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◆ TechLearning – Free subscription

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Other Useful Links

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Tips for Successful Grantwriting

By Zina McGee

Writing grant proposals to enhance teaching and research is becoming more and more common. Here are just a few tips drawn from the literature that will help you with writing your grants.

1. **Find out which foundations have funded grants in your region similar to your planned proposal.** Talk to those who were funded; ask for advice and copies of their successful grants.
2. **Read carefully the current guidelines for those foundations on what they will fund and when the grants are due.** If a foundation states that do not fund equipment, don't ask them for equipment. If they say they'll fund up to \$15,000, don't ask them for \$50,000. Foundations often shift their focus, and timing can be very important. Watch for time-sensitive opportunities. Grant reviewers appreciate those who pay close attention to their RFPs (Requests for Proposals).
3. **Collect samples of successful grants to use as boilerplate models.** Many foundations will send you, upon request, proposals from past funded projects, or at least will give you the addresses of past grant recipients, so you can ask them directly for copies of successful proposals. The more good proposals you read, the more you'll understand how clear writing and following guidelines leads to funding.
4. **Use the same terms in your proposal that the foundation used to describe what they want to fund.** Be convincing as to how your project dovetails with their posted guidelines. If an RFP says that they do not fund technology grants, don't use the word "technology." Find other words taken directly from the RFP guidelines to express your project.
5. **Get to know individuals who have worked with the foundations to which you are applying.** Talk to foundation personnel as much as possible. The suggestions that you receive will make major differences in the final form and focus of your proposal. The more personal contacts you make, the better for you. Foundations appreciate those who take the time to gather all the facts, and they might even recognize your name when your proposal comes up for review. Pay careful attention to what you emphasize and to what you may need to tone down.

6. **Less is More.** Reviewing stacks of proposals is a difficult job. Grant reviewers quickly learn to scan text, particularly proposal abstracts, in an attempt to get a quick overview of exactly what you expect to do, with whom, when, how, and toward what measurable outcome. If you are short and to the point, and you've answered the key questions, your grant will be viewed as comprehensible and fundable. If you overwhelm the reviewer with too much detail, they will have a hard time understanding your proposal and it is likely to be rejected. Good proposals are easy to understand.
7. **A catchy name, like "Reach for the Sky" which is also descriptive of the project, can make a big difference.** First impressions and a memorable theme and name are important. Remember, they will want to promote your project proudly as one of their great projects.
8. **Good writing should be easy to read, understand, and should present your ideas in an exciting, yet specific manner.** The abstract of your proposal is the single most important paragraph of your proposal. You should know exactly what you're planning to do with their money, and express it in elegant simplicity. If the grant reviewer has a good idea of the direction of your proposal from reading the abstract, it creates an important first impression that you do indeed know what you want to accomplish, with whom, at what cost, and specifically how. In reading an exciting, well-written proposal, one idea follows naturally to the next.
9. **Show in your proposal that you are aware of others who have done similar projects.** It is also best to show that you've partnered with appropriate entities to assure that your project will have enough support to make it through to completion.
10. **Sustainability is a big issue.** Too many grant projects disappear after the funding is gone. How you plan to assure ongoing benefits once the funding runs out is one of the biggest questions in the mind of the grant reviewer.
11. **Measurable outcomes.** Once the grant is over, exactly what was produced, how will it be disseminated and exactly how many people will have benefited? How do you intend to measure tangible outcomes to prove the projected benefit actually occurred?
12. **In the passion of writing a grant, it is easy to get too ambitious.** A major "red flag" for grant reviewers is the indication that you've planned to accomplish more than your budget makes realistically attainable. It is better to limit your proposal to less, more assuredly attainable goals, than to promise more than you can deliver. Most investigators find that they badly underestimated funding for staff and particularly technology support. Be realistic and conservative.
13. **Tie yourself to a major regional, or national, issue and position your proposal as a model to be replicated once you have proven that your idea works.** Make it clear that you're not just benefiting ten people, for example, but that you're solving a problem shared by all areas and are creating a replicable national

model. A specific strategy for broadly sharing your solution should be a part of your proposal plan.

14. **Even if your first grant-writing effort doesn't get funded, the planning and writing process still allows you to resubmit your idea elsewhere.** Often project partners get so committed to a good idea, even if funding is not won, that the means for moving forward on a project can still be a possibility. Boilerplate paragraphs from old grants are typically recycled. Seasoned grantwriters are skilled recyclers, reusing paragraphs from successful grants.
15. **Make it fun.** If you get funded, be prepared to enjoy working hard to make your dream happen. Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it. Once a grant ends, what will you have built for the future? Will you be right back where you started having to write another grant? Plan accordingly.
16. **Many web sites exist to support grant-writers.** Knowing this, find them and use them. Search the Web for "educational technology grants" and/or "grant-writing."
17. **Evaluations are the means by which you prove your success at the end of the grant period and are often the key to winning your next grant.** Be tangible and realistic in what you set out to achieve, and in how you'll know whether you've achieved it after the money is spent.
18. **While it is considered to be inappropriate to submit the same grant to multiple funders at the same time,** one option is to change the grant slightly so multiple funded grants would actually dovetail together instead of creating duplication.

