Show Me the Money! An Academic Library's Role in the Art of Grant-Seeking on Campus and in the Community

Karen Downing

Today's academic environment is both competitive and collaborative, and nowhere is this more true than in the area of grantsmanship. Faculty are increasingly judged at hiring, tenure, and promotion times by how many grant dollars they bring to their institutions for research and programmatic efforts. With rising tuition costs, undergraduate students are looking for scholarships, and graduate students need fellowships to pay for tuition, dissertation research, and research experiences. University staff are also increasingly relying on grant monies to seed innovative programs, spaces and services. In recognition of the growing importance of grant dollars in academe, many faculty are requiring their students to learn the art of proposal writing and identifying potential grantmakers as part of their course requirements across the curriculum.

With increasing funding needs across campuses, how can academic libraries be a resource in the grant-getting process, insert themselves into the campus' grant-getting infrastructure, and develop partnerships and relationships with key research and development players across campus?

This paper examines the campus environment for grant-seeking, and suggests a model of service whereby academic libraries can become involved in an increas-ingly valuable area of university work: grantsmanship. Based on the various models in use by Cooperating Collections of The Foundation Center, a non-profit institution whose mission is to connect grantmakers and grantseekers, and central university research offices, separate school and college research administrators, the paper will argue for the importance of libraries in providing information resources related to grant-getting, vigorous instruction for the campus community in partnership with other campus players in the university or college's grant-seeking infrastructure. The model includes typical campus players in the grantseeking process and is outlined in Figure 1.

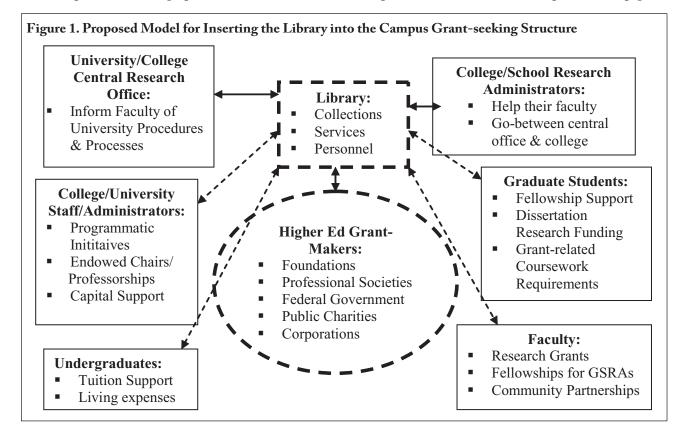## Library's Role(s) In Campus Grant-seeking

There are many ways in which campus libraries can become integral to the grant-seeking and grant-getting processes that occur on most college and university campuses. From having a dedicated Grants Librarian, to utilizing the array of subject specialist librarians, the campus library can be an essential part of the overall grants program on any campus.

A Foundation and Grants Librarian is a rare commodity in academic libraries today. It is a new position for academic libraries, much like outreach li-

Karen Downing is from the University of Michigan; e-mail: kdown@umich.edu

brarians were a decade ago, yet grant specialists have existed in many public libraries for quite some time. Much like other subject specialists whose target audience spans the entirety of the campus community (ie: government documents librarians, map librarians, technologists, etc.), grant specialists face the same challenges and rewards in serving all campus constituents. These challenges include how to tailor services and products to a widely diverse campus community In addition to providing campus-wide access to databases and print resources related to grant-getting, instruction and outreach efforts are key to marketing and spreading knowledge of important resources to those who need them.

The campus library has many potential roles it can play along a continuum of involvement in the grant-seeking process. For starters, it can simply purchase and provide access to one or more grant-seeking tools such as databases like Foundation Directory Online, Guidestar Premium, Community of Science (COS), or InfoEd (Sponsored Programs Information Network, or SPIN). Next along the continuum, the library could develop its own web or print based tools to assist campus users in their search for commercially available products. Webographies such as those found on the websites of my colleague Jon Harrison at Michigan State (Harrison, 2008), or my own selector pages (Downing & Doepker, 2009) are examples of these types of tools. More proactive on the continuum is using these tools to reach out to various constituents across campus (and into the local non-profit community) to provide instruction and support in the use of these various tools in support of the many different types of grant-seeking and funding needs that exist on higher education campuses. Next, the library could collaborate on a variety of grant-based projects, or actually become a grant-seeker itself, or in conjunction with other units on campus. Collaborative projects allow librarians to get in-depth experience throughout the grant-seeking process, develop close relationships with constituents for grant-seeking and other information needs, and allow librarians a window into the work and lives of our users. And finally, for maximum user interaction and impact, someone from the library should be involved in the campus-wide group that sets research policies and maintains and grows the grant-seeking infrastructure. Through these contacts, the library is positioned not only to develop deep and consequential relationships that span the entirety of campus, but is then able to anticipate and help guide

