Windows of Opportunity

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The Crowdfunding Phenomenon

CROWDFUNDING PLATFORMS:

- Kickstarter.com
- Petridish.org
- Scifundchallenge.org
- Indiegogo.com
- Artistshare.com

Ted Russo
Director,
ORSP

In a time of increased competition and decreased federal funding, the crowdfunding phenomenon has been steadily gaining steam. What is crowdfunding? In a nutshell, it is funding that originates from numerous individual (typically small) donations in areas of research or programmatic interest to the individual donor, and/or within the donor's network. Applicants use Internet-based crowdfunding platforms to directly market and sell their proposed projects to large numbers of potential donors.

For universities, crowdfunding poses some interesting challenges where a university faculty or staff member applies directly to a crowdfunder to fund projects that might involve the use of university personnel and resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.). Other considerations arise as well, to include intellectual property; obligations surrounding technical and financial reporting back to the donor; the use of human and/or animal subjects; recovery of indirect costs, and appropriate classification of the activity itself as a "gift" or "sponsored project." (For example, the crowdfunder may require a 501(c)(3) designation so that donors may classify their donations as "gifts" for tax purposes.)

Universities are rapidly responding to crowdfunding and developing policies and procedures for accepting, reporting, and monitoring crowdfunded activities so that University faculty and staff can compete for this funding in compliance with the crowdfunder's requirements, as well as University policy and state and federal rules and regulations.

As crowdfunding continues to emerge as a viable funding source, faculty and staff who are interested in pursuing these opportunities should take into consideration whether the proposed activity will involve more than incidental use of university resources, and/or if the crowdfunder requires that the university formally accept the funds directly on behalf of the individual through a 501(c)(3) or other means.

Please feel free to contact ORSP if you are interested in applying to a crowdfunding site for a research project as described above. Keep in mind that application and acceptance of such funding may require the coordination of several departments on campus, as is the case with any externally sponsored activity (e.g., University Advancement, IRB/IACUC, Grant Accounting). Ample advance notice will serve to coordinate efforts across academic and administrative units so that the project may begin in a timely manner.

MSU's New Certified Research Administrator

Congratulations to our own Marina Aloyets, who recently passed the four-hour Certified Research Administrator (C.R.A.) examination!

The C.R.A. is an increasingly sought after designation in the field of research administration that demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of research and sponsored programs in areas such as project development and administration, legal and compliance issues, and financial and general management.

Managed by the Research Administrators Certification Council (R.A.C.C.), the C.R.A. certification is a demonstration of one's expertise and broad depth of knowledge in the field of research administration and sponsored programs. Currently, R.A.C.C. holds over 1,900 active certificants now to include one of our own! Well done, Marina!

ORSP to Offer NIH-Specific Workshop in Spring

The Office or Research and Sponsored Programs is excited to announce that Dr. Keith Crutcher, a former National Institutes of Health Scientific Review Officer, will be visiting the University on March 28, 2014. His four-hour workshop will familiarize faculty with the NIH and its programs and offer strategies on enhancing proposal submissions.

Please check ORSP's website often as further details become available. We look forward to seeing you there!

Featured Awards

Meiyin Wu (Passaic River Institute, CSAM), **Robert Prezant** (Dean, CSAM), and **Joshua Galster** and **Clement Alo** (Earth & Environmental Studies, CSAM) received a subaward for $67,672 from Rutgers University/NJ Department of Environmental Protection for "Strategies for Flood Risk Reduction for Vulnerable Coastal Populations along Hackensack River at Moonachie and Little Ferry and along Hudson River at Hoboken and Jersey City." These communities are at risk from flooding due to their location and physical setting. This project will identify and evaluate alternatives for flooding risk reduction for the vulnerable coastal populations.

Robert Reid and **Pauline Garcia-Reid** (Family and Child Studies, CEHS) received $125,000—the first year of a five-year $625,000 award—from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for "Paterson Coalition Against Substance Abuse (P-CASA)." The proposed project seeks to develop the infrastructure of an anti-drug coalition targeting at-risk racial and ethnic minority adolescents in Paterson's 1st Ward. As a collaborative effort between Montclair State University and a diverse group of community stakeholders, P-CASA will introduce evidence-based environmental prevention strategies to meet the goals of the Drug Free Communities Grant Program, which are to increase community collaboration and reduce substance use among youth aged 12–17.

Jason Dickinson (Psychology, CHSS) received a $3,500 award for a collaborative research agreement with Central Michigan University for the project entitled "Talk and Show." Participant families will take part in two sessions, to be scheduled one-week apart. The first session will involve exposure to the "target" event and participation in several cognitive-memory tasks. The second session will involve a structured interview about the target event and participation in several cognitive memory tasks. The goal of the research is to identify measures of cognitive control (e.g., inhibitory behavior, theory of mind, working memory) that predict suggestibility and false reporting among children.

