

Writing Your Personal Statement

Michelle and Shawn

October 9, 2012

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

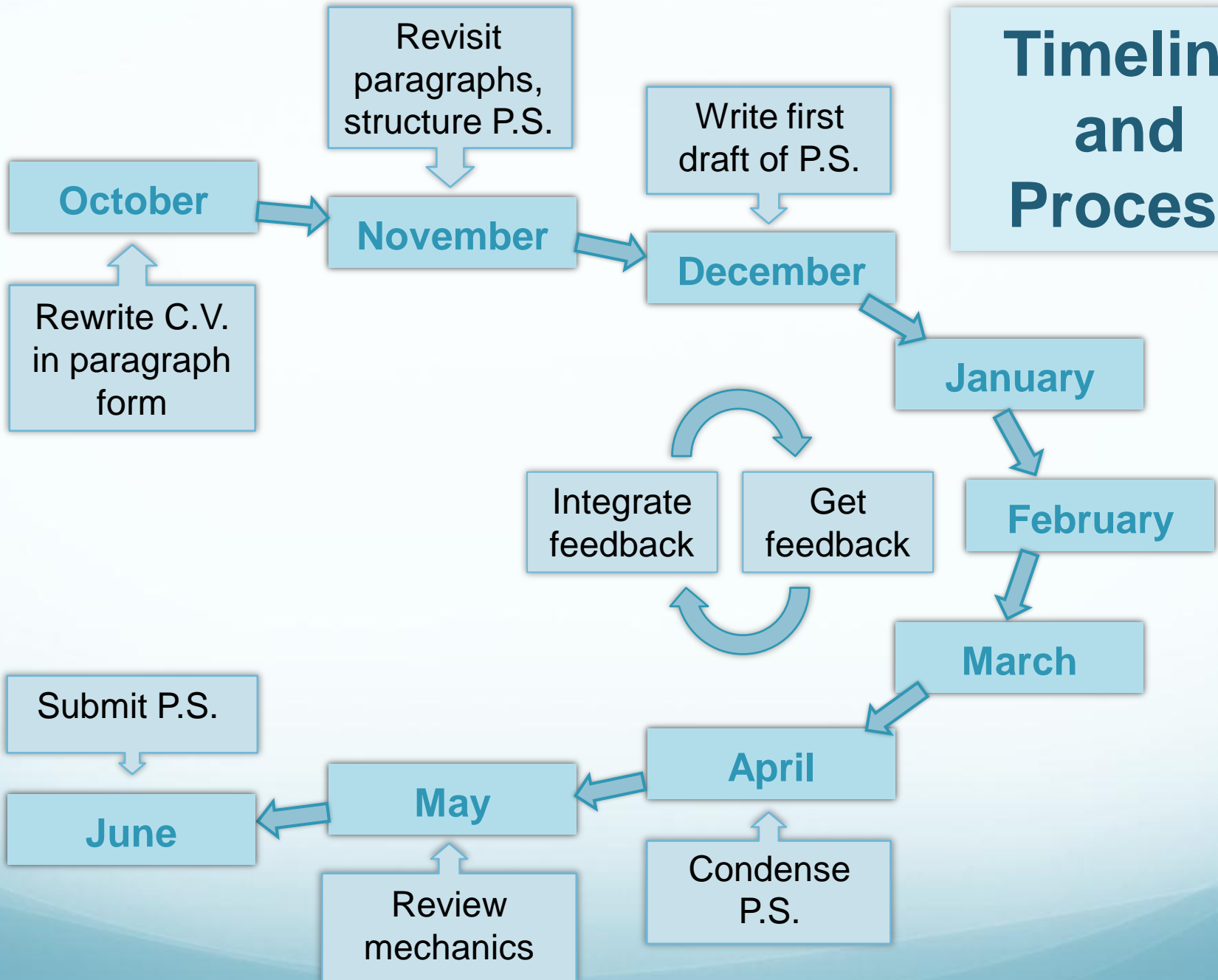
- (1) Your professional interests in the selected area of specialization (i.e., epidemiology, health policy and management, or social and behavioral health sciences),
- (2) the public health relevance of your past and present academic / employment background and its applicability to your career goals,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

