

The Source

Office of Sponsored Projects



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Grants.gov: Improving the Way You Apply for Federal Grants

From *NCURA Magazine*, July/August 2008



Grants.gov is currently working to improve the overall applicant experience while applying for grants. In the brief existence of the website, Grants.gov has made a great deal of progress in suiting and evolving with the needs of the grant community. From making the website and system functions more user friendly to offering information and training on grants, Grants.gov is making great strides in attracting and fostering positive relationships with grantor agencies and, more importantly, with the applicant community.

The biggest improvement effort in Grants.gov, the transition to Adobe-based forms, is now underway. Grants.gov is currently transitioning to a new and improved grant processing system based on Adobe *Reader* application forms. The previously used grant processing system (i.e., *PureEdge*) offered limited accessibility to many applicants, making the grant application process more difficult than necessary. The new grant processing system offers many improved features, such as fillable Adobe PDF-based application forms, which allow federal grant-making agencies to post grant application packages for funding opportunities that can be easily completed and submitted by applicants. The new fillable PDF applications, while maintaining the familiar look and feel of the previous application forms, will further support the Grants.gov initiative of improving

government services to the public by extending access to all.

Regardless of the type of operating system you have, the new Grants.gov system is able to accommodate you by allowing the use of most common computer hardware, operating systems, and Internet browsers. Grants.gov recently introduced a new applicant resource section to the website called “All About Grants” at grants.gov/applicants/all_about_grants.jsp. This section is a new applicant resource offered by Grants.gov and features material and information from all 26 federal grant-making agencies, affiliated grant associations, and applicants (i.e., you).

This section of the website is meant to offer you, the applicant, all of the information you need to make your grant experience the best possible. “All About Grants” is a section of the website focused on keeping you up-to-date with grant information relevant to you and your needs by giving you a “Tip of the Month,” webinars, events, tips and resources from grantors, articles and resources, and a listing of affiliated grant associations and organizations.

In addition to the new resources offered on the “All About Grants” section of the website, Grants.gov continues to offer a variety of

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Personnel

Beth Seaton, Director of Sponsored Projects
Jill Marshall, Administrative Assistant (Pre-Award)
Kathy Lantz, Administrative Assistant (Post-Award)
John W. Smith, Compliance Specialist
Danette Phelps, Staff Clerk



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resources on the "Applicant Resource" page (grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp) to keep you informed. Some of the resources include a quarterly newsletter, community outreach, and program materials (offered upon request). Visit grants.gov/help/subscribe.jsp to sign up for *Succeed*, the quarterly E-newsletter, or visit grants.gov/section910/

[OutreachRequestForm.doc](#) to request outreach information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding Grants.gov, please e-mail Grants.gov at support@grants.gov or contact Jill Marshall in the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) at (309) 298-1191 or JE-Marshall1@wiu.edu.

Spring 2008 University Research Council Grant Recipients

Tarab Ahmad, Chemistry

"Modeling of Catecholamines Using High Temperature Preparative Liquid Chromatography," \$5,000

Amy Brock, Geology

"Preliminary Investigation of a Calcium Carbonate Deposit in NW Arizona," \$4,547

Richard Filipink, History

"Indochina Would Absorb Our Troops by Divisions: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Decisions that Led America into and out of Vietnam," \$5,000

Virginia Jelatis, History

"American Indian Factory System and the War of 1812: Re-examining the Standard Model," \$3,737

Carla Paciotto and Gloria Delany-Barmann, Educational and Interdisciplinary Studies

"Blurring Ethnic Boundaries and Planting Seeds of Social Change: The Impact of a Dual Language Program in a Small Midwestern Town," \$3,325

Febe Pamonag, History

"Training Educated Christian Women: Trans-Pacific Initiatives for Japanese Women's Higher Education, 1890s-1920s," \$4,900

Ashish Pathak, Chemistry

"Structurally Diverse Indole-2-Carboxylic Acid Analogs as Inhibitors of Fatty Acid Synthase (FAS) Enzymes in *F. tularensis*," \$5,000

