

Helpful Hints for Writing May Project Proposals

As you think about your May Project proposal, remember that you're asking UHigh to give you time on your own to pursue something that interests you, and that you'd like eventually to share it with the rest of the Schools community. It's your "last hurrah," too, so you'll want to leave something memorable behind. Remember also that your proposal will be scrutinized very carefully and held to very high standards. You can raise the odds of your project's being accepted by doing the following:

1. **Follow the May Project Handbook's instructions.** Seems simple, but there you have it. That includes adhering to page limits. If you don't think you can even get five pages for a proposal, then it may not be the right one. That includes reading the Evaluation Form so you know what readers and the committee are looking for.
2. **Do your homework.** A proposal that has **specific** elements and references to people you've already spoken to, or places you've already contacted, shows that you're serious and will be ready to go in May. If you plan on shadowing someone, be sure you've spoken to that person and have some background on him/her and what you'll be doing. If you're doing an independent project, you need to give readers a clear understanding of why it's important to you; if you want to write short stories, you should be able to refer to writers you admire or use as models.
3. **Put your project in a context** that will enable the readers and the committee to understand what you hope to learn from it and what you will be able to bring back when you're finished. Whether it's "academic" or "non-academic," you need to have clear justifications for doing it. If you want to develop a fitness workout program, for example, do some research on kinetics, talk to trainers, learn about muscle groups, nutrition, etc. and include some of what you know in your proposal. If you want to design or build a loft, tell us why, how, what architects you know of, and what makes it important to do.
4. **Be sure you account for your time requirement** (30 hrs./week). You have flexibility with how you spend that time, but the committee should feel comfortable letting you work on your own during that time. It's not enough to say, "I'm sure this will fill up the time" and leave it at that; make some clear estimates based on real planning. You may include travel time, but don't let that get too overwhelming.
5. **If you are working with others, be sure each participant has a specific part of the project.** Since you each have to write a separate proposal, make sure you aren't just duplicating each other's work. Whether you're rebuilding an auto or making a DVD with your band, each of you should decide who will be in charge of what.
6. **Anticipate difficulties.** One mark of a well thought out project is your ability to anticipate what might go wrong and how you might deal with it. Obviously you can't think of everything, but one or two possibilities and a description of how you might deal with them will go a long way.
7. **Have a substantive way to measure the project's success.** In other words, don't just say, "My project will be successful if I complete it." If you are playing in a band, will success be producing a CD or will it be learning how to produce a CD, including the various steps it takes? So you can say, "My project will be successful if I'm able to communicate the way a CD gets produced to my audience." The CD itself will be just further evidence of your efforts. See if you can break the project down into steps.
8. **Think ahead.** Remember you'll be doing a public presentation and a stand-alone exhibit so discuss how you'll do those. Both should be as accomplished as you can make them.
9. **If it's important to you, it should look it.** When you hand in your proposal, it should look as if you've taken time putting it together. That means it's typed, with illustrations if needed, in the form requested, and stapled. **BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY FOR YOURSELF.**