Figure 1. **Proposed Model for Inserting the Library into the Campus Grant-seeking Structure**

University/College Central Research Office:
- Inform Faculty of University Procedures & Processes

Library:
- Collections
- Services
- Personnel

College/School Research Administrators:
- Help their faculty
- Go-between central office & college

College/University Staff/Administrators:
- Programmatic Inititaives
- Endowed Chairs/ Professorships
- Capital Support

Higher Ed Grant-Makers:
- Foundations
- Professional Societies
- Federal Government
- Public Charities
- Corporations

Graduate Students:
- Fellowship Support
- Dissertation Research Funding
- Grant-related Coursework Requirements

Undergraduates:
- Tuition Support
- Living expenses

Faculty:
- Research Grants
- Fellowships for GSRAs
- Community Partnerships

campus-wide policies and directions for all subject areas that the are supported by collections and services within the library.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model for inserting the library into the campus grant-seeking structure. The various constituencies are outlined below.

Potential Funders/Funding Sources

Grant-seeking is the art of finding a near-perfect match between those who are making grants (grant makers), and those who are seeking them (grantees or grant seekers). In order to make this match as close a fit as possible, it is necessary to embark on detailed research on the part of the grant-seeker, whether they be a faculty member, a graduate student, or a staff person. Grant-seeking research is one area where the campus library can be of great assistance to anyone searching for funding. A variety of print and electronic databases can assist with this process. (See Downing & Doepker, 2009 for details.)

Foundations

Foundations contribute over 10 billion dollars a year to research at universities in the United States (Cole, 2006; Foundation Center, 2007). They are major players in the funding scene. They are however, no standards with regard to when or how often they accept proposal applications, how often they change their funding priorities, and how they wish to be contacted. To further complicate the picture, there are many types of foundations; these typically include: family foundations, corporate foundations, community foundations, and operating foundations.

With foundations, the key to a successful proposal is doing in-depth research on the funding priorities, history of grantmaking, net assets, personnel, funding cycles, initial contact method, average amount of grant, and other facets of a particular foundation's grant activities. It is only with a near-perfect match between the proposed project (a match in topical area, amount of funds being asked for, and timing of proposal submission) and the work of the foundation that a proposal is likely to be accepted.

To find a close match between grant seekers and grant makers in the foundation realm, the most helpful resources include Foundation Directory Online, and The Foundation Center's website (see appendix of resources), COS, SPIN and Guidestar. Each

of these resources highlights a different area of the research process. For example, Guidestar Premium is the best resource for small community-based foundations, however Foundation Directory Online is the most comprehensive tool, covering well over 90,000 U.S.-based foundations with in-depth profiles and links to the foundations 990 forms (federal government yearly reporting forms which comprehensively list all the grants made in a given year).

Federal Government

The federal government made over 15 billion dollars in grants in the year 2007, making it the largest portion of the research pie for colleges and universities (Cole, 2006). Federal sources of research dollars are unevenly distributed however, with the sciences, technology, engineering and math (STEM) receiving the vast majority of these dollars.

Federal grants are give serious amounts of money for health-related and technological research, but the process of researching and applying for these dollars is very rigorous, very complex, and researchers are usually required to have a track-record to be principal investigators (P.I.s). Partly because of the intense competition for research grants from the federal government, intergenerational collaborations between researchers is common. Proposal teams between more senior faculty (with publication records) and junior faculty and/or graduate students can help develop the newer faculty and doctoral students' track record and proposal writing skills.

The major databases for researching a good match between the research project and the federal agencies and grant programs available include Grants.gov, the federal grant portal freely available on the Internet, and COS and SPIN. Grants.gov is the most comprehensive source for federal dollars, but COS and SPIN contain much more powerful search engines.

Professional Societies/Associations

Professional societies often provide modest research grants, as well as fellowship, scholarship and internship support for undergraduate and graduate students. Professional societies are a very good option for researchers and students in the humanities, as they are often left out of the funding pool by other potential funders. An example of this type of funding can be found in a professional association close to our hearts, the American Library Association (ALA). ALA

provides small research grants via many of its divisions and association-wide. It also provides dozens of graduate school scholarships each year. Both of these revenue sources are detailed in the COS and SPIN databases. Typically, these types of grants are limited to $5,000 or less.

Corporations

Corporations are an interesting type of potential grant maker in that they often give through a corporate foundation (in which case, using the tools and strategies found in the foundation section above apply), but also through a much more nebulous process of direct giving. Many universities are building corporate relationships with local and national and even international corporations in order to collaborate in research, procure internships and jobs for their graduates, but also, increasingly, to receive research funding for jointly sponsored research projects.

The best source of information about corporate funding is the Corporate Funders dataset within Foundation Directory Online. Because this type of funding is very often discretionary and based on the interests of the corporate leaders, it can be very difficult to do proactive research on these entities.