Susan Romano, Biological Sciences

"Spatial, Temporal, and Genetic Distribution of Pin Oak Genotypes Along the Upper Mississippi River, USA," \$3,750

University Research Council Members

Ken Hawkinson.....	Associate Provost/Associate Academic Vice President; Chairperson of the URC
Steve Axley.....	Management
Gary Daytner.....	Educational and Interdisciplinary Studies
Samuel Edsall.....	Communication
William Howard.....	Art
Chris Kovacs.....	Kinesiology
Jennifer McNabb.....	History
Leslie Melim.....	Geology
Lora Ebert Wallace.....	Sociology and Anthropology
Meng Yu.....	Computer Science



Remember to check out the Grants Resource Center (GRC) for the latest news on grant announcements, upcoming grant deadlines, federal agency updates, and much more. Go to aascu.org/grc/default.htm and enter the username "WIU" and the password "grants."

Best Practices for Developing Relationships with Private Foundations

Malcolm Furgol, Program Advisor, Grants Resource Center

Like all good relationships, trust is the key to building a mutually beneficial partnership with a private foundation. A July 11, 2008, Foundation Center workshop, “Cultivating Grantmaker Relationships,” examined the factors critical to earning that trust: clear communication of expectations, honesty in representation, familiarity with the grantmaker’s priorities, reliability, and fiscal accountability.

Instructor John Hicks, president and CEO of J.C. Geever, Inc., said that to be successful, “proposals must be genuine and speak with the voice of your organization.” Just as foundations are, colleges and universities are experts at building bridges with like-minded organizations and working with their surrounding communities. Program officers at foundations seek partners like these that are compatible with the foundation’s long- and short-term goals and that have an end goal for their projects in clear sight. Applications that are forward thinking and anticipate possible problems stand the best chance of being funded. The odds are tipped, especially favorably, if there are plans in place from the beginning to evaluate the project and gather actionable feedback as it progresses.

Grantseekers must match the scale of the project to the scale of the grantmaker they are considering. It is also important to consider that different types of foundations require different approaches. For example, with family foundations, it is practically required to develop and maintain contact with a member of the family on the board of the foundation. In general, however, what is the best way to cold-start a relationship with a private foundation? Hicks offers the following advice:

- *Be forthright.* Make an initial phone call, submit a letter or e-mail, and/or use pre-existing contacts, asking any questions you can to make sure the foundation is a good match for the project at hand.
- *Communicate on the foundation’s terms.* Sometimes a foundation’s staff is too small to handle phone inquiries. In this case, a letter or e-mail may be the best way to start. The Foundation Directory Online offers data on how large a foundation is and their preferred first step.
- *Let them see you in action.* If you’ve been in touch several times and the foundation still seems like a good fit, invite a representative—especially a member of the foundation’s board—to your site to show them what you are doing.
- *Get to know the right person.* With larger foundations, focus on the program staff for the area appropriate to your project, just as you would get to know the program officer in charge of a particular federal program prior to applying.
- *Do your research.* Mega-foundations like Ford and Gates are often much more objective than a family foundation and use a more systematized application process. Comb the foundation’s online and print materials for tools to assess your institution and project from the foundation’s perspective.
- *Write a strong letter of intent.* Following a productive phone call, it is common for a foundation to invite a letter of intent providing more details on the support needed and the project’s goals. The positive reception of a letter of intent can lead to a face-to-face meeting between your project staff and a foundation representative.
- *Use feedback.* Some foundations demand a full proposal as the first form of approach. If your proposal is not initially successful, feedback received during the application process can be useful in determining whether to pursue support from the foundation or to look elsewhere.
- *Choose your representatives wisely.* Grantmakers generally want to speak with individuals who have authority and responsibility for the project, knowledge of the content of the project, and expertise in developing mutually beneficial partnerships.
- *Link your goals with the foundation’s agenda.* After selecting the right foundation to approach and establishing that mutual benefits exist, be flexible. Unless making a change would violate the very essence of your project, be open to working with the foundation to enhance your chances of success.
- *Leverage unique characteristics.* Hicks suggests using statements like the following: “As an institution of higher education focusing on our undergraduate student body, we can offer a wide array of talent and creative energy to tackle any project”; “Being located in a suburban/urban/rural area, we have the ability to target the community you are most interested in reaching”; “Not only would any project we pursue together further your goals, it would also provide training for the next generation of leaders in this field”; “Through the services we provide to the community, we already have connections in place with other organizations

