

Research@CMU

Promoting Scholarship and Creative Work Throughout the University

Volume 1, Issue 3, September 23, 2011



News from the Hedge

As State support for higher education continues to decline and as projected enrollment declines portend fewer tuition dollars for all universities in Michigan, continuing our scholarship and our students' involvement in research will require obtaining new resources. Obtaining more grants and contracts is one avenue to new resources. However, approximately seventy percent of the faculty members at CMU have never benefitted from having external funding to support their scholarly work.

For anyone who has not applied for external funding, the prospect can be daunting. The possibility of failure is high, and the process is time-consuming. Because most faculty members have a strong track record of success, undertaking the highly speculative activity of grant writing may seem counter-intuitive.

Apart from the obvious benefits of receiving external funding to support one's work, what, if any, benefits are there to grant writing as an activity? I think there are several. First, it is an intellectual undertaking that forces the writer to review critically pertinent literature and determine where and how his or her questions might fit into the larger scene. Second, it forces the writer to ask the question: "How will the field be moved forward by my successful completion of the proposed work?" Third, it forces the writer seeking funding for the proposed project to ask the all-important question: "Who cares?" Often a recasting of the original questions one had in mind can dramatically change the answer to this last question.

Whether or not you are successful on the first of second attempt, the activity itself is worthwhile. When a grant is submitted and reviewed by peers, even when the outcome does not lead to funding, you can learn a great deal about how you are approaching a problem. And if a grant is funded, it benefits you not only in being able to advance the work of you and your students but also gives you a tremendous sense of peer validation of your intellectual and creative work. (See Values of Grant Writing Continued on Page 2)

Jim Hageman

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, September 28 Undergraduate Grant Preparation Workshop

Undergraduate Research & Creative Endeavors and Summer Scholars Grants
Location: Isabella Room, Bovee University Center
6:00-7:00 p.m.

Friday, September 30 Nominations For President And Provost Awards Due

Submit to ORSP, Foust 251
by 5:00 p.m.

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

ORSP@cmich.edu

251 Foust Hall
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, MI 48859



Dr. Mary Senter Focuses On Rural Research With CARRS Center

Dr. Mary Senter has been involved with the Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies (CARRS) at Central Michigan University since its inception in 1995, currently serving as Director. In this capacity, she has worked on more than 100 projects for community agencies, governmental units, and university offices in central and northern Michigan. Many of these projects have involved collaboration between agencies and CARRS to gather, interpret, and disseminate data relevant to addressing community problems. These projects have included community needs assessments using mail, web, and computer-assisted telephone surveys; collaborative program evaluation efforts; and focus groups with community leaders, service providers, and community members. Senter has also directed a number of projects for offices within CMU, most recently working with Cherie Strachan and Chris Owens of Political Science on a project to explore the climate for racial and ethnic diversity at CMU.

The resources of CARRS for both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis are available to assist faculty members throughout CMU. In addition, in recent years, CARRS has contributed to the education of 125-150 undergraduate and graduate students at CMU by providing hands-on instruction in applied social science research. CARRS is a self-supporting unit within CMU generating yearly revenues of more than \$100,000.

Senter holds the PhD in sociology from the University of Michigan and is Professor of Sociology at CMU. She teaches courses in social research methodology and social inequality. She is a member of the Council of the North Central Sociological Association and is a co-Principal Investigator of an NSF-funded project undertaken by the American Sociological Association, under Roberta Spalter-Roth's leadership, to explore the opinions and experiences of sociology majors from the Class of 2012 before and after graduation.



(Values of Grant Writing continued)

In any activity such as grant writing, especially when it is the researcher's first attempt, there is a considerable energy barrier. In chemical terms, we would say "a high free energy of activation exists." However, a catalyst can speed up the process. A catalyst is an agent that gets involved in any process in a reversible way that lowers the energy barrier for that process and allows the process to occur much more rapidly than in the absence of the catalyst. I suggest to you that the staff members at ORSP are each catalytic agents for grant preparation. They are each assigned to serve different groups within CMU: **Mary Montoye** is director of the staff and writes all contracts; **Deborah Clark** serves CEHS, Graduate Studies, Biology, Institutional Diversity and the Volunteer Center; **Lenora Calkins** serves CCFA, CHSBS, Computer Science, Geography, Engineering and Physics; ProfEd; Residence Life and the Library; and **Rick Middleton** serves CBA, CHP, CM, Chemistry, Math, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, and Public Safety. Once a grant is received, **Melinda Brakenberry** helps to smooth the proper use and management of the funds awarded. I will have more to say in the future about the many ways these terrific staff members can help you, but I will leave you with one example of the kinds of services we provide to help you get over that energy barrier. Click on the link below as our own Deb Clark presents a helpful guide to grant writing entitled "Five Steps to a Successful Proposal Take Two." <http://webcast.cmich.edu/webcast/Viewer?peid=52c953c7-2c1e-4e45-8496-b75fc4c91472>

Post Award Tip #3

If you have an ORSP internally funded grant, you have 5% re-budgeting authority. What does that mean? As long as you stay within the scope of your project, you can feel free to make minor changes to your already approved budget line items as long as those changes are less than 5% of your total budget. If your cumulative changes will total more than 5% of your overall budget, please contact Melinda Brakenberry in ORSP (meyer1mm@cmich.edu) before any expenses are incurred and she will assist you in seeking the necessary approvals.

CMU External Funding Hits Record High

Congratulations to the CMU faculty and staff who received external awards during the 2010 – 2011 fiscal year. We reached a record high amount of external funding, totaling \$20,656,000 during the fiscal year. This surpasses the record high set during the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year of \$14,969,000 and just over \$10,000,000 from 2008-2009. It is only through the dedicated hard work of the faculty and staff that such milestones are reached.