Public Charities

Public charities are likely places to look for action research that is community-based and serves the needs of the local community in some way. Organizations such as United Ways and local service organizations are the most usual sources for this type of funding. Guidestar Premium and Foundation Directory Online are the best sources of information about these types of funders.

End-User Constituents

Faculty

Increasingly, faculty are required to have a history of successful external grant getting to be considered for a tenure-track position. Additionally, many institutions (and many schools and colleges within large research based universities) require external funding in order to have successful tenure and promotion outcomes. This, along with the need to fund faculty research is heavy motivation for junior and senior faculty to become knowledgeable about the grant-seeking process.

Postdocs

Post-doctoral fellows are often funded through federal or foundation grant support. These grant funds sometimes go directly to the fellow, or are most often funneled through departments within the host university. Many graduate students begin looking for postdocs in their fifth year of their doctoral program. It is possible to find postdoc opportunities in both Community of Science and SPIN.

Graduate Students

There are many typical graduate student funding needs including tuition support, research funding for dissertations, and travel funding to attend and present at professional conferences. The best source of funding for all these needs are found within the schools and colleges in which they are enrolled. Check your campus research office and/or graduate school for internal sources of funding first. Then use Community of Science and SPIN to find fellowship, scholarship, and travel funds. Professional organizations are very good sources of funding for graduate students as well.

Undergraduate Students

Scholarship funding is of growing importance for many students, as tuition rises much faster than the overall cost of living. The Foundation Center's Grants to Individuals and Foundation Directory Online both contain thousands of grants that individual students are eligible to apply for.

Administrative/Programmatic Staff

Many campuses run directed field experiences, practical engagement programs, service learning programs, and other community-based programs that engage in collaborations outside the university. Grantmakers are particularly interested in such programs, as they extend the reach of traditional single-institution grants, and often have greater impact. Program coordinators are located throughout campus, but are especially concentrated in student services, academic services, schools such as public health, social work, I-schools, education, and others. These types of collaborative programs are likely to find grant opportunities from any of the funding tools, but especially from Foundation Directory Online, Community of Science and SPIN.

Institutional Support

Within the larger campus community, there are several typical types of offices that can play an important role in the library's ability to saturate campus with its services and collections. At Michigan, these offices include our Vice President for Research, the Division of Research Development and Administration, our Business Engagement Office, the Vice President for Development, and individual schools and colleges research administrations. These various offices and individuals create the infrastructure for grant-seeking, and are wonderful conduits through which to offer library-based grant-seeking services.

Central Research Office

Most postsecondary institutions have some sort of centralized office which manages grant applications, processes grant monies. Some central research offices may also help with proposal writing, and may have existing relationships with foundation officers and federal grantors. These offices are often found in the Vice President for Research office, or the central Development office, and they are powerful allies for libraries who wish to be involved in campus grant activities.

Individual School and/or College Research Administrator

On larger campuses, and within larger schools and colleges within university settings, many individual schools and colleges have their own research administrators who coordinate that unit's grant processes. They often have direct contact with faculty and other principle investigators, deans, and other research support personnel. These research administrators are important links to the faculty, and have a wealth of knowledge about their schools' grant activities.

Central Development Office (Foundations and Corporate Sponsors)

Virtually every campus has a central development office today. And often individual schools and colleges have development (sometimes called "advancement") officers as well. Development officers often work on securing major donors for their campuses and schools, but sometimes miss opportunities to secure funding from foundations and other grantmakers. Understanding the difference between research grants, and grants for capital campaigns and endowments is an important distinction for everyone involved in grant-seeking activities.

Conclusion

Taken together, the various grant-makers, grant-seekers, and campus collaborators can assist any institution in its grant getting goals. The campus library can serve as a central information resource for all these constituents, providing information to connect funding needs with potential funders. The combination of collections, services, and collaborative relationships across campus can provide an important link between the campus library and its many campus constituents.

Bibliography

Cole, S.S. (2206). Researcher behavior that leads to success in obtaining grant funding: A model for success. *Research Management Review, 15* (2) 1-10.

Does tenure need to change? *The Scientist*. (2007). Accessed on December 11, 2008 from; http://www.the-scientist.com/news/home/53370/#comments

Downing, K., Doepker, R. (2009). *Resources on Foundations and Grants*. Accessed on January 16, 2009 from: http://www.lib.umich.edu/grad/guide/guide.php?id=84

Foundation Center, (2007). *Philanthropy Annual*. Accessed on January 13, 2009 from: http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/philanthropy2007/

Frey, B.B., Lohmeier, J.H., Lee, S.W., Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*: 383-394.

Harrison, J. (2009). *Grants and Related Resources*. Accessed on January 10, 2009 from: http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/index.htm