Foundation Announces Mini-Grants Competition

CSI Foundation mini grant applications are now being accepted in the office of Planning and Grants Development (Taylor 120). The due date is Wednesday, March 19. Faculty, staff, and administration can apply for up to $2500 in funding for projects and activities that "stimulate innovative ideas and activities and their subsequent implementation, and result in improved student learning and access."

Two keys to success in securing funding are collaboration among employees and clearly articulating how your project supports the CSI Strategic Plan. Grant funds may be used for supplies, equipment, consultants, technical assistance, registration fees, and lodging. Grants do not pay salaries, honoraria, or food for the applicant. However, they will pay a reasonable rate for a finished product that has been developed. Travel expenses may not exceed 15% of the funding request. Applicants should include sales tax and shipping/handling in all applicable budget items.

The grant application can be accessed here. And don’t forget the submitted application must be signed by your Department/Division Chair, Dean, and Vice President. Finally, in addition to the signed paper copy, you must also submit an electronic copy via email attachment to dmckinstry@csi.edu.

Call x6244 if you have any questions.

A list of successful applicants and their projects can be found here http://planning.csi.edu/grantsDevel/internalGrants/miniGrantsFunded.asp#1213

In Defense of Data Nerds

Everyone knows that in all good writing there must be representation of both the head (the documentable things that exist in your world) and the heart (the things that make you feel). For me, the heart is the easy part. I love collecting stories about the people in our community and discovering what they have and what they need. The old man who wants dentures because his busted smiles frighten his neighbor’s kids, the child advocate whose training in Traumatic Stress Intervention helps a mother and her son talk, really talk, about why he so often feels scared and alone. The heart is interesting—it’s sad and exultant—it makes me believe (most of the time) that the world can be a better place.

In October I went to a Grant Writing Professionals Association conference in Maryland. People attend conferences like these to learn a variety of things in a short amount of time. We socialize and hope to get wind of that inside scoop on federal budgets and grant forecasts that no amount of Googling will produce. We go in the hopes that whatever we find will make our jobs easier.

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Fiscal Fact:
"Regardless of the funding agency, all College of Southern Idaho Business Office policies will be followed. For federal funding OMB Circular A-21 Cost Principals for Educational Institutions and OMB Circular A-110 Uniform Administrative Requirement for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_default/ will be followed".

CSI Employee Policy and Procedure Manual 8.16 Grant Accounting and Administration Fiscal Policy

We are more than halfway through the fiscal year. Can you believe it? How are your grant budgets looking? Are you spending down your funds? Do you need to request a budget modification to ensure that your funds get spent by June 30th? If applicable, have you ordered and received all of your grant equipment? These are some of the questions you should be asking yourself to ensure that you are on track to spend your grant funds by the end of the fiscal year. If at all possible we don’t want to leave any unspent funds on the table. If you need help with any of these questions, please give me a call. I am happy to help.

With the most recent round of CSI policy updates, there were 16 new grant/external funding policies added and/or updated to the CSI Employee Policy and Procedure Manual. As a grant manager or for those involved with grants please click on the link below and familiarize yourselves with these new policies (8.16 through 8.16.16).

http://hr.csi.edu/handbook/business8.html#Grant

Many of these policies and procedures were already in place, however, in order to comply with federal requirements they need to be in writing within our formal operating policy. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns regarding this new policy.

Thanks for all you do for grant management here at CSI! We appreciate you!

Magan Hodge can be reached at 208-732-6216 or mhodge@csi.edu

Evaluation: essential to winning funds

A well-conceived evaluation plan is essential for both success in receiving funding and success in carrying out your funded grant project. As competition for grant funds continuously increases, those seeking funding are increasingly asked to provide solid evidence that their programs and projects have met the funder’s goals and objectives. Having an excellent evaluation plan in your proposal assures funders that you have the capability to assess and report on your project’s successes and shortcomings and adjust when needed.

Evaluation does more than reassure funders, however. It is also essential for you as the project director. Formative project evaluation (evaluation that takes place regularly during the project period) allows you to monitor the successes of your project as they occur and also to change elements that are not working. Summative project evaluation (evaluation that occurs at the end of a project) allows you to share your success with the campus and community, and it also helps you build reputation with funders.

The Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook says “Effective evaluation is not an ‘event’, but is an ongoing process which helps decision makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies and the community; and how it is being influenced/impacted by both internal and external factors.”

For more info on creating an evaluation plan for your projects see these resources—

Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook,
NSF’s User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation,
EvaluATE

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In Defense of Data Nerds cont.

Weeks before boarding the plane I scanned the schedule, checking off which seminars I wanted to attend—Tools for Collaboration: The ABC’s of MOUs; Project Development: Are we having fun yet?; Using Microsoft Access to Organize Grant Research. I was super excited to spend five days in Baltimore, and not because of crab cakes, resurrected merchant ships from the late 1700’s, or the world renowned National Aquarium. This enthusiasm surprised me. I wondered about what I had become.

The session that piqued my curiosity the most carried the least frilly of titles— “Using Census Data for Grant Writing.” It’s not that I thought that learning how to navigate the columns and rows that represent the “Occupation by sex and median earnings in the past 12 months (in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars) for the civilian employed population 16 years and over,” sounded like a ton of fun. Not at all. My motivator was thinking about all the weeks I wasted printing page after page of estimates, margins of errors, sample sizes and quality measures, trying (and often failing) to find and then translate a mind-numbing mash of statistics into exactly what I had to have to make my grant application’s Needs Statements just needy enough. Simplifying (if such a thing was possible) the Census search could save me a whole lot of time.

My instincts proved right. The seminar was all I could have hoped it would be and more, and I began geeking out a little. In part because I learned that most of the data that I thought I had to pull individually could be layered—one demographic on top of another—and integrated into one or two documents that showed, say, how many people are uninsured, have less than a high school diploma, the percentage of these people that earn below the poverty level, and per capita household income broken down not only by county, but by ethnicity as well. You don’t have to be a genius or a wizard to pull this together; anyone can do it. The part of my job where I must find and define that “head” piece of the writing became infinitely better.

This revelation was wonderful, because for me, unlike writing personal stories, tracking down and tacking in all of these numbers has always been the worst part of the writing process. It’s the long trudge home from school after you’ve been caught smoking behind the dumpster and the principal has called your parents. It’s remembering that you need to take the dog out only after your feet have finally warmed up the bed. Choice doesn’t hold a lot of weight here; these are things we must haul ourselves through. But what I discovered is that, as lifeless as they appear on the surface, each number packed into a tiny rectangle in an Excel chart represents the broad narratives of our community. It can be a tool for change—alerting us to where bilingual clinicians are most needed or how many people have to choose between paying their gas bill on time or buying diapers because they spend more than 30% of their income on housing thus making them poor even if they are ineligible for services because their income floats just above the mandated poverty line. If we’re sincere, the numbers provide the direction for our projects. If it is the heart that makes me believe the world can be a better place, it is the head that provides the compass.

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The Grant Shortlist

Charlotte Martin Foundation funds projects in two areas. Youth: Projects that ensure opportunities for all youth, particularly the underserved and economically disadvantaged. Wildlife and habitat: Projects to protect and restore vital ecosystems and their resident wildlife. Deadline is April 30, 2014 or Sept. 30, 2014. [http://www.charlottemartin.org/faq.htm](http://www.charlottemartin.org/faq.htm)

Seagraves Family Foundation, Inc. The Foundation grants to entities along the Highway 93 Corridor from Twin Falls County to Custer County. The Foundation is specifically interested in grantmaking in areas of education, families and children, and the humane treatment of animals. There is no deadline. [http://seagravesfamilyfoundation.org/Grantmaking.html](http://seagravesfamilyfoundation.org/Grantmaking.html)

Idaho Humanities Council Grant: $1,000-$10,000 for projects “focusing on literature, history, philosophy, ethics, languages, archaeology, art history, and other humanities disciplines involving Idaho citizens”. Deadline is September 15, 2014. [http://www.idahohumanities.org/?p=grants](http://www.idahohumanities.org/?p=grants)


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