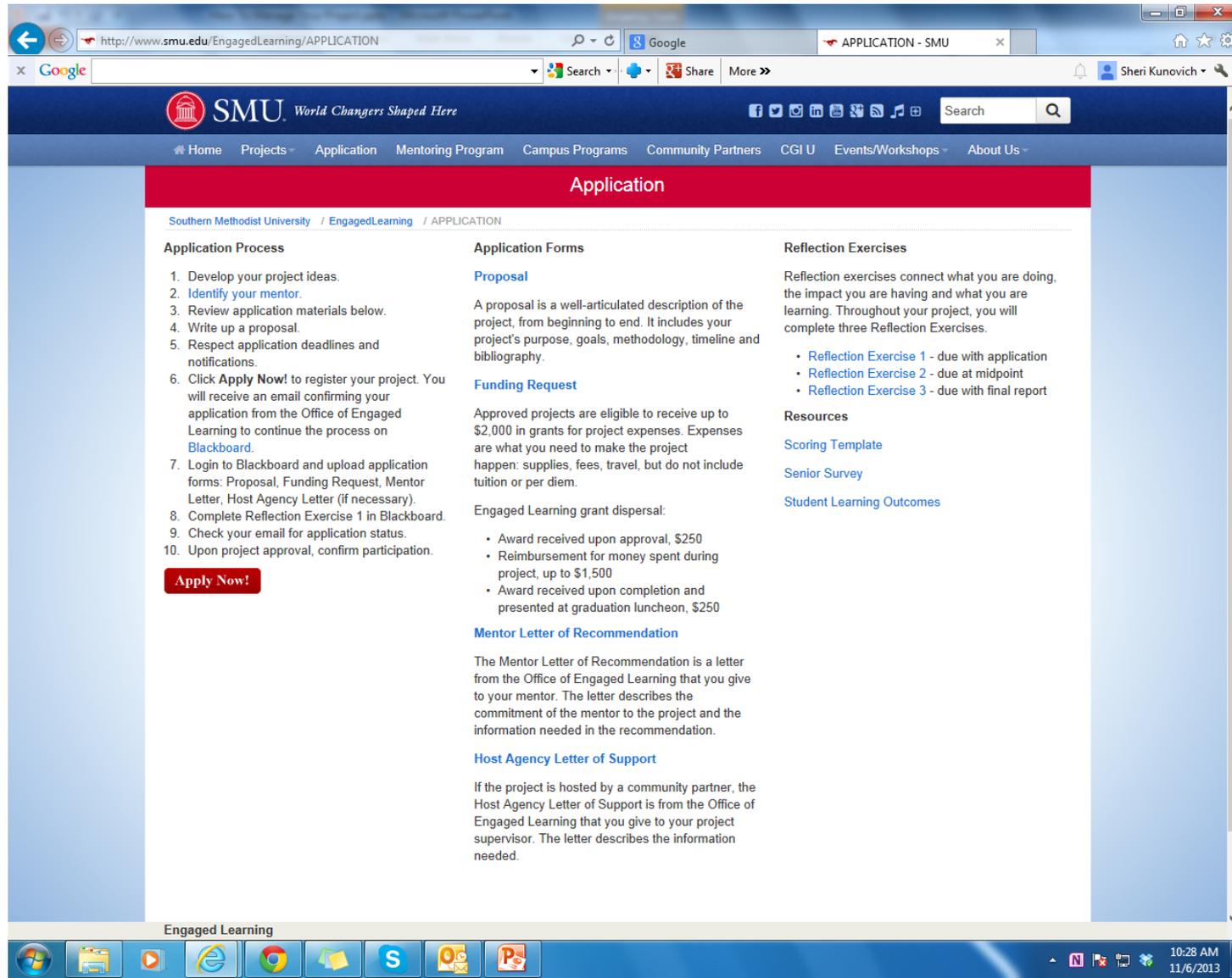
Parts of Engaged Learning Proposal

Application Process

1. Develop your project ideas.
2. Identify your mentor.
3. Review application materials below.
4. Write up a proposal.
5. Respect application deadlines and notifications.
6. Click **Apply Now!** to register your project. You will receive an email confirming your application from the Office of Engaged Learning to continue the process on Blackboard.
7. Login to Blackboard and upload application forms: Proposal, Funding Request, Mentor Letter, Host Agency Letter (if necessary).
8. Complete Reflection Exercise 1 in Blackboard.
9. Check your email for application status.
10. Upon project approval, confirm participation.

