

# Writing Your Personal Statement

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QLCSS 412

# Agenda

- Introductions
- The Personal Statement
- Timeline and Process
- Tips and Suggestions
- Critiquing Personal Statements
- Questions

# Introduction to the Personal Statement

# Sample Prompts

## **William S. Richardson School of Law:**

Compose a personal statement on a subject of your choice. Many applicants write about their goals, achievements, influences, and their interest in our law school.

## **AMCAS (Allopathic Medicine):**

Use the space provided to explain why you want to go to medical school.

Some questions you may want to consider:

- Why have you selected the field of medicine?
- What motivates you to learn more about medicine?
- What do you want medical schools to know about you that hasn't been disclosed in another section of the application?

# Sample Prompts

## **PTCAS (Physical Therapy):**

Describe your decision making process in choosing physical therapy as a career choice versus other health care careers.

## **PharmCAS (Pharmacy):**

Your Personal Essay should address why you selected pharmacy as a career and how the Doctor of Pharmacy degree relates to your immediate and long-term professional goals. Describe how your personal, educational, and professional background will help you achieve your goals.

# Sample Prompts

## **UHM MEPN Program (Nursing):**

In your goal statement, please address the following:

- What you believe your previous academic and life experience will bring to:
  - a) The nursing profession
  - b) The specialty you have chosen to apply for
- Relevant personal qualities and experiences that have shaped your beliefs
- Your immediate and long-term goals upon completion of the program

## **UHM Public Health Graduate Program**

- (1) Your professional interests in the selected area of specialization (i.e., epidemiology, health policy and management, or social and behavioral health sciences),
- (2) the public health relevance of your past and present academic / employment background and its applicability to your career goals,
- (3) your reasons for seeking enrollment at the University of Hawai'i public health program, and
- (4) your future career plans.

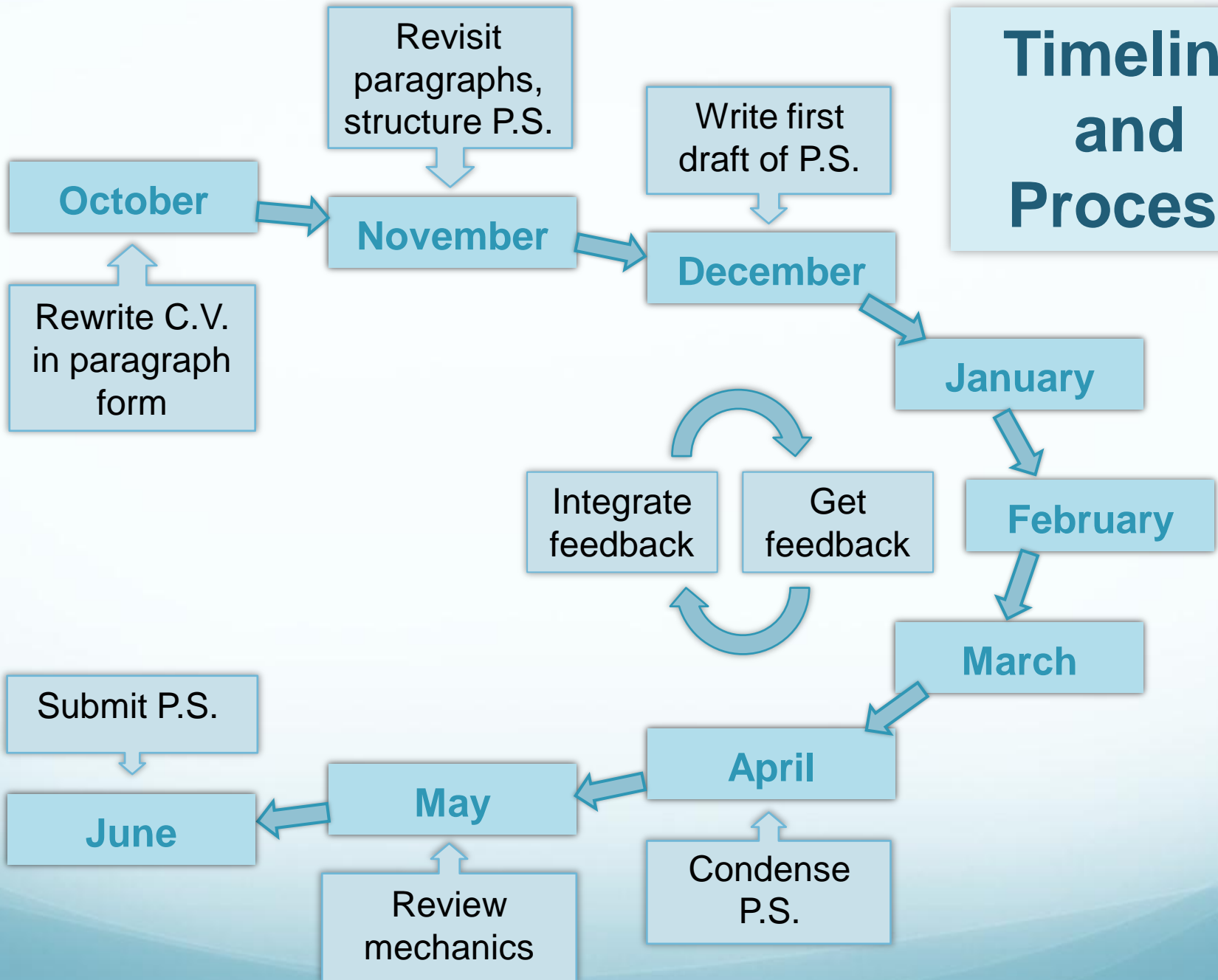
# Brainstorming Activity

- Make a list of activities, clubs, work experiences, service or leadership roles, etc. that you might want to discuss
- Include anything you would like admissions committees to know about you
- Choose one experience to focus on
- Write a paragraph about your experience
  - Provide minimal description
  - Focus on:
    - What did you learn?
    - What did you like/dislike about this experience?
    - How has this experience changed you as a person?
    - Why is this experience significant to you?

