RACKHAM RESEARCH GRANT

When applying for Research Grant funding through Rackham, pay close attention to the details below. These comments have been specifically provided to SNRE students from the Rackham review committee.

1. As with any research grant, an important part of the proposal is to frame a Background and Significance (or Introduction) section that informs the reader (reviewer), even if not an expert, and convinces that the approach you are about to take is well reasoned. Therefore:
   - avoid undefined jargon and acronyms
   - provide a scholarly introduction to the question and methods, including appropriate literature citations. You don't have to worry about using too many, since the listing of the literature cited at the end does not count in the word limit. (Although don't go overboard - this isn't a review article.)
   - clearly state the questions/hypotheses to be addressed before starting the section on your experimental design
   - provide some indication as to how this work fits into your master's thesis or PhD dissertation

2. In the experimental design, be as specific as possible about the questions, the methods to be used, and any needed statistical analyses. If a survey instrument is to be used that is not standard (can't be referenced) and understanding it might be critical to the proposal, plan to contact the Rackham Fellowships office and ask to submit it as an appendix.

3. If IRB approval is needed for human subjects or animal use, please provide approval information. This will be needed before funds can be disbursed.

4. In preparing a budget, pay close attention to the allowed and disallowed expenses described on the web site. These evolve. Note that technical assistance (and transcribing assistance) is normally not funded unless a compelling case is made that the graduate student cannot do the work.

5. Seek help from your advisor, or any other experienced writer of grants who can give you tips and help edit. Although the grant proposal must be written by the student in his/her own words, it is normal and appropriate in writing grants to seek this sort of advice and editing help. In many cases this is a student's first grant proposal, and a valuable learning opportunity.
David Engelke is part of the review committee for the Rackham Graduate Student Research Grants, and offered these specific tips to help students get their grants funded the first time instead of needing to revise and resubmit. [17 May 2011]

There are essentially three common issues, other than problems with the description of the science itself, that slow up the process of people getting their funds:

1. Like any grant proposal, literature citations should be used liberally to supplement a scholarly introduction and explanation of the problem, as well as provide methodology for a convincing approach. The citations can be in any format, with the full citations listed either at the end of the text (won't be counted in the word limit) or in the separate place to paste them in the application.

2. Often an applicant will want to show the full budget for a project, for example $12,000 to do a project in another country over a summer, rather than just the part that is funded by the $1,500 or $3,000 max available from Rackham.
   a. In these cases the student should indicate which parts will be paid using Rackham funds (even though this might be a slightly artificial division, it is real because we have limitations on our funds), and how the student plans to fund the remainder of the costs.
   b. If it is a combination of applications to other places, plans should be discussed for what will be done if:
      1) more than the amount needed in the budget is awarded, and
      2) how the student intends to make up the difference if not enough other funds are awarded (might not be a point in partial funding).

      This can all be laid out in the budget page(s), which don't count toward the word limit.
   c. If "filler" funding is promised by the research advisor, it would be helpful if the advisor could mention this in her/his supporting letter – it won't negatively affect Rackham's enthusiasm for funding the proposal.