Brainstorming Activity

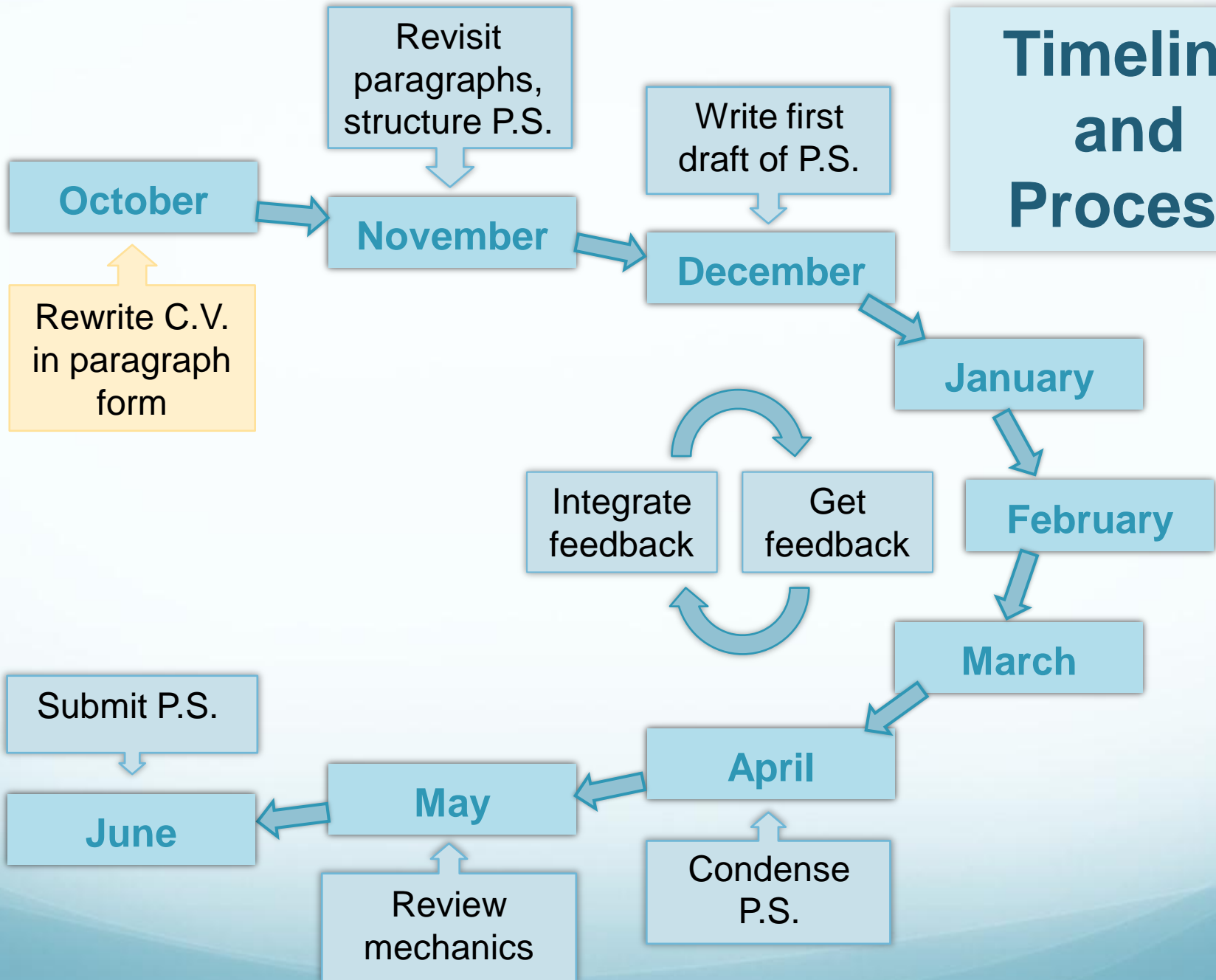
- Make a list of activities, clubs, work experiences, service or leadership roles, etc. that you might want to discuss
- Include anything you would like admissions committees to know about you
- Choose one experience to focus on
- Write a paragraph about your experience
 - Provide minimal description
 - 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

