

## Tips for Submitting a Successful Application to the Cancer Prevention Research Training Program (CP RTP) – Summer Research Experience

Many students often ask how they can increase their chances of getting a **CP RTP Summer Research Experience** fellowship award *or* why their application was not selected for review. The following are a few tips that will ensure that your application is selected for review.

- 1. Make sure you are eligible for the CP RTP Summer Research Experience.** Many applications are rejected because the applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements. If you are: a visa holder, in high school, in your 2<sup>nd</sup> + year of medical school, already have a doctoral or medical degree, in a gap year and not enrolled in school during both the spring and fall semester of the program year, or you are enrolled in a degree granting institution and program outside of the United States-- **you are not eligible to participate in our program.** Eligibility requirements are listed on our program page and many are established by both National Cancer Institute and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.
- 2. Upload your initial application components no less than two weeks prior to the posted deadline.** Many wait until the last minute and often times, their application is not selected simply because they are missing one letter of recommendation. Do not wait until the last minute to apply. Because recommenders are usually traveling around the winter holidays--- applicants are encouraged to request their letters as soon as possible within application open of November 1. **Application extensions are not granted for those missing letters of recommendation.**
- 3. Keep track of all Discover application submissions.** We cannot stress this enough. Because the MD Anderson Summer Experience includes additional participating summer programs, and the Discover system allows multiple summer applications with one single email address, many applicants lose track of which fellowships in which they are applying. **For example:** Jane Doe may apply to the *CP RTP/CURE Undergraduate Summer Experience* and the *CP RTP Summer Research Experience* using her email address JDoe1234@yahoo.com. However, Jane will receive two unique Discover ID account numbers. **In this instance, Jane should make a list of those Discover ID numbers and the corresponding fellowship to eliminate confusion. No two MD Anderson summer programs are the same and usually the same application components are required for each summer fellowship.**
- 4. Do not submit more than what is required.** Applicants will not increase their chances of the summer fellowship award by submitting more than what is required. CPR certification, lifeguard certificate, scientific posters, awards, publications or any other miscellaneous documents are not required for Phase 1, and will not be submitted to the review committee. **Upload only what is required!**
- 5. Write a strong personal statement.** The personal statement must be two pages and should include a unique story about your experience. Many applicants choose to write about their personal experiences with cancer (such as losing a loved one or their own personal battle), while other applicant's write about a life-changing course, lecture, Ted talk or some other event which sparked an interest in cancer prevention. These experiences should tie in with your educational and career goals, and **must state a clear interest in cancer prevention research.** If there is no stated interest in cancer prevention, chances are, you will not be selected.
- 6. You may make corrections to uploaded documents, not the Discover application.** After completing the initial Discover application, applicants are required to upload supporting documentation (e.g. CV/Resume and unofficial transcript of highest degree or current degree in pursuit). **If you make a mistake and need to upload a new document, simply upload the revised document in the same location. Any new document will replace the older document however, our office will have access to all versions of the document. This does not apply to the Discover application.** Double check each application component up until the deadline to ensure the correct item has been uploaded & make sure you upload documents in the correct location category.
- 7. To submit your Discover application click the gray SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION button.** After completing the Discover application, you will be required to complete Steps 1 and 2 (uploading the required documents), and submit the application in Step 3. Click the gray SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION button to transmit the application to the program. **After submitting the link, "Application Submitted Successfully" will appear on your screen. You will only see this message once.** If the SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION button is greyed out, it means your application is incomplete.

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### Letters of Recommendation

**8. Make sure the letters of recommendation are strong.** A recommendation letter with one paragraph is not a strong letter and can ruin your chances of a fellowship award. It is imperative that you have someone who knows you well and can write a strong letter of recommendation on your behalf. It is the applicant's responsibility to enter the recommender's correct email address in the contact information. This letter needs to come from someone who can attest to your educational training and professional goals. Preferred recommenders are:

- Professors
- Academic Advisors
- Teachers/Instructors
- Research Lab Managers/Supervisor
- Lab or Research Colleagues

A successful letter will include a minimum of 4 paragraphs and as long as 2 pages. NOTE: If you or the referee are short on time, check to see if they will accept a draft of the letter you desire, as this will save time.

**9. Always have a backup plan.** If you are not sure whether your recommender will provide you with a letter by the deadline, identify another recommender. If we receive more than the required two letters, we will randomly select which letters will be included in the review, unless you tell us otherwise.

**10. Check the status of your letters of recommendation.** Logon to your Discover account and from the LEFT menu select **Request Letters of Recommendation**. You will see a list of recommenders and a column in the middle titled, **Letter Status**. If the status is **Submitted**, we have received the letter. If the status is **Requested**, we have not received the letter of recommendation.

**11. If your letter of recommendation is in Requested status, follow up with the recommender!** After entering your recommender's information, the recommender will receive an email link to upload their letter directly to your application. You will not be able to see the letter, but you will be able to see that the recommender submitted the letter. If the recommender tells you they did not receive the email link, follow these steps:

- 1) Confirm that you entered the correct email address in Discover. If you entered the wrong email address, from your Discover account, go to **Request Letters of Recommendation** (LEFT menu) and select **Delete** next to the recommenders name, re-enter the information and submit another request.
- 2) Login to your Discover account, click **Request Letters of Recommendation** from the left menu, and select **Send Reminder**.
- 3) Tell the recommender that the email notification will come from [DISCOVER\\_Support@mdanderson.org](mailto:DISCOVER_Support@mdanderson.org) and to check their bulk/spam/junk folder. If this does not work, see if the recommender will give you their personal email address (e.g. gmail or yahoo).
- 4) Inform the recommender that the link was emailed from [DISCOVER\\_Support@mdanderson.org](mailto:DISCOVER_Support@mdanderson.org) and have them check their spam/bulk/junk folder.

**IMPORTANT:** The CP RTP receives more than 400 summer applications each year. To eliminate administrative burden, please refrain from contacting the program to ask if your application is complete or if we received your supporting documents. As the applicant, you have complete access to your Discover account, which means you can see **all** items submitted, including the status of your letters of recommendation. While it may be tempting to contact us 'just to make sure', it is unnecessary. For additional information, please refer to the **CP RTP Summer FAQs** and **Guidelines for Letters of Recommendation**, available for download from our fellowship page at [www.CancerPreventionTraining.org/Summer](http://www.CancerPreventionTraining.org/Summer). **Good luck!**