

## **How to Write a Compelling Hrabowski Academic Innovation Fund Proposal** **By Linda C. Hodges, Director of the Faculty Development Center, 1/10/13**

A grant proposal is a specific kind of persuasive, academic writing. This kind of narrative is most compelling when you as a writer pay special attention to who your readers are: what they want, what they know, and especially, what they *don't* know. The selection committee for the first round of Hrabowski Academic Innovation Fund Proposals this fall formulated the following questions and suggestions for writers as they seek to craft a winning proposal:

1. How is your idea innovative? In what way is it new and different from other similar ideas? Is it new to UMBC or new to higher education? If it is a well-known effective practice that you are newly adapting in your department, explain how your adaptation will be distinctive. Your readers may not be familiar with the practice you propose, nor ways in which it is truly novel.
2. How does your proposal specifically fit the criteria described in the call for proposals? Don't assume that your readers can infer this critical information. Dividing your proposal into sections corresponding to the bulleted list of criteria in the call for proposals will help your readers quickly and easily assess how well your proposal addresses these criteria compared to all the other proposals they will be reading.
3. Related to the criteria, how will your project specifically impact student learning? What learning challenges in your discipline do students face, and how will this innovation help them address these challenges successfully? Does your innovation increase student motivation? If so, how, and why is this important? Does it help them become deeper thinkers? How? And how will you know? Don't assume that your readers will just know that your innovation is a good thing for student learning.
4. If your project impacts only a few students, is there a way to collaborate with another course or department to extend the reach of your innovation? And, importantly, are there lessons to be learned from your work with your students that transfer to other courses and disciplines? The size of the impact becomes important given that we cannot possibly fund all the wonderful ideas submitted.
5. How will your innovation be sustained? The answer to this question is especially important if you are proposing an idea that requires hiring new personnel. The more creative and potentially effective your idea seems to be, the more willing the committee will be to fund a proposal even if future funding is unknown. But thinking ahead and having a plan to continue your idea if it is successful will strengthen your case.
6. Think if your project could be and should be done in conjunction with other units on campus, for example, the Learning Resource Center or the Shriver Center. Taking advantage of other valuable campus resources may be able to both extend your project and save you money.

7. Please don't pad your budget. Be realistic in what it costs to accomplish what you want to accomplish. Be as accurate as possible in your allocation of money and justify salaries with rate of pay used and hours expected on the project, for example. Budgets that happen to coincide exactly with the exact amount allowed for proposals (e.g., \$3499 or \$25,000) appear to be less thought-out.
8. Please be sensitive to your readers. Use a font equivalent to at least to 12 point Times New Roman. Do not include appendices—they will not be read.

As Director of the Faculty Development Center I am always happy to chat with you about your ideas and the way you are “selling” them. I can be reached by email, [lhodges@umbc.edu](mailto:lhodges@umbc.edu), or phone, 5-1829.