A New Approach to Grading Student Essays

By Matt Birkenhauer

As a very young teacher, I remember pulling all-nighters to get my students' essays back within the one-week limit I set for myself. Even in those days, this "cram grading" was miserable and exhausting; but now at 50—especially with the added responsibilities of husband, father, and homeowner—it's all but impossible. Fortunately, over the years I've developed a system where I grade student papers the same way I encourage students to write—that is, I've incorporated a process approach to grading student essays.

Taking a dip into student writing

The process starts with something I call "dipping." I "dip" by going through a batch of student essays to make sure everything is in order. For example, for all submitted essays I require a grading rubric, a rough draft, and a final draft. (For papers using sources, I also require a Works Cited page.) So—while watching TV at night or sitting in my home office as my kids play elsewhere—I'll dip. In addition to making sure that everything is in order, dipping also allows me to

skim the first page or so of the essay. The next step in my process involves the use of sticky notes, usually of the 4-by-6-inch size. At this stage I read through the entire essay and then comment on its strengths and weaknesses. On one sticky note, for a Personal Experience essay, I wrote: “Though Ashley sometimes uses more words than she needs to, she tells a pretty good story, with suspense and buildup. The weakest part for me was the conclusion. What could she do to improve this?” Obviously, I’m not completely certain of my full response here, but that’s OK; I don’t have to be at this point. That’s a benefit of approaching grading as a process.

The advantage of sticky notes is that their very size encourages me to be concise. In addition to my sticky note comments, I also “mark” papers in this stage of the process, in the sense of pointing out sentence boundary and other problems; but I don’t heavily edit the essays, since the research from the last 30 years makes clear that bleeding all over a student’s essay isn’t all that useful.

A more reflective grading process

In the last stage of this process, I comment directly on the student’s grading rubric; that is, I transform my sticky-note “writer-based” comments into the reader-based comments the student sees. Because I use grading rubrics, I needn’t reprise everything that is wrong with a particular essay and can distill from my sticky-note comments what is most germane to a student’s revising his or her essay. With the high A essays, I generally just give a verbal pat on the back. With essays in the B range and below, I comment more, though usually no more than a brief paragraph. My comments also include underlined or asterisked parts of the grading rubric, sometimes with brief comments in the margin.

Although this process approach may seem more work, it’s really not. But it is fairer to the student. If you have only one shot to respond—that is, if you try to grade a batch of papers in essentially a single sitting—are you giving a truly reflective response? This is particularly a problem for those essays that when first read make us scratch our heads. But if you give yourself two or three times to ruminate over such an essay, your response is likely to be more helpful because you’re being more thoughtful.

Excerpted from *Incorporating Process Pedagogy into Grading Student Essays*, *The Teaching Professor*, May 2008. – (Matt Birkenhauer teaches English at Northern Kentucky University.)

Announcements

General Education and Assessment: Maintaining Momentum, Achieving New Priorities, a Network for Academic Renewal conference scheduled for February 18-20 in Seattle, Washington,

invites fresh thinking and new approaches to help faculty, staff, and administrators maintain momentum in general education and assessment during tough times, and reaffirms a commitment to engaged liberal education as the guiding principle for campus action. The conference will draw on AAC&U's long-standing projects and publications on general education reform including work to bring diversity, global, and civic learning into general education and models for advancing scientific and quantitative literacy through real-world curricula and problem-based pedagogies. Online registration is now available; take advantage of discounted rates through January 25, 2010.

The **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)** is pleased to announce that the next NIDA Blending Conference will be held on April 22–23, 2010, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Don't miss this 2-day conference that presents innovative, science-based approaches that have proven effective in the prevention and treatment of drug abuse and addiction. The conference is designed to narrow the "translational gap" by disseminating science-based findings and placing them directly into the hands of practitioners. Participants will explore the use of evidence-based practices when working with diverse populations and settings. To register for the conference, or to find out more about speakers and topics, please visit www.NIDABlendingConference.info.

The Deans' Seminar – held June 13-17, 2010, for college and university chief academic officers, academic vice presidents, provosts, and academic deans – will focus on the challenges of academic leadership and liberal education in a diverse, global world. The Seminar will probe the values and goals fundamental to our institutions, using classical texts, both ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, illuminated by discussion with colleagues from other colleges and universities. The application deadline is Feb. 1, 2010.

The Wye Faculty Seminar, to be held July 17-23, 2010, is one of the premier faculty development programs in the country. The Seminar seeks to address what we believe is a central need of faculty members – to exchange ideas with colleagues from other disciplines and other institutions committed to liberal education and probe ideas and values that are foundational to liberal learning in a free society. The Wye Faculty Seminar is offered to selected faculty members who have the honor of being nominated by their presidents and deans for their distinctive contributions to the quality of liberal education. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2010.

These two seminars combine vigorous intellectual exchange with time to read, reflect, exercise, and socialize on the beautiful Aspen Wye River campus in Queenstown, Maryland. They are supported jointly by the AAC&U and the The Aspen Institute. More information is available online at www.aacu.org or by calling 410-820-5374.