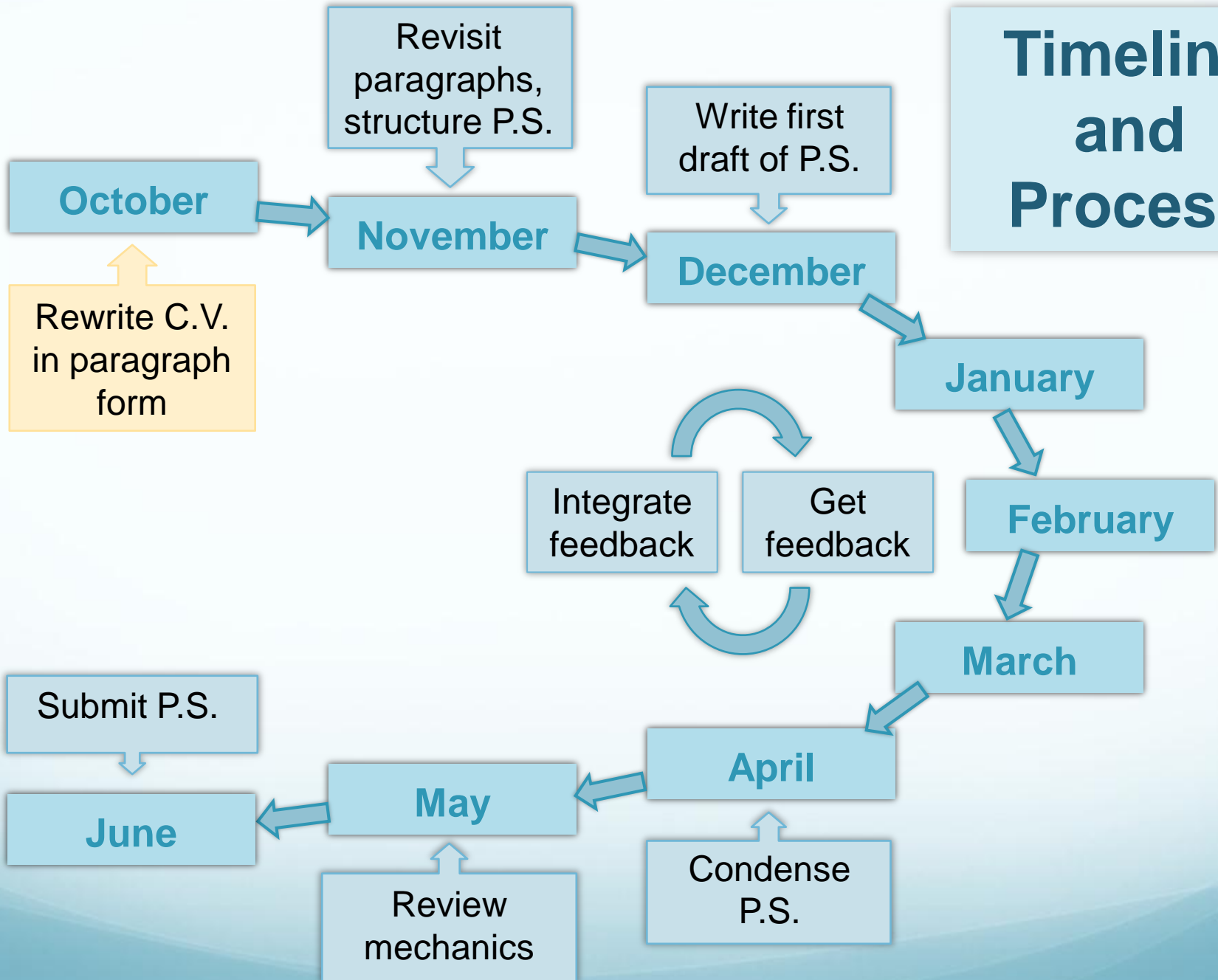
# Timeline and Process



# Timeline and Process



# Timeline and Process



# Step 1: Rewrite C.V.

CAREERS IN MEDICINE CV SAMPLE #3

234 CHESAPEAKE WAY, UNIT 111 • NORFOLK, VA 23506  
PHONE 757.555.0000 • E-MAIL ANNEBODY@EVMS.EDU

ANN E. BODY

## EDUCATION

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Aug 2006 Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) Norfolk, VA  
M.D., Anticipated May 2010

2002–2006 University of Virginia Charlottesville, VA  
B.S. in Human Biology with honors  
▪ Concentration: Pathogenesis and Immunity

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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2009 Gregg Upshur County Medical Society Medical Student Scholarship  
▪ Competitive academic scholarship

2008–present Honors Research Program

2007 Outstanding Community Service  
▪ Dermatology Interest Group, EVMS

2005 University of Virginia Unrestricted Endowed Presidential Scholarship  
▪ Competitive academic scholarship

2002–2005 Alpha Phi Sigma Premedical Honor Society  
▪ Member in Mentorship Program

