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Authors	Dunwell, Rachel M.
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DI in The Sourcing of Academic Funding

R M Dunwell

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1 Project Description

Applying for grants for external funding is an essential activity for all researchers. It can be a highly complex task that calls for skills not taught through traditional means. The basic idea of this DI is that participants work with the author (Rachel Dunwell) on sourcing funding for a pedagogical investigation within the Math Support Center.

Below I describe how the process of applying for funds can be turned into a academic inquiry, and hence fully exploit the learning opportunities that such an activity provides. Then describe how this will apply to this particular DI.

1.1 General Description

The principle activity of this Directed Inquiry will be for the participant(s) to be a member of a team that sources funding of a major academic project. The work of the application team will include:

- Surveying potential funding agencies and the programs run by those agencies.
- Finding those programs with goals that match those of the project.
- Familiarizing themselves with the award policies and procedures of the agency.
- Drafting of application documents.

The participants will keep a journal of their work on the team, in which they will reflect on

- The aspects of the work that are common to all applications for funding.
- The way the goals of the project mesh with the missions of the research's department, institution, and academic discipline, and how in turn these mesh with the goals and missions of funding agencies.

The participants will also give formal verbal reports of their progress to the relevant department(s) on campus. These oral presentations will focus on those aspects of the application process that will help the members of the audience with their own funding applications. At the end of the DI participants will write a summary of the semesters activities in the form of an advice guide for anyone from Rhodes College making a similar application.

1.2 Particular Details for this DI

1.2.1 Project to be funded

The Math Support Center has started offering, on a limited basis, mentored study group support for students taking various mathematical courses on campus (these include Math 121, Math 122, Math 111, Psych 211). In order to extend and rigorously evaluate this work additional funds are needed.

1.2.2 Funding Team

The funding team will be lead by Rachel Dunwell (Director of the MSC) and they will work closely with the College's Communication Strategist (Dr R Gibboney) to ensure they are following best practice.

1.2.3 Application Stages

The initial phase of the project will be to survey potential funding bodies, and join appropriate notification lists. Particular attention will be given to reviewing the pedagogical programs of the NSF. Once a relevant program(s) has been identified, the team will familiarize themselves with the protocols of the awarding agency. They will then start preparing the relevant documents for the application. By the end of the time frame of the DI, the team will have first drafts of relevant application documents.

2 Assessment of Participants Work

The quality of the participants work will be assess through

- The quality of the grant application. This will form 50% of the final grade.
- The quality of the reflection contained in the participants journal. This will form 20%
- The effectiveness of the participant's communication in the two oral presentations. Each presentation will count for 10% of the final grade
- How effectively the participant's summary report advices readers on applying for a grant. This will be 10% of the participant's final grade.