

GRANTS WORKSHOP 4 Oct. 2006
presented by the
**Faculty Development Committee and the
Research & Scholarship Committee**

Tips on Preparing Applications for AASU's Internal Grant Competitions

Background on Research & Scholarship and Teaching & Learning Grants

- Each fall, Academic Affairs provides funds for faculty grants of up to \$2,500 available through two separate competitions:
 - Research and Scholarship (reviewed by the R&S Committee); and
 - Teaching and Learning (reviewed by the Faculty Development Committee).
- Approximately \$40,000 is available this year to spend on *both* competitions.
- Grants are restricted to full-time faculty members.
- A faculty member can be the principal investigator (PI) for only one funded proposal.
- This grant program is *competitive*.

The Process

- RFPs are distributed to all full-time faculty in mid-September.
- By the deadline (5:00 p.m. on October 20, 2006 for R&S and T&L Grants), faculty submit proposals (original plus ten copies) to the Office of Faculty Development (Solms 211).
- Copies of proposals are immediately distributed to committee members for review.
- Reviewers have approximately ten days to read, evaluate, grade (on the "Kraft Scale" of 1 to 9), and write comments on the proposals.
- Reviewers on each committee meet to discuss and rank the proposals.
- Committee recommendations are delivered to the Vice President and Dean of Faculty, who reviews all proposals and recommendations.
- The VP announces awards by mid-November.
- All final funding decisions rest with the VP.
- Grant funds must be spent in the spring semester.

Tips on preparing a successful proposal

1. Consider the make-up of the committee.

- Both Research & Scholarship and Faculty Development are made up of faculty members from a variety of disciplines.
- Not every reviewer will have in-depth knowledge of your particular field. *So*, be sure to:
 - a. Follow the instructions and write for the generalist.
 - b. Provide enough detail so that someone in your field will feel comfortable that you know what you're talking about.

It's highly unlikely that reviewers will question your credentials or expertise or ability to carry out the proposed project. They presume that you know what you're talking about. The major challenge is to make sure that the reviewers understand what you're talking about.

2. Let your application do the talking: don't lobby faculty reviewers.

- Avoid putting committee members in a situation where they have a conflict of interest.

Because neither the Director of Faculty Development (Dick Nordquist) nor the Assistant VP for Sponsored Programs (Mike Price) votes on grant applications, they are available to answer questions and possibly offer suggestions as you work on developing your proposal.

3. Use the appropriate form and get the right signatures.

- Make sure that you include the R&S or T&L application form with your proposal.
- Make sure that you allow enough time before the deadline to get signatures (and endorsements) from your department head and dean.

4. Format your narrative strategically.

- Use the review criteria to organize the main parts of your proposal. For example, a T&L proposal might be divided into the following sections:
 - Project Description
 - Demonstrated Need
 - Anticipated Improvement in Teaching and Learning
 - Evaluation of Outcomes/Impact
 - Budget Justification
- Write clearly and directly, using bold headings and subheadings: keep in mind that reviewers must read, evaluate, and rank as many as 40-50 applications in ten days, while continuing with their other campus responsibilities. Make it easy for them to find your key points.
- Be sure to provide specific methods of assessment: the evaluation component is critical (and yet often over-looked or treated superficially by applicants).
- Follow the formatting guidelines: don't try to squeeze in more information by reducing font size or shrinking margins.
- If your qualifications for conducting a project are not readily apparent, *briefly* address those in the body of your proposal. But make sure that you write to inform, not to impress.
- Make your proposal package neat, organized, and attractive to reviewers.

5. Adhere to the page limit

- Make sure that your application package includes the following:
 - Two-sided cover sheet (the actual application form included with the RFP), signed by your department head and dean, with budget clearly presented on the form.

- Four-page narrative that clearly describes your project and responds directly to the review criteria. (For Research & Scholarship projects only, a list of references *may be included* on a fifth page to support the validity of the research.)
 - If necessary, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see below) if you're using human subjects.
- Don't exceed the four-page limit on your narrative: reviewers are instructed not to read beyond four pages.

As in most grant competitions, reviewers are likely to deduct points for failure to follow correct procedures.

6. Revise and edit: ask a colleague or neutral third party to review your proposal.

- Invite constructive criticism on continuity, clarity, and reasoning.
- Check for unsupported assumptions, needless jargon, or faulty writing.

7. If necessary, seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval.

- If you are unsure whether or not you need IRB approval for your project, seek advice from Mike Price (ext. 5719).
- If IRB approval can't be obtained by the deadline, indicate on your proposal that you've applied and will forward the approval form to Sponsored Programs (Mike Price's office) asap.
- Make sure that you have *applied* to the IRB by the time you submit your proposal.

If you require IRB approval, you cannot be awarded any grant funds until you have provided the approval letter.

8. When designing your budget, make sure that costs are appropriate and clearly justified

- Justify your budget: do some research and determine the actual costs. Don't simply ask for the maximum amount of \$2,500.
- The committees can decide not to fund particular items if they appear to be excessive, unnecessary, already readily available on campus, or are otherwise not adequately justified.
- Be extremely wary of requesting travel funds. Because the annual budget line for faculty travel is larger than the amount earmarked for all internal grant funds, travel requests are difficult to sell to the committee and should really be sought from your Dean. Requests for travel funds should only be made in very special circumstances. Attending or presenting at a conference is usually not adequate justification in itself. Reviewers are far more interested in finding out exactly what the faculty member intends to do with that experience upon return to campus.

Example: Research & Scholarship grants have funded travel to a library in another state where the resources were non-circulating and not available elsewhere. Part of the justification for that proposal was to explain that there was simply no other way to gain access to the research material.

Example: Travel in a Teaching & Learning proposal might involve sending a faculty member to a workshop to learn about designing new courses for the web and then having them share this knowledge with their departmental or college/school colleagues when they return.

- Keep in mind that the underlying purpose of Teaching and Learning grants is *faculty development at AASU*.

Example: We have seen Teaching & Learning proposals in the past that provided wonderful teaching and learning outcomes for public school teachers by our faculty, but there did not appear to be any professional development of AASU faculty. Such proposals have been rejected.

Example: Another Teaching & Learning proposal was rejected because the requested funds were all to be invested in support staff, and the role of the faculty member was unclear.

- Avoid requesting significant funds for students (who have access to Student Activities funds) or student assistants: make sure that Teaching & Learning funds apply to faculty development
- Make sure that the funds you request are in keeping with state-approved guidelines. Grants are paid through state funds appropriated for higher education; state dollars cannot be used for on-campus food, refreshments, entertainment, etc.

Example: One application that could not be funded proposed purchasing equipment for a local public school. If the equipment could have been housed at AASU instead of at the school, the proposal may well have been funded because it was excellent in every other respect.

- Don't bother requesting more than \$2,500 in your budget: you won't get it anyway.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE:

Check out the resources linked to the Grants page (www.faculty.armstrong.edu/FDgrants.htm) of the Faculty Development web site. To get a sense of which Teaching & Learning proposals have been funded over the past few years, check out "Recipients of Teaching & Learning Grants: 2002-2006." To get a sense of which Research & Scholarship proposals have been funded in the past (1998-2004), follow the Research & Scholarship link at the Sponsored Programs web site (www.grants.armstrong.edu/research.htm).

As you're working on your proposal, don't hesitate to get in touch with Dick Nordquist (ext. 5991; nordqudi@mail.armstrong.edu) with any questions that come up.

Finally, don't wait until the last minute to discuss your project with your department head and/or departmental colleagues: they may be able to suggest some concrete ways in which you can strengthen your proposal.