2002–2004 Gamma Beta Phi Honor Society

2002–2006 University Honors, University of Virginia

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE/PRESENTATIONS

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2008–present George C. Fox, Ph.D., Faculty Mentor  
Department of Surgery, EVMS

### Honors Research Program

▪ Project: A comparison of the effect of oxidative stress on Melanoma cell morphology

May–June 2007 Morgan J. Adams, M.D., Ph.D., Faculty Mentor  
Department of Plastic Surgery, EVMS

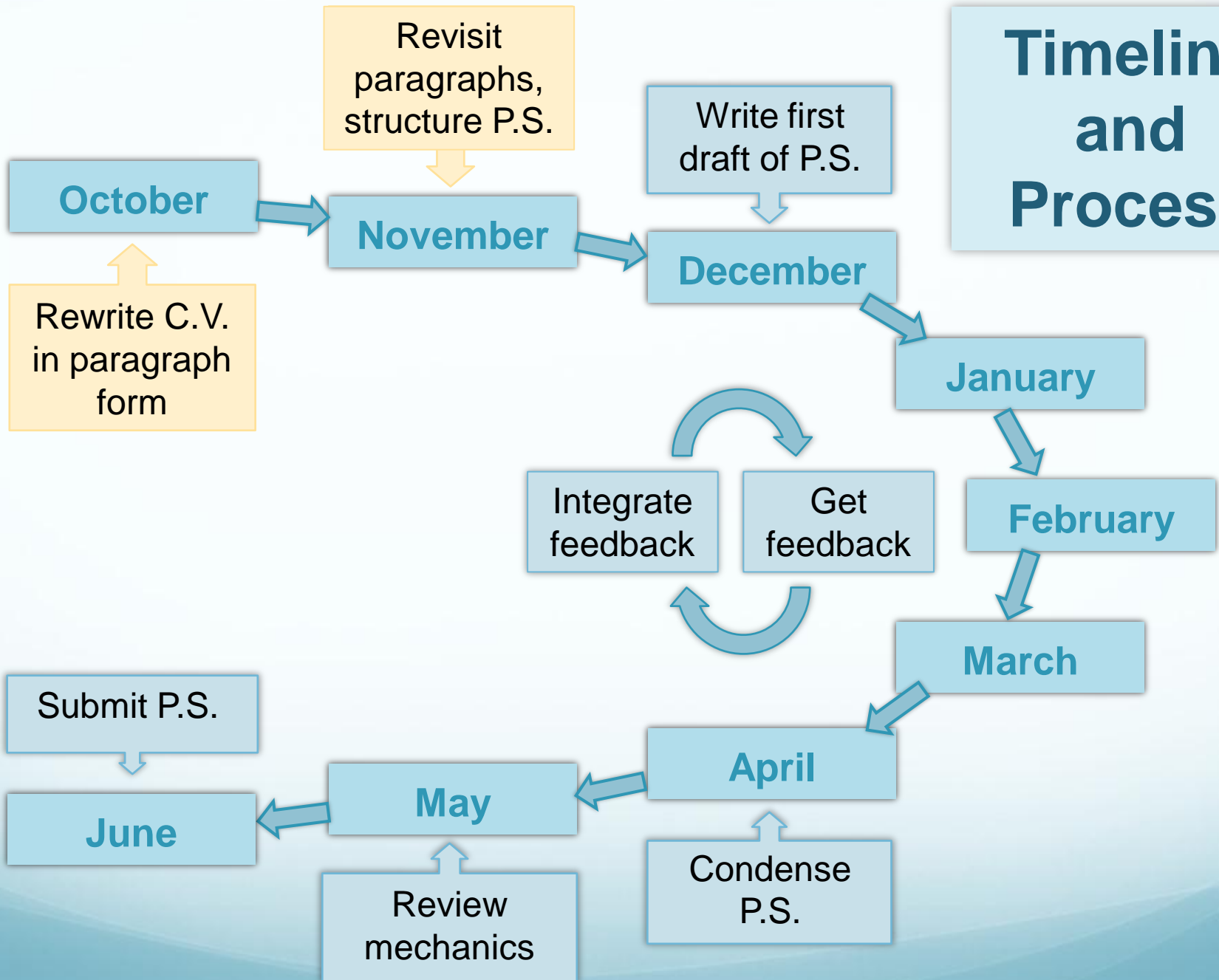
### Medical Student Summer Research Program

▪ Project: The effect of liposuction on weight gain: A comparison across the age of donors

▪ Poster Presentation: Medical Student Summer Research Program, EVMS

- curriculum vitae (C.V.)- comprehensive list of activities, clubs, work, honors, awards, etc.
- also consider personal challenges, obstacles, accomplishments
- rewrite each in paragraph form

# Timeline and Process



# Step 2: Revisit paragraphs

- set aside several hours to reread paragraphs
- read aloud and listen
- look for recurring ideas and themes, stories with depth
- see what can go onto application in areas other than the personal statement (e.g., extracurricular activities, transcripts, etc.)
- if your field requires secondary applications, consider what will go into your primary versus secondary essays
- choose which stories you want to write about in your personal statement