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Compliance Corner

Welcome to another edition of “Compliance Corner.” For this edition, I would like to talk about scholarly misconduct. According to a recent article in the *Report on Research Compliance* (July 2008), scholarly misconduct is happening much more frequently than is being reported. The purpose of this edition is to provide you with some examples of scholarly misconduct and some steps researchers can take to prevent it.

Examples of scholarly misconduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Falsification of data* – Ranging from fabrication to deceptively selective reporting, including the purposeful omission of conflicting data with the intent to falsify results
- *Plagiarism* – Taking credit for an exact copy or the rewritten or rearranged work of another
- *Improper assignment of credit* – Insufficiently or knowingly not citing the work of others, including associates and students, or inadequately identifying the repetition of data or material that appears in more than one publication
- *Abuse of confidentiality* – Improper use of information gained by privileged access such as information obtained through service on peer review panels and editorial boards
- *Deliberate violation of regulations* – Failure to comply with regulations concerning the use of human subjects, the care of animals, or health and safety of individuals and the environment
- *Misappropriation of funds or resources* – The misuse of funds for personal gain

Steps Researchers Can Take to Prevent or Reduce Scholarly Misconduct

The respondents to a recent survey on research misconduct suggested the following when asked to recommend ways to thwart misconduct in their own group (wording is how it appears in the survey report):

1. Conduct internal audits and reviews with peers
2. Have meetings and discuss research concerns reviewing misconduct cases
3. Maintain close contact with and record activity
4. Impart an ethical model and honesty in research
5. Encourage training and education on misconduct
6. Emphasize replication of study
7. Value quality and negative results
8. Maintain a good research environment keeping low pressure
9. Remain vigilant, watchful, aware, and skeptical

Other strategies cited include working in teams, enforcing penalties, and having zero tolerance for misconduct. The full text article can be found at ReportonResearchCompliance.com.

If you have questions about scholarly misconduct, Western Illinois University’s policies on misconduct in research, or if you are interested in having me attend a class or discuss the topic at a faculty meeting or departmental colloquium, feel free to contact me at (309) 298-1191 or e-mail me at JW-Smith@wiu.edu. I look forward to helping you with any of your research compliance needs.

First Summer Proposal Writing Program

OSP hosted a grant proposal writing program on May 22, 2008. The program was presented to 14 faculty members completing their first year at WIU.

Program topics included the following:

- Introduction to OSP
- Funding Searches
- How to Read a Grant Solicitation
- Parts of a Proposal
- Budget Development
- Compliance Issues
- Writing Tips
- Review Process
- Grants Administration
- Lessons Learned by Current Faculty Grant Recipients

Participants will receive \$1,000 for expenses related to their research upon successful completion and submission of an approved competitive grant proposal to an external agency.

The following first-year faculty members participated in the program:

- Tarab Ahmad, Chemistry
- Sarah Haynes, Philosophy and Religious Studies
- Kishor Kapale, Physics
- Barclay Key, History
- Gilles Kouassi, Chemistry
- Todd Lough, Law Enforcement and Justice Administration
- Daniel Malachuk, English and Journalism
- Febe Pamonag, History
- Xiaoping Pan, Chemistry
- Bridget Sheng, Educational Leadership
- Hiroko Sotozaki, Psychology
- Melissa Stinnett, Curriculum and Instruction
- Dali Xu, Kinesiology
- Linda Zellmer, University Libraries

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in the area and can serve as a bridge for building future partnerships”; and/or “Due to our research experience, we already have evaluation procedures in place for when we proceed with the project.”