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

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

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

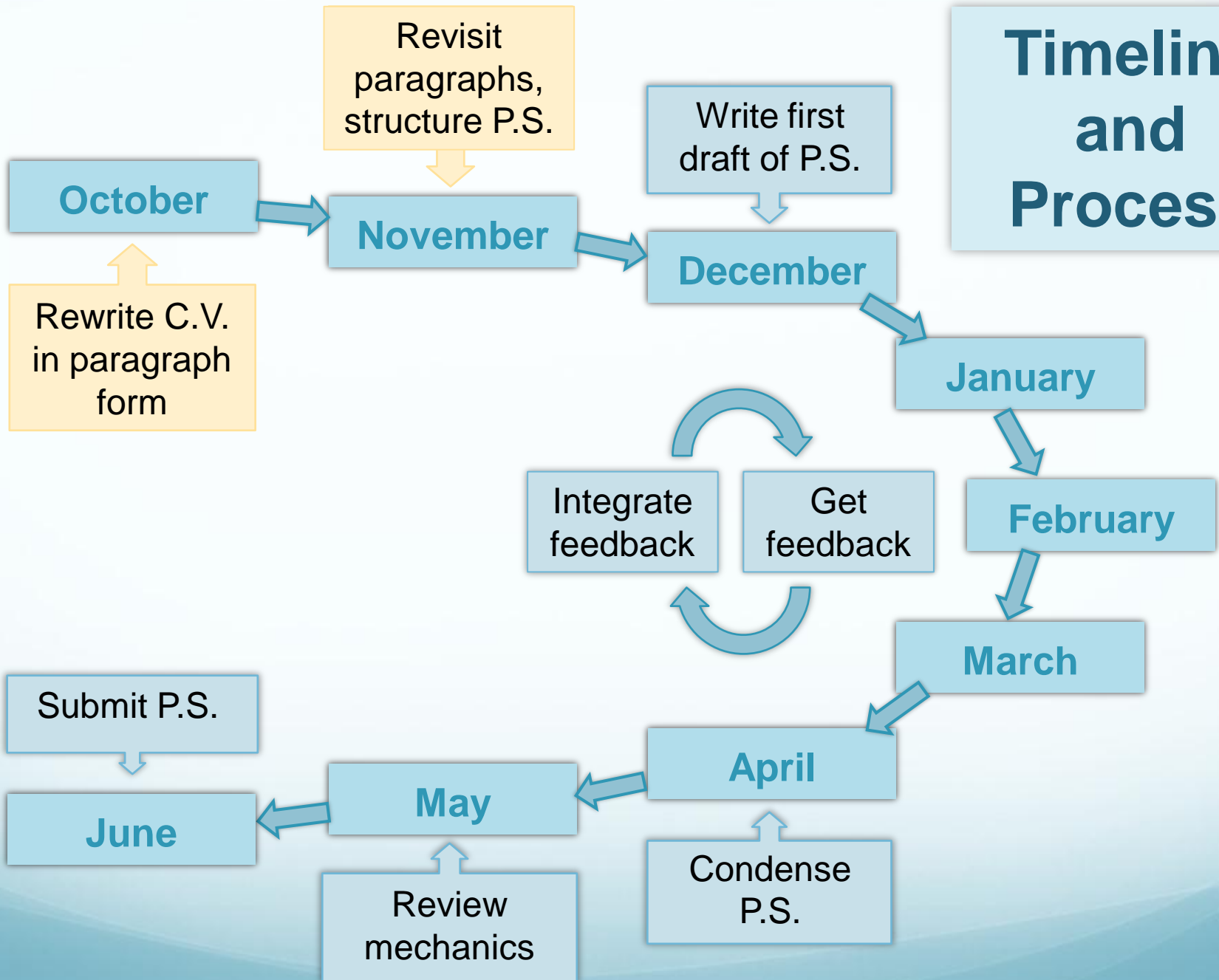
Medical Student Summer Research Program

▪ 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.

