

Fellowship Application Workshop



Boston University Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies
African Studies Center

bu.edu/africa

Outline

1. General Guidance on Applying for Fellowships
2. Specific Guidance on Applying for FLAS Fellowships
3. Questions



Many of these suggestions can be applied to any kind of competitive opportunity: fellowships, scholarships, research grants, internships, and jobs.

General Guidance on Fellowships

- ❖ Questions to ask yourself *wherever you are in your academic career*:
 1. What kinds of opportunities am I interested in outside the classroom?
 2. What are my goals and priorities for the short term and the long term, and what might help me realize them?
 3. What opportunities are out there to make these goals attainable? When should I plan to pursue them?

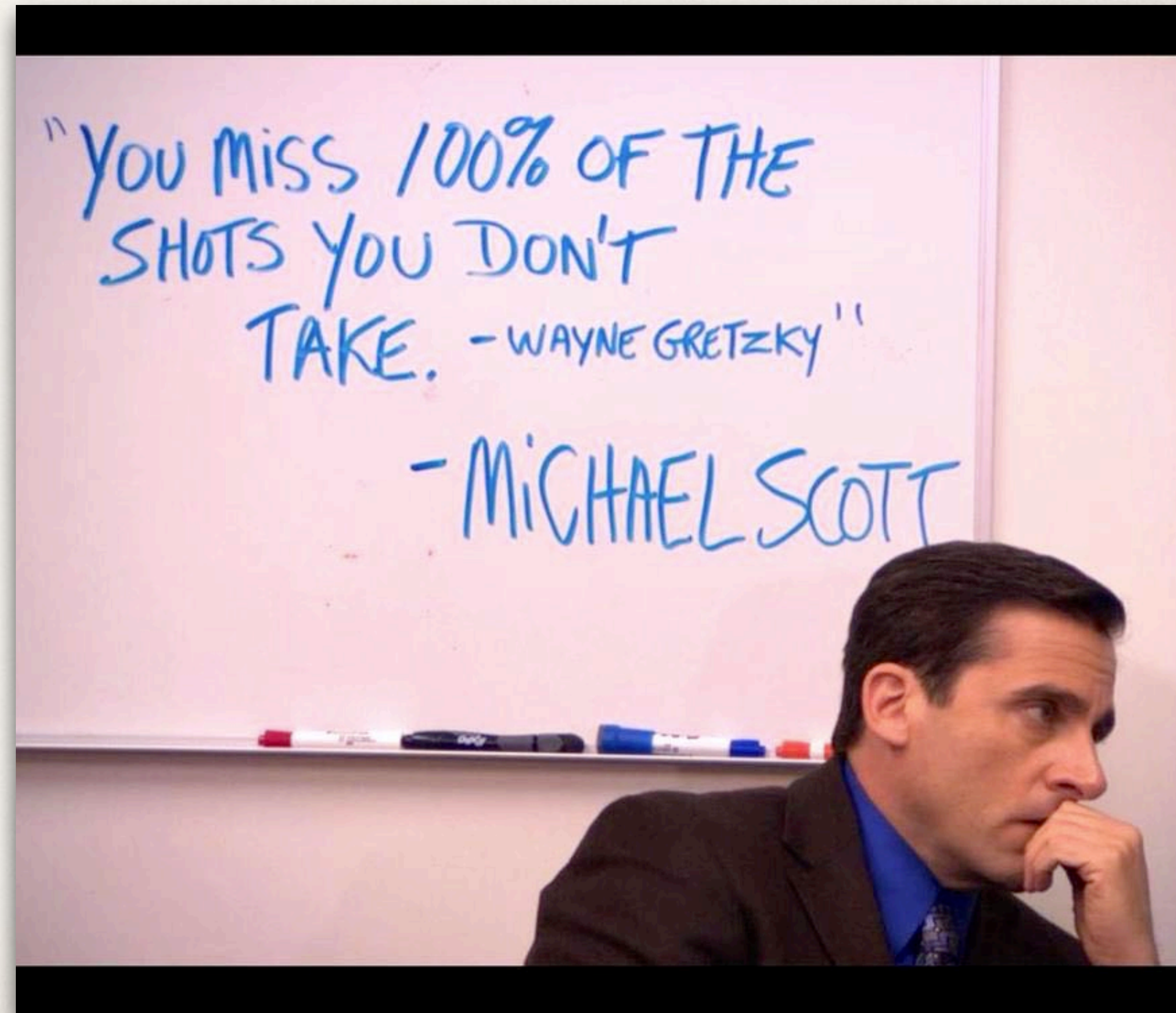
Fellowships Beyond BU

- ❖ Other fellowships and scholarships beyond BU:
 - ❖ BU Financial Assistance: Private Scholarship Search Services
- ❖ Language and study abroad opportunities in addition to FLAS:
 - ❖ Boren Awards (*due soon! - Jan 25/Feb 1*)
 - ❖ Critical Language Scholarships (CLS)
 - ❖ Fulbright U.S. Student Program

General Guidance

Questions to ask yourself *once you've identified an opportunity*:

1. Am I eligible?
2. Should I apply?
3. What do I need to apply and when do I need it?



General Guidance on Fellowships

- ❖ **Start early.**
- ❖ Are you applying to multiple fellowships or opportunities? **Get organized!**
 - ❖ Consider setting up a spreadsheet in Excel or Google Sheets to track all the actions and materials you need – here's an example:

Due Date	Opportunity	Link to More Info	Materials Needed	Tracking Letters/References
2/13	FLAS Fellowship	https://www.bu.edu/africa/forstudents/alp/flas/	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Personal statement (500 words)❖ Unofficial transcript	<p>2 needed (1 language, 1 academic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Prof. Mali submitted 1/20❖ Prof. Storella requested 1/14

General Guidance on Fellowships

- ❖ **Make it a hard decision!** Don't give committees any reason to toss your application. Double check you've provided everything that is asked for and that you present your most polished work.

Personal Statements

- ❖ Review the application directions.
 - ❖ Does the fellowship ask for you to include specific information or to answer specific questions in the personal statement?
 - ❖ Make sure you address *every one* of these points. There's a reason those questions are asked and they often are related to the program priorities.
 - ❖ *Remember: make it a hard decision!*

Personal Statements

- ❖ Sometimes no directions are given, and there's only a generic request for a personal statement.
- ❖ Core components of a personal statement:
 1. Your story
 2. Your qualifications
 3. Your future
 4. Your suitability to the foundation/agency/funder's priorities

Personal Statements: Core Components

Your story.

- ❖ **Tell a story through your personal statement.** This is your chance to define yourself to a group of people who may not know you. This is powerful!
- ❖ Who are you? What parts of your life may be relevant to this fellowship?
- ❖ Committees are going to read a lot of applications back to back. How do you stick in their memory when it comes time to select fellows?
 - ❖ Think about formative experiences, transformative moments

Personal Statements: Core Components

Your qualifications.

- ❖ What skills, experiences, and attributes prepare you for this opportunity?
- ❖ Highlight your connections to the eligibility criteria and priorities of the fellowship.
- ❖ Be sure to share information that might not be apparent in other parts of your application (like your transcripts).

Personal Statements: Core Components

Your future.

- ❖ What are your academic and career goals?
 - ❖ You've introduced readers to who you are. Now help them understand who you want to become.
- ❖ How does this opportunity support those goals and where does it fit into a broader trajectory of your development? How will it benefit you?
 - ❖ **What specific doors would this fellowship open up for you?**

Personal Statements: Core Components

Your suitability to the foundation/agency/funder's priorities.

- ❖ Think about your audience: the fellowship committee. What are their priorities?
 - ❖ You may have to do some background digging, but often those priorities are explicitly stated or hinted at in the call for applications.
- ❖ **Connect:** Think about how your goals and experiences can connect with those priorities while remaining authentic and true to yourself.

Personal Statements: Final Considerations

- ❖ **Organize.**
- ❖ **Revise, revise, revise.** Have peers and mentors review your drafts.
- ❖ Be **straightforward** and “abandon all hope.”
 - ❖ Readers don't need a bunch of jargon and they also won't likely be convinced by unsubstantiated claims or dreams that aren't accompanied by a specific plan.
 - ❖ Most readers *absolutely* want you to realize your dreams and that's why they support these opportunities. But: they have responsibilities to ensure that fellowships are meeting foundations' priorities or else they can jeopardize the program.

Personal Statements: Final Considerations

- ❖ Your personal statement is often the most important component that can make or break your application.
 - ❖ Limited experience or a low GPA? Here's your time to shine!
 - ❖ Strong credentials? Don't rest on your laurels.

Letters of Recommendation

- ❖ Make sure you select referees who meet fellowship requirements and who can commit to writing a strong, positive letter.
 - ❖ You can (and should) ask them this specifically.
- ❖ Give referees plenty of time to prepare.
 - ❖ At least two weeks, but ideally 4-6! At the very least, give them a heads up.
- ❖ The best references come from people who know you well, not always the biggest “name.”
- ❖ **Important:** Waive the right to view reference letters.

Letters: How to Ask

- ❖ "Dear Professor/Doctor/etc., ..."
- ❖ Include in your email:
 - ❖ Details about the fellowship, such as a link to the fellowship website and any specific guidelines offered about what letters of recommendation need to include
 - ❖ Directions on how to submit their letters
 - ❖ Your draft or final application materials, including personal statements, CV/resume, and any other details
 - ❖ Remind them about your accomplishments relevant to your relationship and to the opportunity

Letters: Final Considerations

- ❖ Multiple opportunities?
 - ❖ Help your referees out and provide all info upfront, with deadlines and each opportunity organized together.
- ❖ Don't hesitate to follow up and send reminders.



Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships

- ❖ Review the FLAS Info Session slideshow and our website for full details on awards & eligibility
- ❖ We'll review application process here

Application Process

- ❖ Apply: **online application on FLAS main page**
- ❖ Current unofficial transcript
- ❖ Personal statement (500 words max)
- ❖ Two letters of recommendation, sent via email to ascflas@bu.edu
 - ❖ *One letter should speak to your language skills*
- ❖ Academic Year applicants: submit your FAFSA with BU selected to receive your report

Deadline: **February 13th, 2024**



FLAS Personal Statement

- ❖ Your statement should answer the following questions in about 500 words:
 1. What are your motivations for studying your target language?
 2. How does the study of this language fit in with your academic and career aspirations?
- ❖ The strongest essays will demonstrate commitment to the language and a clear rationale for studying it.

FLAS Personal Statement

- ❖ **Summer FLAS applicants:**

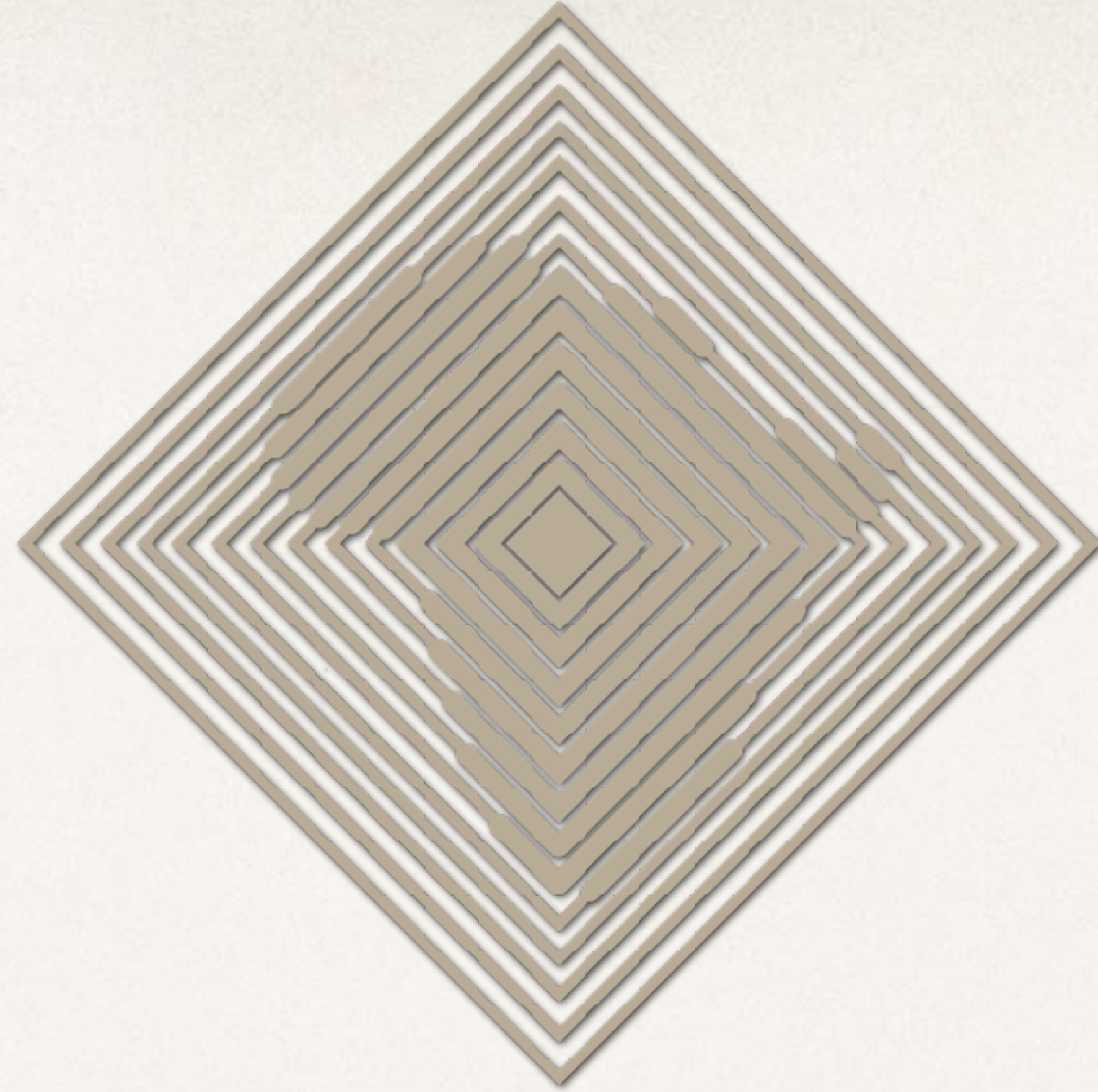
- ❖ If you have a specific summer intensive program(s) in mind, please mention it and your rationale for selecting this program.

- ❖ **Dissertation research abroad applicants:**

- ❖ Your proposed dissertation project, including your destination abroad, a clear plan for how you will engage the target language in your research, and tentative dates for travel;
- ❖ Your progress toward your degree, including an anticipated date of graduation and steps remaining for completion; and
- ❖ Any additional dissertation funding sources you may have or have applied for

More Resources

- ❖ Some of the recommendations in this presentation are drawn from these excellent sources:
 - ❖ BU Office of Fellowships and Scholarships
 - ❖ Application Dos and Don'ts
 - ❖ Writing the Personal Statement
 - ❖ ProFellow: How to Win Competitive Fellowships



Questions? .

Contact:

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