Tips for writing a successful proposal:

- Use a general style that will be clear to readers from a variety of fields who are not specialists in your area.
- Let your interest, enthusiasm, passion show in your proposal.
- Be clear about the significance of your project—What will it contribute not just to you personally but to society?
- Select a mentor who can be supportive of your proposal.
- If you are using human subjects or animals, begin to seek the appropriate clearance.
- Develop your budget: supplies (expendables), capital (equipment), travel (only if necessary for research).
- Note that capital will become part of university inventory; if you are working in an ongoing lab, faculty support of some supplies and equipment will strengthen your proposal.

Characteristics of successful proposals:

- straightforward
- clearly organized
- creative, but clearly communicated

If working with data, remember:

- inform reader where data are located or how they will be obtained
- inform reader as to access to data
- describe tools and techniques you have for analyzing the data

Weaknesses in proposals:

- problem of insufficient importance / unlikely to produce new or useful information
- proposed methods unsuited to stated objectives
- researcher has inadequate training/experience
- needed equipment or personnel are unrealistic

- technical methods questionable or unsuited
- hypothesis lacking, faulty, diffuse
- scope of project too broad, unrealistic for time available
- data collection confused or inappropriate
- study group or control inappropriate
- data analysis vague or unsophisticated