Tasks to Complete Application

1. Develop your project ideas--abstract
2. Identify your mentor--concrete
3. Mentor Letter --concrete
4. Apply Now to Register (Blackboard Process)--concrete
5. Proposal --abstract
6. Funding Request--concrete
7. Host Agency Letter (if necessary)--concrete
8. Complete Reflection Exercise 1 in Blackboard--abstract

**Items in RED are out of your control but you have to stay on top of them.

**Items in BLUE can take as much or as little time as you dedicate to them.

How much time do you think?

Application Deadlines

Nov 15: Application Cycle Opens

Dec 15: Early Decision Deadline

Feb 15: Application Cycle Closes

Is it feasible to complete all tasks between now and Dec 15 if early decision?

Is it feasible to complete all tasks between now and Feb 15?

Now that you have your deadline established look at the details.

Engaged Learning Proposal

WHAT IS A SMU ENGAGED LEARNING PROJECT?

An Engaged Learning project is capstone-level, student driven research, civic engagement, professional internship or creative work that has distinct project and personal learning goals. The project impacts specific needs of a target population or community of practice beyond the SMU classroom.

A target population is a group of people who are served by a host agency or organization outside of SMU. A community of practice is a group of individuals engaged around common interests, such as happens in the research and arts communities.

The Engaged Learning project has four phases: first developing the proposal, then performing the activity through a personal effort, followed by giving a public presentation and finally turning in a summary product such as a research paper, project report or other creative artifact that illustrates some original achievement.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN AN ENGAGED LEARNING PROPOSAL?

The Engaged Learning proposal is a well-articulated description of the project, from beginning to end. It includes the project's purpose, goals, methodology, timeline and bibliography, and is in line with the student's academic learning and the Engaged Learning student learning outcomes and reflections.

Capstone-level project: The student engages in the proposed activity through a personal effort, applying academic learning to the project through a cumulative understanding of interdisciplinary or disciplinary practice and produces a record or artifact showing some original achievement in research, synthesis, creative endeavor, exploration or other production. This definition is in line with the capstone goals of the SMU University Curriculum.

Engaged Learning Proposal

- Develop your Engaged Learning proposal with your mentor. Use the following format.
- **ENGAGED LEARNING PROPOSAL FORMAT**
- **Title:** Give your Engaged Learning project a short, succinct name.
- **Statement:** Develop a one sentence statement that indicates what you hope to accomplish.
- **Purpose:** Explain the rationale for your project, the end goal and benefits to be gained.
- **Description:** Describe your planned research, service, internship or creative work and the activity you will engaged in to meet the end goal and benefits. Include the following basic information:
  - **Who will be impacted?** Name and explain the target population or community of practice that is part of your project.
  - **What has prepared you for this work?** Describe your academic training that you will apply to your project.
  - **What will you produce?** Propose the type of summary product that you will create to illustrate some original achievement in your effort.
  - **What do you personally hope to gain?** Reflect on your personal, academic and career goals.
- **Methodology:** Specify how you will do what you propose. Include some thought about potential challenges you might encounter and how to manage them.
- **Timeline:** Develop a project calendar that includes all phases of the project.
- **Bibliography:** List sources of information that informed the project in its development and will be used in its realization.
- **Mentor Statement and Signature:** "I have reviewed and approve this proposal."
- If you are proposing a research project, follow the appropriate research proposal guidelines for your field of study. Make sure you include the key items above.

How much time do you think now?

Would you adjust your decision to apply for early decision on Dec 15?

Would you adjust your decision to apply for Feb 15?

What parts do you anticipate taking the most time and what quality of time do you need?

Congratulations Engaged Learners

Execute your plans!

Youth Village Resources of Dallas

Project Calendar

      Qualitative Field Research Project

      Survey Research Project

- Ruby kim—applications for grad school
  - 20 page writing sample
- Rob Kellesky—phd in chemistry
  - Grant proposals
- Rebecca Graff
  - Improving student resources
- Asia Rogers
  - EL project, managing competing pressures
- Daniel Brock
  - Balance with project and other commitments
- Diane Lu
  - Meadows performance major working at reasonable hours