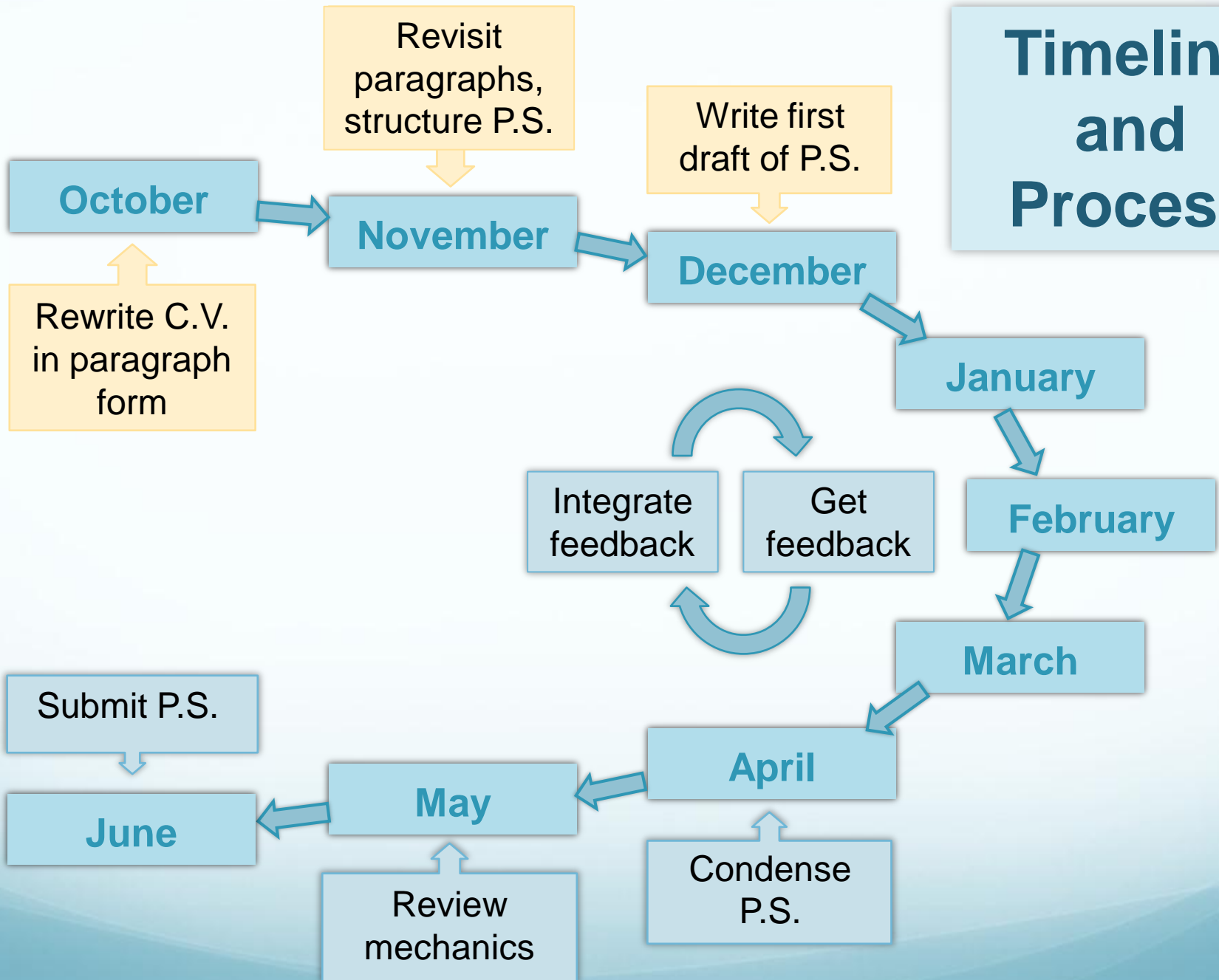


Which structure best conveys the story you want to tell?

Step 3: Structure your P.S.



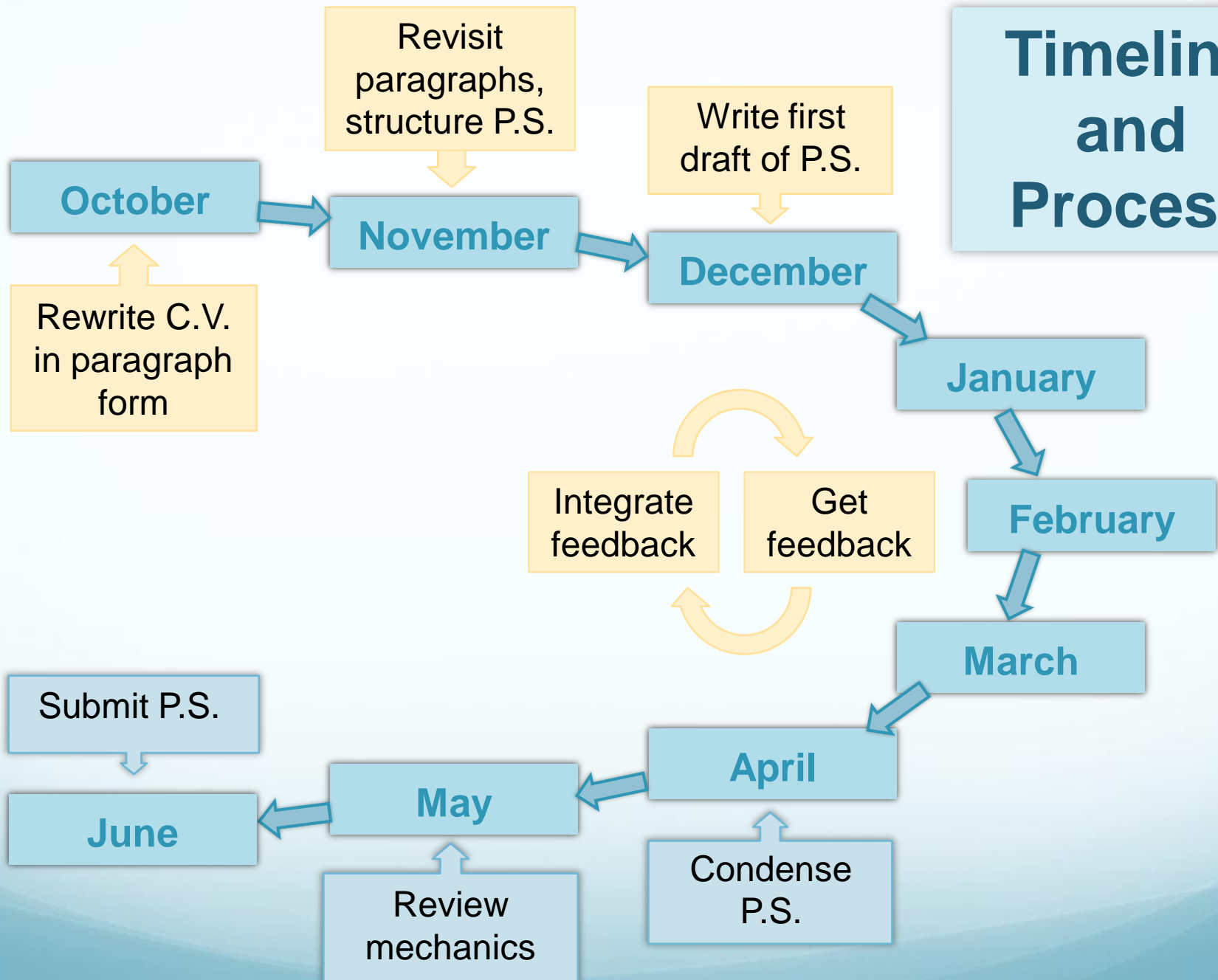
Timeline and Process



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

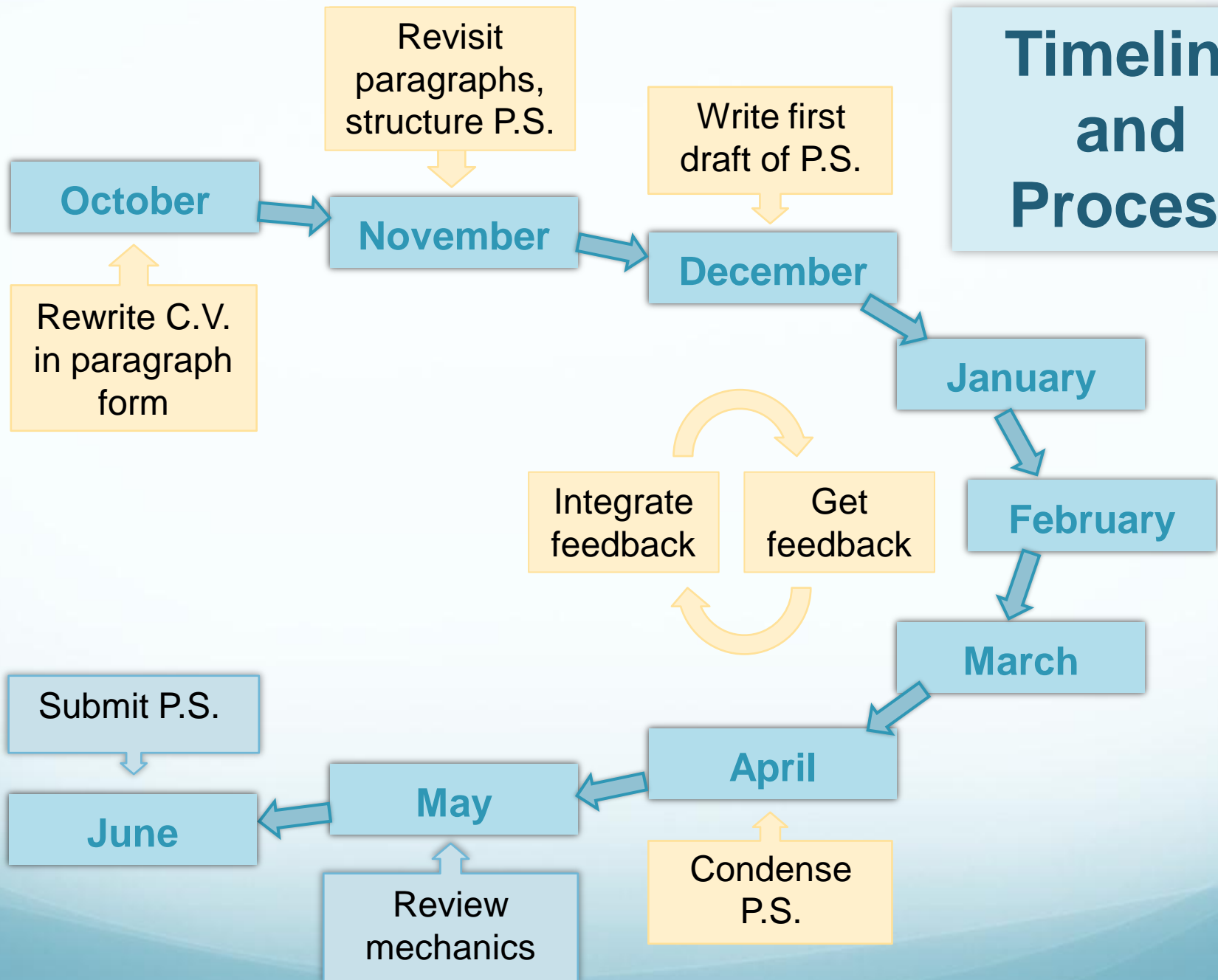
Timeline and Process



Step 5: Feedback and revision

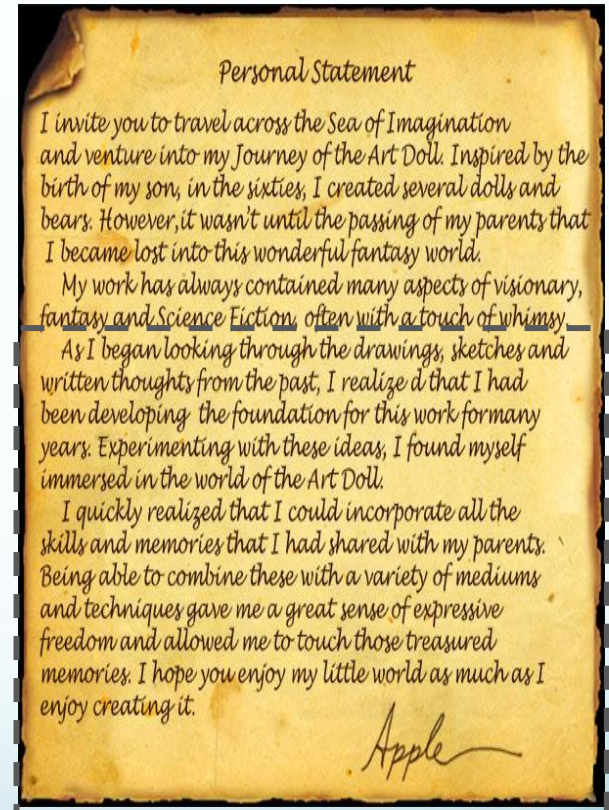
- ask for feedback from family and friends to proofread
 - What is your first impression?
 - Is it interesting to read?
 - Does it sound like me?
 - Is it convincing?
 - What did you learn about me?
- ask for feedback from Mānoa Writing Center, PAC, Mānoa Career Center, advisors, professors, letter writers,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