# Step 3: Structure your P.S.

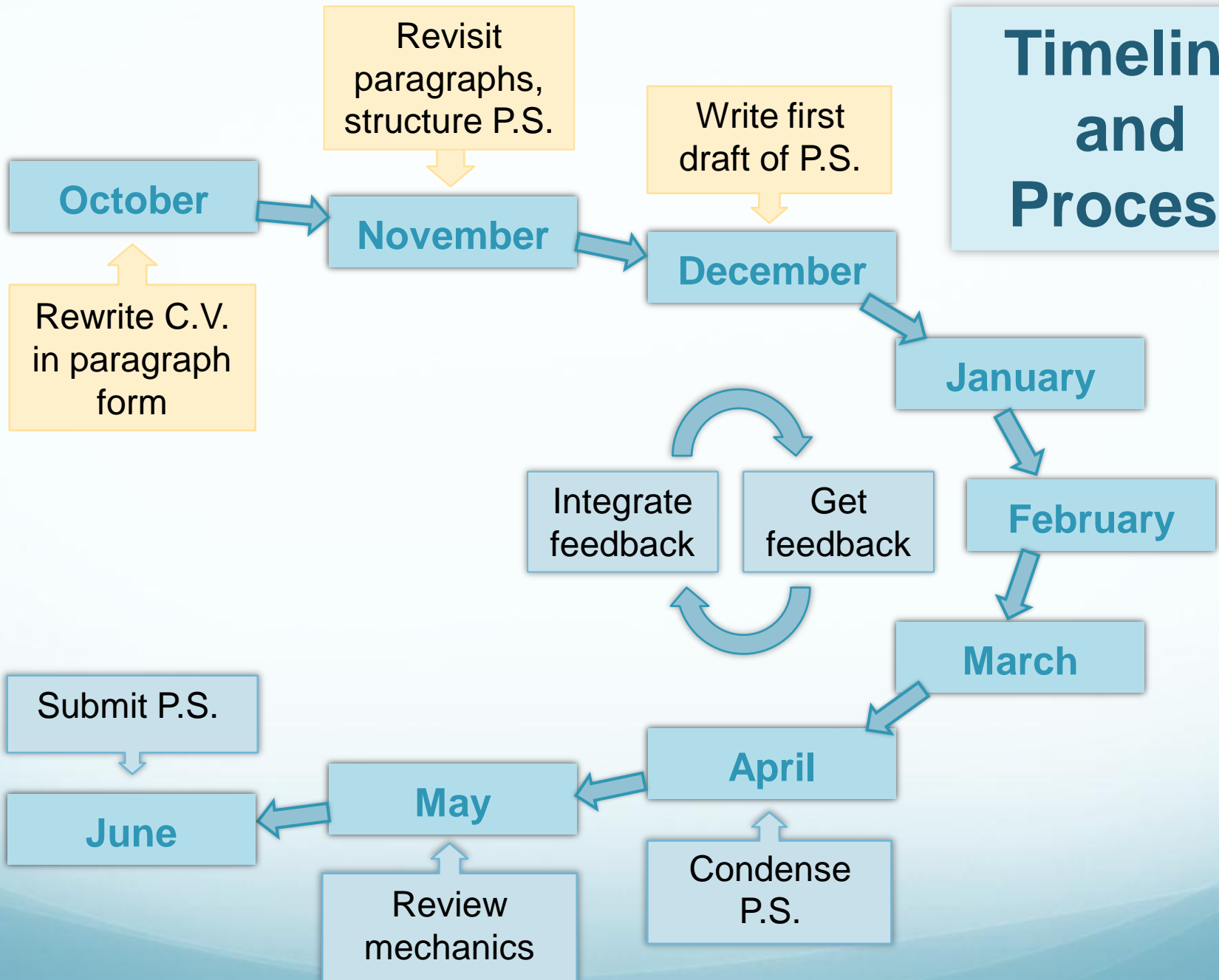


Which structure best conveys the story you want to tell?