Finally, make use of your Grant Resource Center (GRC) program advisor to locate the best foundations for your institution’s goals. Having full access to the Foundation Center’s Foundation Directory Online, GRC can match your program to possible

funders by field of interest, geographic focus, type of support, and the amount of funding required.

Note: OSP works closely with the WIU Foundation to help faculty identify potential sources of private funding. Please contact Jill Marshall (OSP) or Becky Morrow (WIU Foundation) for assistance in working with private foundations.



Hot Topic in Post-Award: Time and Effort Certification Reports

All sponsored projects at educational institutions are subject to the “Cost Principles” established by the federal Office of Management and Budget in OMB Circular A-21 (*Cost Principles for Educational Institutions*). A significant part of OMB Circular A-21 addresses reporting and documenting the time and effort devoted to sponsored projects (i.e., grants or contracts). The time project directors/principal investigators and their associates spend on grants or contracts, whether the sponsor pays for the time or the cost is shared by WIU, must be documented.

Effort reporting is a method of documenting the work time devoted to an externally sponsored grant or contract activity and is expressed as a percentage of professional activity devoted to an account. All individuals who devote effort to sponsored activities, whether or not they are paid, are subject to effort reporting. The total amount of effort expended to accomplish the professional activities of WIU faculty, staff, and students, regardless of the actual number of hours expended on those activities, is equal to 100% for each activity report. This normally includes all effort expended on WIU-compensated sponsored research, administration, teaching, nonsponsored scholarly activity, and other activity. The number of hours implicit in an individual’s 100% effort must be reasonable and supportable to department, school, University, and external reviewers and is also subject to audit review. The effort percentages on the *Time and Effort Certification Report* form must total 100%, which means that the total of the individual effort categories cannot be greater than 100% for each activity report.

OSP disseminates the *Time and Effort Certification Report* form three times a year, covering the time periods of May through August, September through December, and January through April. These reports allow the University to manage and document the efforts charged to each account for all professional activity for faculty and staff, including sponsored

grants or contracts. It is therefore important that these reports accurately reflect time and effort devoted to sponsored grants or contracts and that the signed reports be returned to OSP by the stated deadline.

Payroll distributions and effort reports are not the same thing and should not be confused. *Payroll distributions* are the distribution of an individual’s salary, while *effort reports* describe the allocation of an individual’s actual time and effort spent for specific projects, whether or not reimbursed by the sponsor. Effort is not just a verification of the salary or payroll distribution, and any cost-shared or contributed effort must be included in the calculation for effort reporting purposes.

The grant or contract award was based on commitments made by the project director/principal investigator and their associates to spend a specific amount of time on the project. The government considers this commitment a legal obligation. Failure to abide by this commitment or to properly document the committed effort could be viewed as a failure to perform under the terms and conditions of the agreement with the granting agency.

In recent years, the federal government and its auditors have become much more active in their review of effort reporting requirements, and a number of universities have received large audit disallowances as a result. Therefore, all universities are required to have an effort reporting system in place that will provide records on how individuals who are participating in federally funded sponsored agreements are actually spending their time. Since the federal government mandates effort reporting, it is essential that institutions that receive federal funding, such as WIU, maintain accurate and auditable systems and records.

Get to Know Your Funding Agency



NSF Regional Grants Conference

The first National Science Foundation (NSF) Regional Grants Conference of fiscal year 2009 will be held in Omaha, Nebraska, and hosted by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln on October 20-21, 2008.

Key representatives from the NSF as well as your colleagues (i.e., faculty, researchers, and grant administrators), representing colleges and universities from around the U.S., will participate.

This two-day conference is a must, especially for new faculty, researchers, and administrators who want to gain key insight into a wide range of current issues at NSF, including the state of current funding, new and current policies and procedures, and pertinent administrative issues. NSF program officers representing each NSF directorate will be on hand to provide up-to-date information about specific funding opportunities and to answer your questions.