Timeline and Process

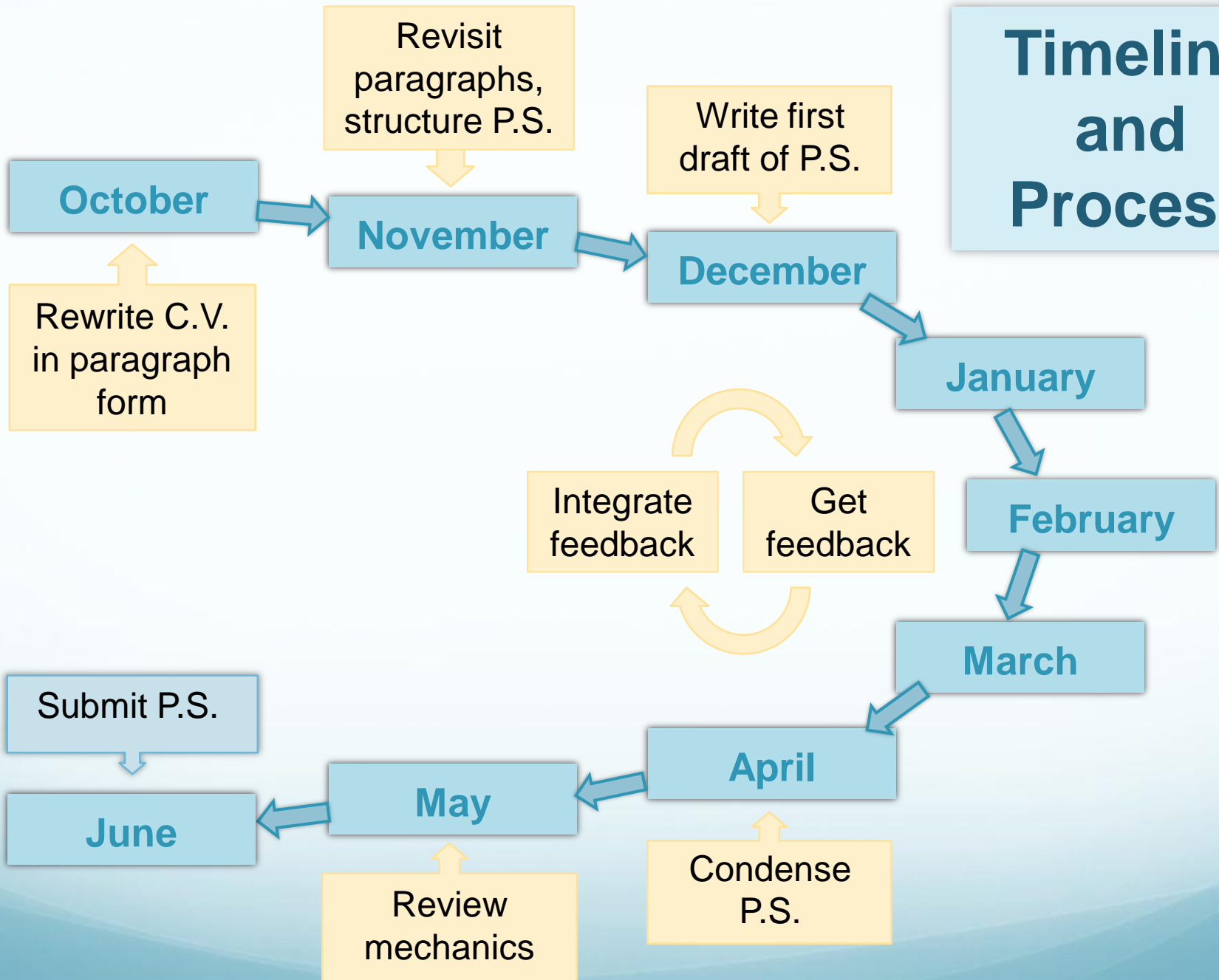


Step 6: Condense your P.S.