# Step 3: Structure your P.S.



# Timeline and Process

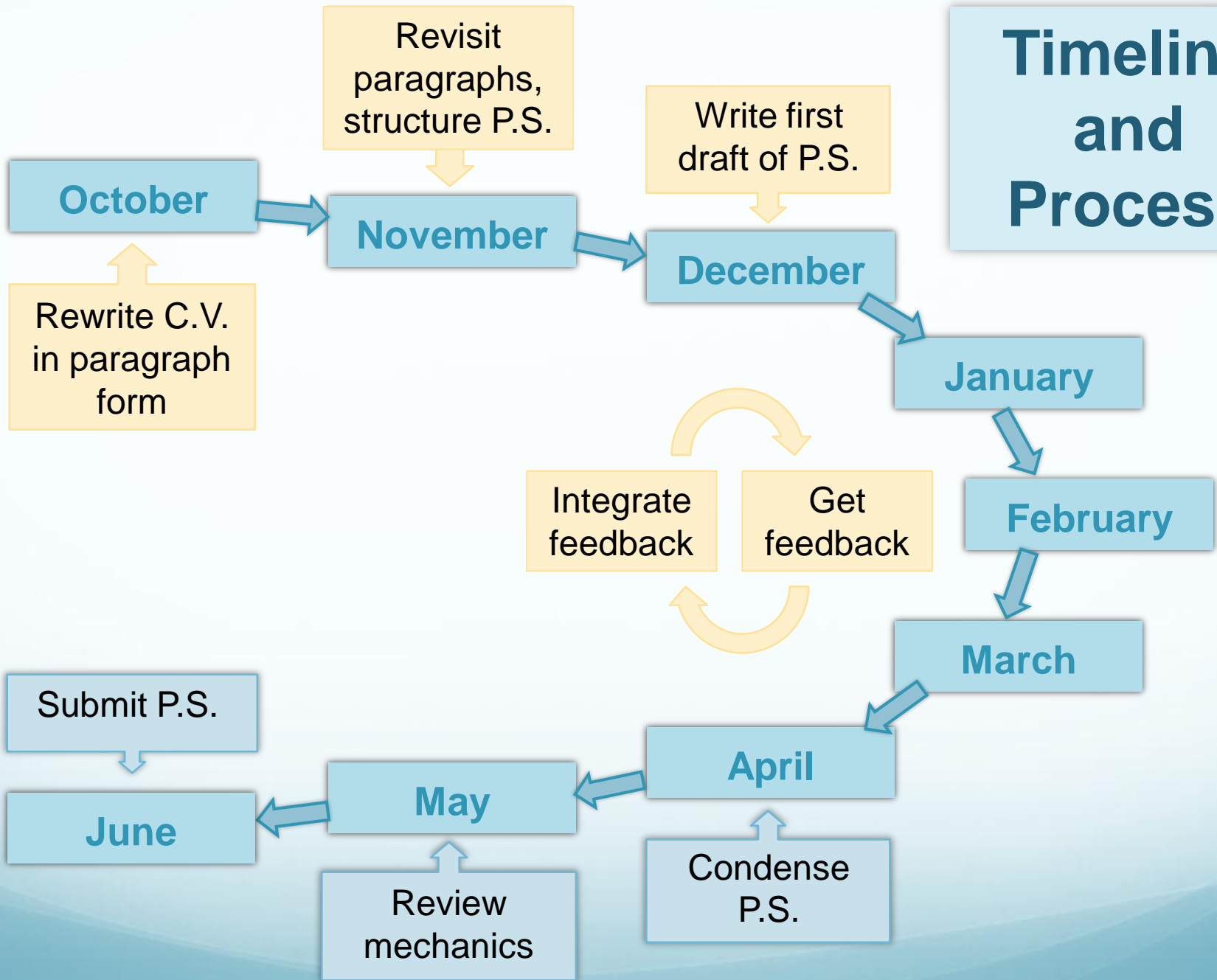




# Step 4: Draft your P.S.

- create a draft that contains everything you want to convey in your personal statement
- don't worry about length, write for content
- pay attention to style, structure, flow, themes and ideas, and telling your story
- make it presentable