Highlights include the following:

- New programs and initiatives
- Future directions and strategies for national science policy
- Proposal preparation
- NSF's merit review process
- Cross-disciplinary and special interest programs
- Conflict of interest policies
- Breakout sessions by discipline

Logistical information (including conference registration, lodging, etc.) is available at <https://www.seeuthere.com/rsvp/invitation/invitation.asp?id=/m2c757-590329232169>. Questions about conference registration should be directed to nsf_regional@nsf.gov or by calling (703) 465-5736.

For additional information regarding program content, contact the Policy Office, Division of Institution and Award Support, at (703) 292-8243 or by e-mail at policy@nsf.gov.

Spring 2009 Regional Grants Conference: Phoenix, Arizona

NIH Regional Seminars

April 16-17, 2009



The spring seminar will be hosted by Georgia State University and Georgia Institute of Technology. For more information and for registration information, please visit the seminar website at osp.gatech.edu/NIH_Seminar.html. Please contact either Princeanna Walker (nihseminarsosp@gsu.edu) or Michelle Powell (seminars@osp.gatech.edu) if you have any questions.

June 2009 (dates TBD)

The summer seminar will be hosted by Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) Education. For more information, please e-mail spaedu@ohsu.edu or call (503) 494-1885.

GRC Proposal Writing Workshop

February 26-28, 2009

Hosted by the Grants Resource Center (GRC), this workshop offers OSP staff and faculty access to timely and detailed information on funding opportunities, information on federal agency appropriations and funding priorities, and the opportunity to schedule individual appointments with federal agency program officers. This meeting is held in the Washington, DC, area. Visit aascu.org/grc for more information.

URC Internal Grants Competition Announced

The University Research Council (URC) has announced that the deadline for the Fall 2008 Internal Grants Competition is at 12:00 PM on Tuesday, October 7, 2008.

URC support is intended to promote research—or its scholarly equivalent—in appropriate fields by providing seed money for the initiation of new, one-year projects. Priority will be given to those proposals that are likely to result in external funding and publication in peer-refereed journals or exhibitions and performances.

Eligible applicants include tenured or tenure-track faculty members who are not members of the URC at the time of application. An individual may not be an applicant or co-applicant on more than one proposal per funding cycle.

Proposed projects may not be for dissertation research or used in any way to fulfill degree requirements. In addition, projects cannot be considered for textbook writing, curriculum development, or personal development.

The URC holds a grant competition twice each academic year, with one deadline in October and one in April. In the last competition (April 2008), the URC funded 8 new projects, with awards totaling over \$35,000.

Application materials have been sent to all chairpersons and are also available on the OSP website at wiu.edu/SponsoredProjects/council.

What Is OSP?

The mission of the Office of Sponsored Projects at Western Illinois University is to provide comprehensive support services to the University community for the successful administration of externally sponsored projects.

OSP is committed to providing a full range of administrative services to the faculty, staff, and administrative units at Western.

The goal of the OSP staff is to deliver our support services in an efficient and professional manner, which is in full compliance with external sponsoring agency guidelines.

Who to Contact

Beth Seaton, Director – Contact Beth for matters related to the review and approval of proposals to ensure compliance with University and agency policies and procedures, authorized organizational representative approval (official University signature for proposals in addition to certification, assurances, and representation), and administration of University Research Council (URC) selection and awards.



John W. Smith, Compliance Specialist – Contact John for federal compliance issues, including questions about human subjects in research and Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures.



Jill Marshall, Pre-Award Services – Contact Jill for assistance with funding searches, procurement of grant application materials, development of proposals and budgets, electronic submission of proposals, and requests for internal approval forms.



Danette Phelps, Staff Clerk – Danette's responsibilities include the copying, mailing, and tracking of all proposals; maintaining the database of proposals and awards; making arrangements for workshops and seminars; and performing all those other assignments that keep the office running efficiently.



Kathy Lantz, Post-Award Services – Contact Kathy for services involving the administration of awards, including the receipt and negotiation of all award documents; account establishment; review and processing of all requests for modifications, extensions, and amendments of sponsored projects; processing of payroll forms; and administration of URC awards.



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