- 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

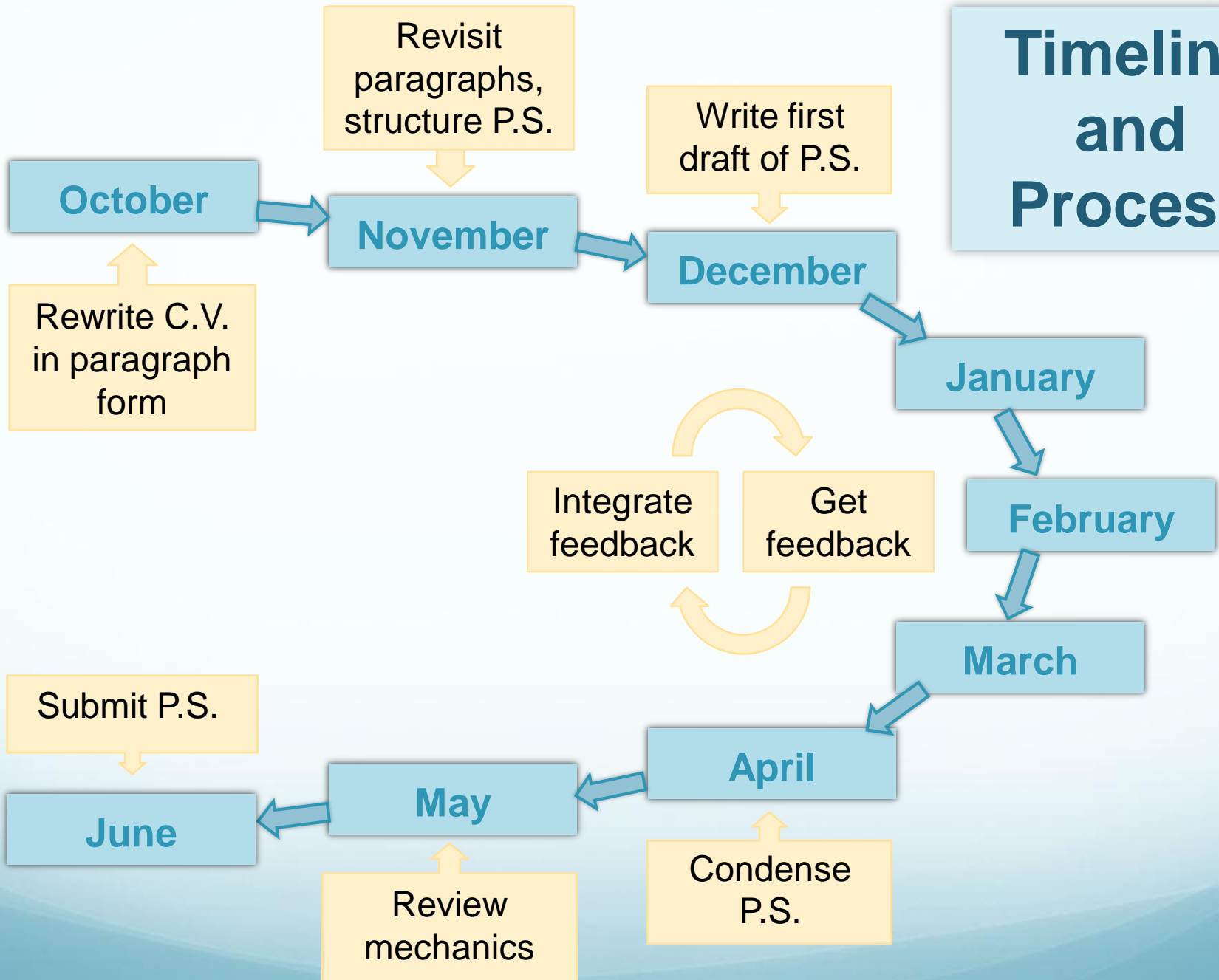
Dates

Speling

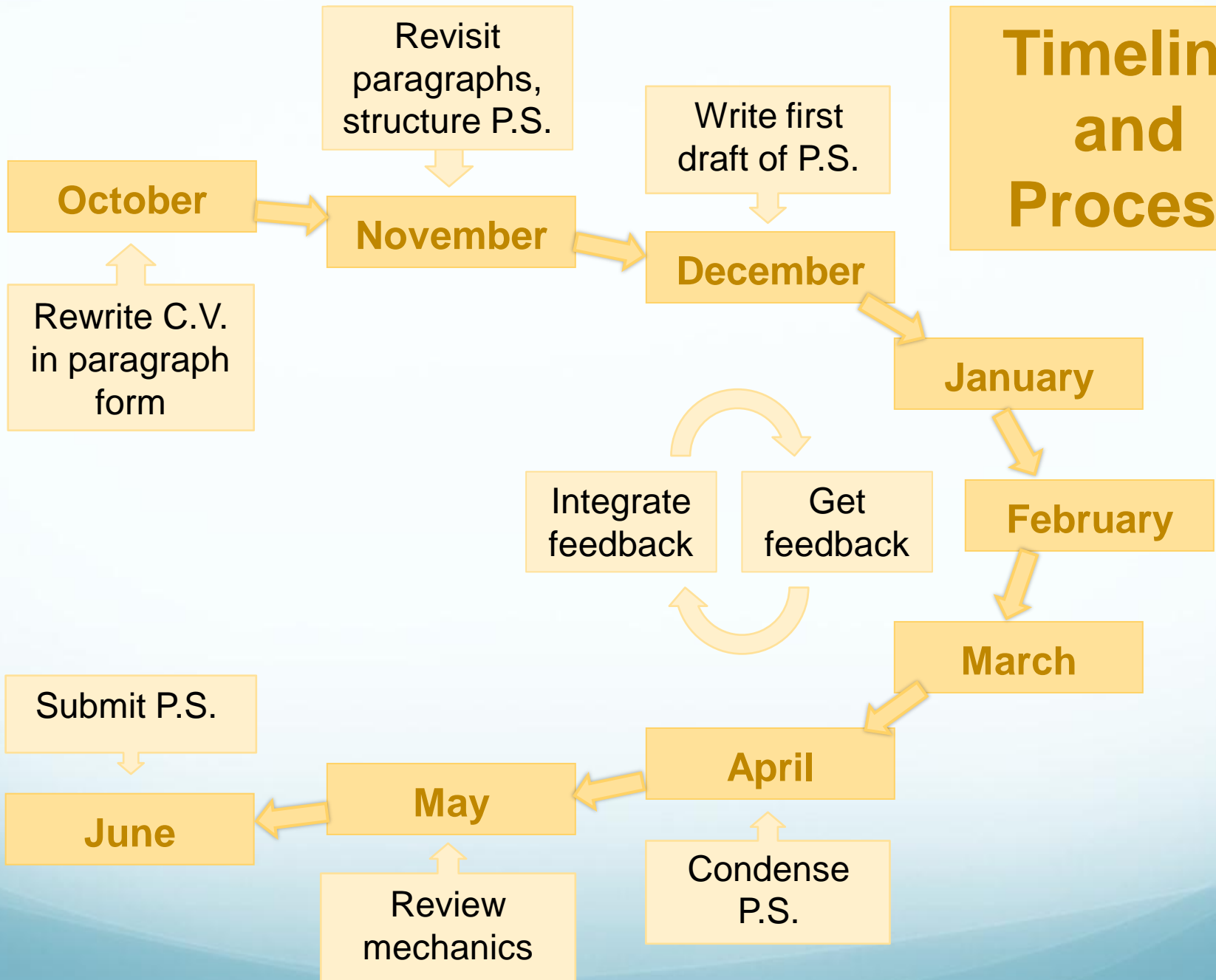
Grammars

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, 956-7007
- Mānoa Writing Center
 - Kuykendall Hall 415, tutors@hawaii.edu
- Dr. Ruth Bingham at PAC
 - QLCSS Room 101, 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

uhsac@hawaii.edu