Robert Ferrara (Fire Safety, University Facilities) received an award of $1,500 from FM Global in support of life safety activities for MSU residents. This includes the Fire Bowl competition, where students compete against each other in a trivia-style event, and the annual Fire Safety Poster Contest, which invites students to create a poster based on the NFPA fire safety message with the winning poster being reproduced and displayed throughout campus.

Profile: MSU's New Awardees

Dr. Marc Favata (Mathematical Sciences, CSAM) was recently awarded $126,000 by the National Science Foundation for his project "Issues in Modeling Gravitational-Wave Sources." He gave some of his time to discuss his work and the grant submission process.

What are the major aspects of your awarded project?

My project concerns the detection of gravitational waves. These are oscillations in the gravitational field, just like electromagnetic waves are oscillations in the electric and magnetic fields. Strong gravitational waves are produced primarily by black holes or neutron stars in a close binary orbit. The NSF-funded LIGO experiment is attempting to detect these waves. LIGO—the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory—consists of two "L"-shaped detectors that are 4 km long on each side. A gravitational wave passing through the detector moves mirrors at the ends of the "L" by a very small distance; a technique called laser interferometry measures this motion.

My work focuses on improving mathematical models that describe the gravitational-wave signals; it also involves understanding how well we can infer information from the signal. For example, part of the project involves calculating the measurement error in the masses of a pair of neutron stars if we use a signal model that differs slightly from the actual signal. (This might happen if you ignore the fact that the neutron stars are spinning or that their orbits are slightly eccentric.) Another aspect of the project involves modeling a peculiar nonlinear effect in which gravitational waves themselves produce their own gravitational wave. Two MSU students are currently involved in the project.

What are some of the challenges involved in a project like yours? How are you tackling these?

The first challenge is to figure out how to break a large problem into smaller, easier parts. Then the challenge is to find a mathematical solution or computer program that solves those smaller parts. You solve these by sitting, thinking, and trying different possibilities until the solution presents itself. (You also generally don't write a grant proposal unless you already have some idea on how to solve the problem.)

Another challenge is determining the optimal way to involve students. The trick there is to find a piece of the project that can be accomplished in a relatively short time, but still contributes meaningfully to the project and the student's development as a scientist.

How would you advise colleagues interested in submitting a grant application?

I would advise two things: 1) Get a copy of a successful grant from someone in your field and also from someone at MSU. 2) Put yourself in the mindset of someone on the evaluation committee: Think of obvious problems with your proposal or questions the committee might have and address them. Make a clear and compelling case for why your project is interesting and why you are well qualified to complete it.

Grantsmanship Expert Visits Campus

Marina Aloyets
Assistant Director, ORSP

In October 2013, ORSP was honored to welcome Dr. Robert Porter, a nationally recognized leader in the field of grantsmanship, to our campus. Dr. Porter presented a workshop on the often elusive topic of *Writing Successful Grants* to an audience of faculty, staff, and students new to grant writing, as well as to experienced grant writers and awardees.

Dr. Porter began the workshop with a comparison of academic writing versus grant writing, showing attendees the critical differences in style. He explained that after years of honing their academic writing styles, faculty need to shift their writing styles, perspectives, and attitudes to win over grant reviewers. Dr. Porter noted that there is a twenty percent difference in style between academic to grant writing. Unlike academic writing, proposers should use simple language, short sentences, and bullet points when writing a grant to make their points easily understood by a reviewer. He encouraged grant seekers to view a grant proposal as a sales pitch, stressing the importance of keeping the attention of their audience right from the get-go in the first thing a reviewer reads: the summary or abstract. Unlike academic writing, Dr. Porter stressed that gimmicks are welcome in grant writing, giving examples such as highlighting important parts, exclamation points, indentations... basically anything that would make your points/proposal stand out from the rest.

As a starting point, Dr. Porter provided attendees with an exercise that included the six questions they should answer prior to writing a proposal:

- What are you passionate about?
- What is the problem (and why is it important)?
- How is existing knowledge or practice inadequate?
- Why is your idea better?
- How is it new, unique, different?
- What will it contribute and who will benefit from it?

Answering these questions is a critical step in planning a proposal. It also helps with organizing the first approach to a funding agency.

Throughout the workshop, Dr. Porter focused on the reviewers' perspective: how creating a clear and direct proposal is important since they are likely reviewing many other proposals at the same time. He also poignantly noted that the reviewers themselves are the same people as the workshop attendees, i.e., colleagues in their field.

Lastly, Dr. Porter stressed common grant writing pitfalls, such as: too broad of a problem statement, unclear, vague methodology, incomplete literature (status of what has been done) review, and he delineated what reviewers are looking for:

- Significance
- Creativity
- Clearly delineated projects
- Research Plan (methodology)
- Outcomes (evaluation)
- Clear, concise writing

Please visit ORSP's website to view select clips from Dr. Porter's workshop.