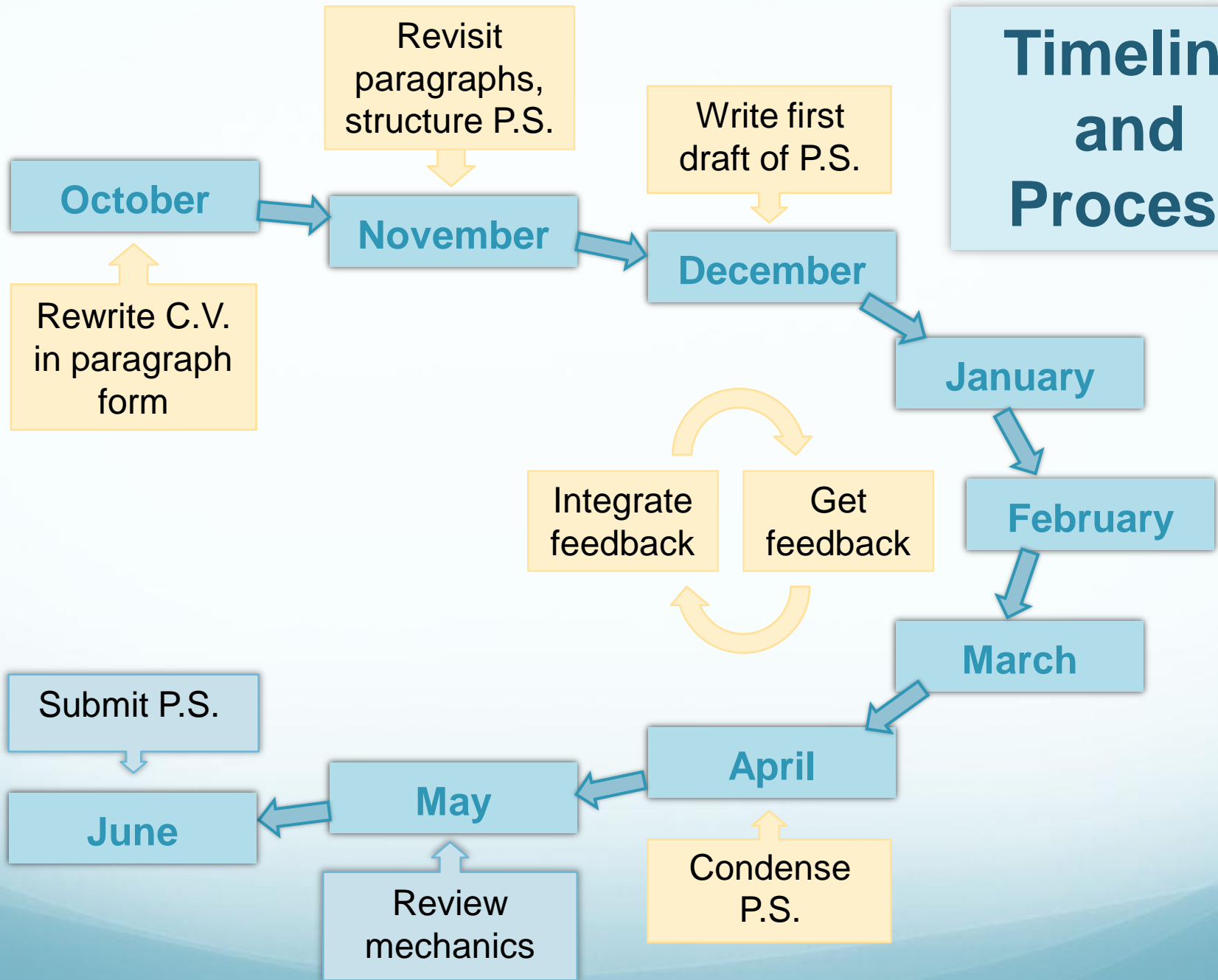
# Timeline and Process



# Step 5: Feedback and revision

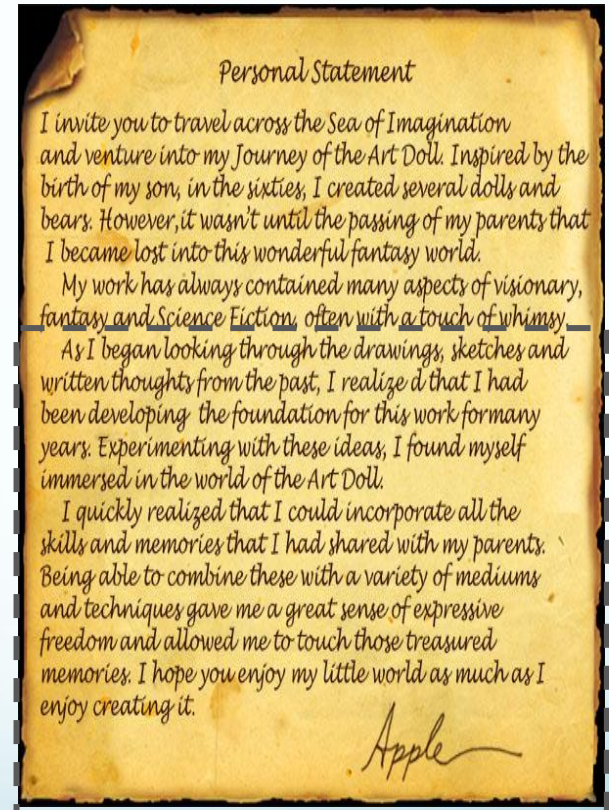
- ask for feedback from family and friends to proofread
  - What is your first impression?
  - Is it interesting to read?
  - Does it sound like me?
  - Is it convincing?
  - What did you learn about me?
- ask for feedback from Mānoa Writing Center, PAC, Mānoa Career Center, advisors, professors, letter writers, etc.
- after each person, integrate feedback and repeat (1 – 2 weeks each)
- repeat until you feel you have THE perfect essay

# Timeline and Process

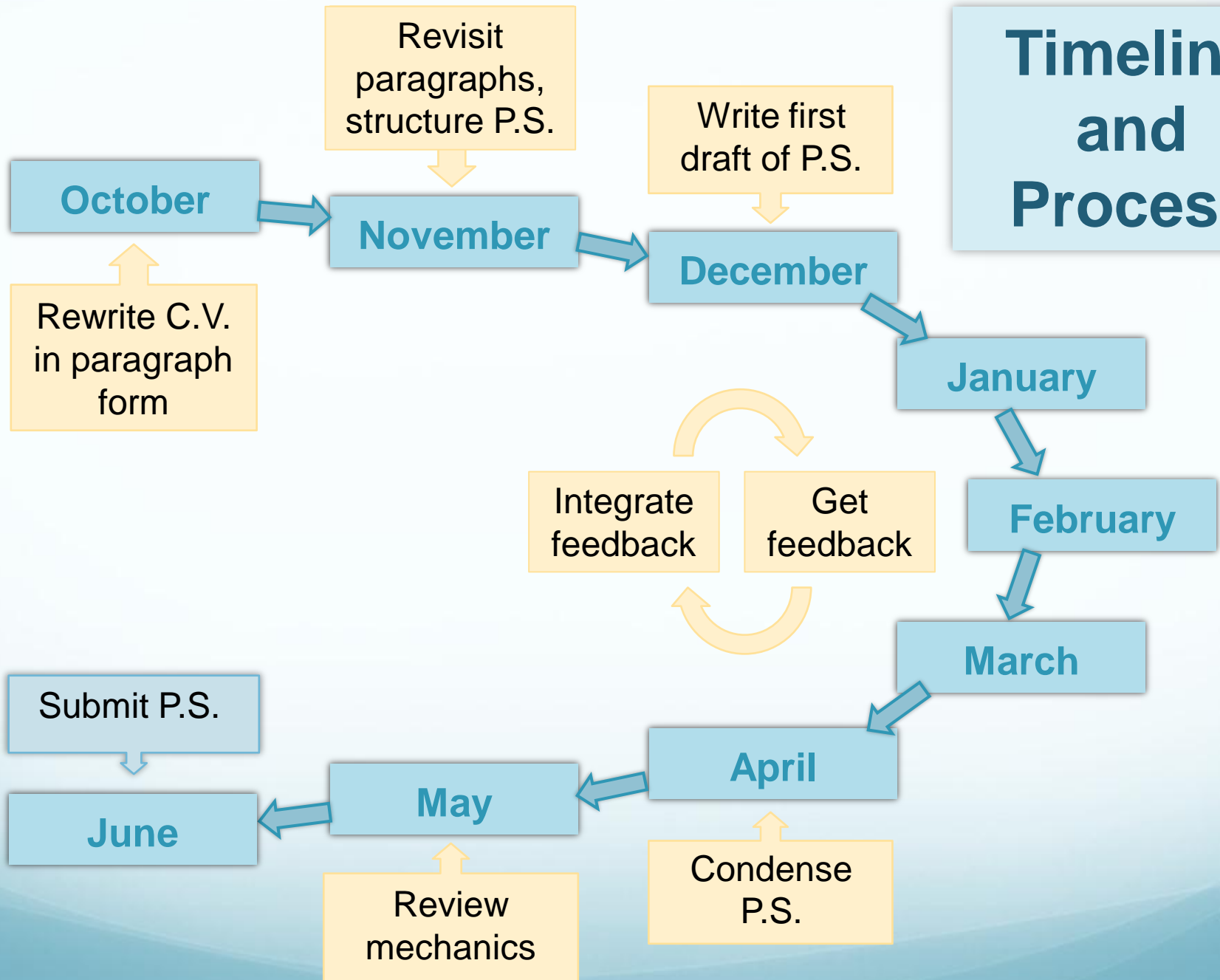


# Step 6: Condense your P.S.

- trim off extraneous and repetitive words and phrases, not content
- you can condense almost anything down to almost any size!
- high density of content



# Timeline and Process



# Step 7: Polish your P.S.

Double-check:

Names and titles

FormAttIng ReqUirements

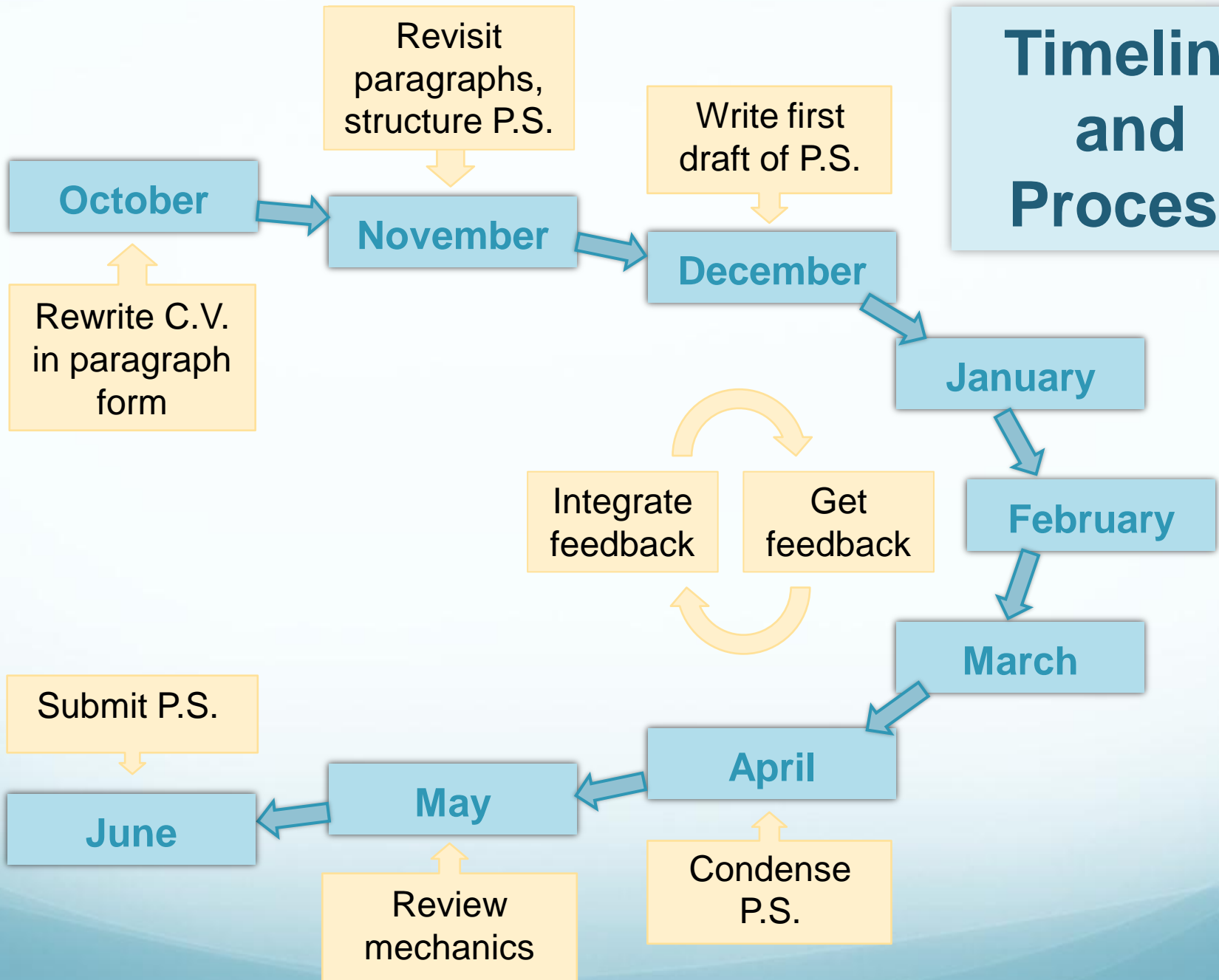
Dates

Speling

Grammars

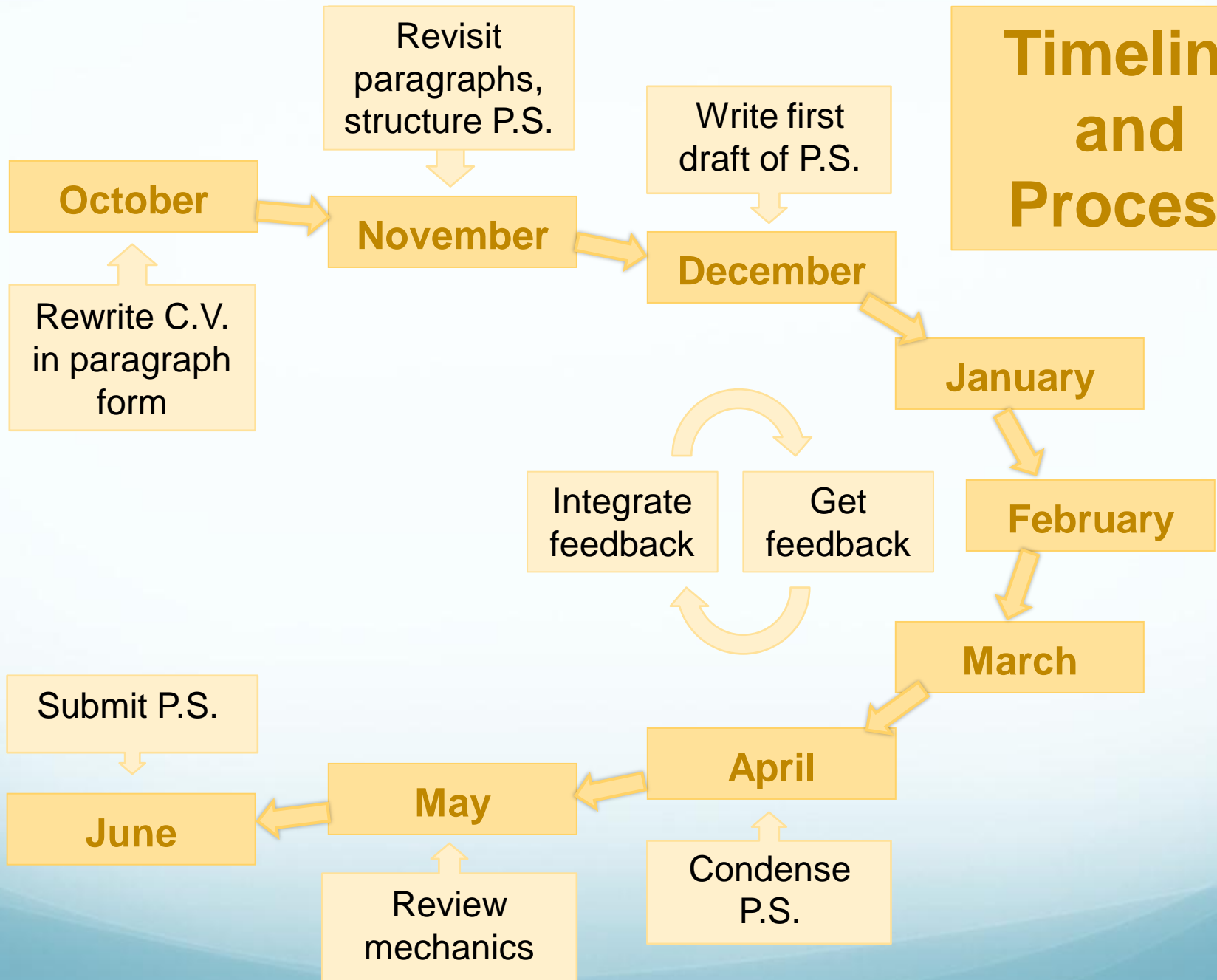
Punctuation!

# Timeline and Process





# Timeline and Process



# Tips

- Start early!
- Be yourself, not the “ideal” applicant, make sure your story is about you
- Be sincere
- Provide the reader with insight into what drives you
- Evaluate experiences rather than describe them
- Answer the question/prompt
- Have a clear theme and structure
- Avoid clichés, pidgin, big words
- Triple check for errors

# Common Misconceptions

- I can use this essay to explain why I failed MATH 100
- All I need to do is rewrite my résumé into prose form
- I will impress the committee with my fictional short story
- One draft is enough!
- My GPA and test scores are awesome so no one will bother reading my personal statement
- The fact that I used to dress up and play doctor/dentist/veterinarian/ etc. when I was five will show the school that I am dedicated to this field
- I will show my personality by using “cute” words
- I need to make my essay sound unique
- I need to start with a “hook”

# Sample Personal Statements

- read through two sample personal statements, feel free to annotate
- discuss strengths, weaknesses, possible improvements, etc.

Questions?

# Additional Resources

- Your Professors
- Your Letter Writers
- Mānoa Career Center
  - QLCSS Room 212, [careers@hawaii.edu](mailto:careers@hawaii.edu), 956-7007
- Mānoa Writing Center
  - Kuykendall Hall 415, [tutors@hawaii.edu](mailto:tutors@hawaii.edu)
- Dr. Ruth Bingham at PAC
  - QLCSS Room 101, [uhpac@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhpac@hawaii.edu), 956-4045

# Upcoming Workshop

## **Interviewing Workshop**

**Thursday, October 11 at 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**

**QLCSS Room 412 at UH Mānoa**

Are you nervous about your upcoming interviews? Learn how to be well prepared for your interview, such as communication and listening techniques, to show your professionalism! Also, experience a practice interview with professionals and representatives of various health fields!



# Mahalo!

Pre-Health/Pre-Law Advising Center  
QLCSS 101  
2600 Campus Road  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



(808) 956-4045

[uhpac@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhpac@hawaii.edu)