FY2015 Internal Awards

Sangeeta Mehra
*Post-Award
Program Assistant,
ORSP*

A new round of Internal Awards was announced by the Provost on December 11, 2013. Internal Awards are opportunities to apply for funding in a range of activities:

- *Separately Budgeted Research* supports faculty projects involving scholarly, creative, and/or research efforts.
- *Student Faculty Research* awards support to projects which involve students working cooperatively with faculty.
- *Summer Grant Proposal Development* supports faculty research by providing funds to work during the summer on developing grant proposals for programs, research, training, or creative activities for submission to foundations or government agencies.
- *University Distinguished Scholar* recognizes faculty with a distinguished record of scholarly or creative achievement. The award provides twelve credit hours of release time to pursue a scholarly or creative project that will result in a significant contribution to the field.

All award applications are due on February 14, 2014, to the Academic Dean in each college for review by that college's Research Committee. By March 13, each Academic Dean will send recommended applications to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, who then forwards them for review to the University Research Committee (URC), which consists of representatives from each college. By May 12, at the end of a series of two meetings, the URC sends its recommendations to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, who will make their final decisions.

ORSP will send out notification letters to all the applicants. For the applications that are awarded, the funds will become available for use starting July 1, 2014. Summer Grant Proposal Development award funds become available on June 1, 2014. Funds must be utilized by June 30, 2015, according to the Finance and Treasury year end schedule.

If a proposal involves human subjects, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval letter must be obtained by submitting an Application for Review of Research Involving Human Participants. Guidelines can be found on the IRB website.

While ORSP is not involved in any of the review process, our office is here to assist faculty with any questions and to help with the requisitioning of materials and hiring of students. Additional information on Internal Awards and past recipients is available on ORSP's Internal Awards page.

FY2015 Internal Awards

Informational Session

January 29, 2014

10:00 A.M.–11:00 A.M.

Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall

Please RSVP to Sangeeta Mehra at
mehras@mail.montclair.edu.

MSU's Distribution of Indirect Costs Policy

Catherine Bruno
Post-Award Officer, ORSP

I don't know about you, but I love that feeling of finding lost money: the twenty dollar bill in a pair of jeans or $5 in a pocket of a coat I haven't worn all year.

Well, if you have a grant or contract, you may not be aware that a portion of the indirect costs budgeted on that grant may be distributed back to you as the Principal Investigator/Project Director under the University's [Distribution of Indirect Costs](#) policy. Why and how, you ask?

As an incentive and reward for applying to and securing external funding for research and/or other scholarly activities, many universities (to include MSU) return a portion of indirect costs recovered during the course of a externally sponsored project *back* to the Principal Investigator/Project Director. MSU's policy distributes 10% of indirect costs recovered back to the PI/PD via the University Controller's office.

In a nutshell, here's how it works: If the award you have received allows for the charging of indirect costs, then as the grant is spent down, those indirect costs are charged to the grant and then distributed to the PI (10%), the Department (25%), the College/School (15%), Academic Affairs and ORSP (20%), and the University (30%).

Let's consider an example: A faculty member receives a $500,000, 5-year award from the National Science Foundation. Indirect costs are calculated at 59% of salaries and wages. Assume $100,000 in faculty and student salaries and wages over 5 years. Indirect costs are charged at 59% of $100,000, for a total of $59,000. If the grant is spent down completely over the life of the project, $5,900 would be redistributed back to the PI/PD to use for nearly any activity that will enhance his or her research or work.

For example, if you wanted to attend an additional conference, purchase software, hire a student RA, or have additional funds to pay incentives to subjects, you can use your "indirects." And if you have more than one grant that has indirects budgeted, then you have more than one source of indirect funding. Per MSU's policy, however, distributed indirects cannot be used to pay for extra salary to the PI/PD.

> *Indirect costs are costs that the University incurs that are not directly identified with a particular grant, contract, or program. For example, central administration, library, facilities maintenance, and utilities. In essence, the institutional costs of conducting externally sponsored activities on or off campus.*

At this point, you might be saying, "Yes my grant has indirects budgeted, but what do I do to access this funding?" Well, when you were awarded your grant that includes indirects, you were automatically assigned and emailed an FRS indirect account number from the Office of Grant Accounting which looks something like this: 3-XXXX. This account is separate from your FRS grant account, which that looks like 5-XXXX. Once your indirect account is created and grant expenditures start to incur, indirects are typically and automatically distributed four times a year into your FRS indirect account, usually the month after the quarter ends (i.e., April, July, October, and January). Keep in mind, no matter how many grants you have, you only have one FRS indirect account. An extra bonus is that indirect accounts, upon approval, can be carried forward each fiscal year.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY