

OBJECTIVES

The mission and over-arching goal of RSP is to “coordinate efforts to secure funding to support institutional goals and faculty/staff scholarly activity” (RSP Strategic Plan, 2003). Main areas of responsibility include administration, coordination of University of Wisconsin funding opportunities, liaison/professional development, funding identification, proposal development, and compliance. The main activities associated with each area are outlined in Appendix 1.

Current strategies focus on distribution of funding opportunities information campus wide through a variety of mechanisms (the campus announcement board, the RSP website, telephone, etc.) RSP also identifies key faculty members and works closely with them to develop proposals, usually after RSP becomes aware of a potential source of funding that aligns with faculty interests. A similar approach is used with teams of faculty, sometimes within the context of a working lunch meeting. Thus, RSP support is centered on both the institution and individuals or teams with the potential to develop fundable proposals. This approach extends to external stakeholders—i.e. the Jefferson County Delinquency Prevention Council—who, once identified, can be matched to faculty who become collaborators in developing grant proposals. RSP then tailors its support to meet the needs of individual faculty. Some proceed independently in developing proposals while other require more support—i.e. searching the relevant literature, directing the actual writing process, designing an evaluation plan, etc. RSP personnel routinely develop budgets, complete standard forms, and procure necessary signatures for all proposals that are submitted. Further, the office oversees two important compliance entities, the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and keeps grant writers apprised of all Federal, State, and University laws and policies that impact on their specific grant applications.

RELATIONSHIP TO DIVISION/UNIVERSITY GOALS

The division encompasses a diverse set of units including Graduate Studies, Research and Sponsored Programs, Summer Session, Winterim, Credit Outreach, Continuing Education Services, Distance education, Travel Study, World Affairs Seminar, and the LEARN Center.

The functions of RSP are also strongly related to the University’s goals. Under Priority 2—UW-Whitewater will deliver state of the art programs and services—RSP has assisted in the achievement of Goal 2.1—Academic programs that are intellectually challenging, current, and dynamic (UW-Whitewater Strategic Plan, 1996). Examples include assisting the Departments of Biology and Geography in procuring funding focused on improving the quality of instruction using technology. A recently funded proposal in the Department of History has the potential to make UW-Whitewater a center for the improvement of K-12 instruction (Dr. Nikki Mandell is the principal investigator, and she worked closely with RSP in developing the proposal.). Goal 3.1 addresses the development of “a diverse instructional staff, nationally recognized for their achievements, who are outstanding teachers, productive scholars and active contributors of professional, university and

community service.” Grants secured with the assistance of RSP often form the basis for scholarly activity; Dr. Meg Waraczynski is an excellent example. A series of grants from the United States Department of Education aimed at alleviating the drastic shortage of teachers in the southeastern Wisconsin for students for whom English is not their first language continue to provide an important community service for the region. Drs. Wallace Sherlock and Susan Huss-Lederman are the principle investigators for these grants and maintain consistent contact with RSP. Similarly, Goal 5.2 addresses the University’s contribution to the “economic development of the region and the quality of life of its citizens.” RSP has been instrumental in brokering several partnerships between regional organizations—i.e. the Jefferson County Literacy Council—and UW-Whitewater faculty that have resulted in funded proposals. External evaluation expertise for two counties (Dodge and Jefferson) that have State Incentive Grants to reduce alcohol and drug use among youth is also being provided. Finally, RSP is the primary reason that Goal 6.3—Supplemental outside funding support sufficient for the University to achieve its goals and priorities—has been accomplished, as evidenced by the unit receiving a grade of “A” in the Chancellor’s 2002 Report Card—one of only four units or initiatives campus-wide so recognized.

INDICATORS THAT OBJECTIVES ARE BEING MET

Appendix 2 contains the responses from principal investigators on campus regarding several aspects of RSP. The feedback is uniformly positive with Item #2 (assistance in following sponsor guidelines and completing required forms (budgets, assurances, certifications, etc.)) and Item #4 (efficiency of proposal preparation, routing, and/or mailing) being particular strengths of the office. Responses to the open-ended item are also positive. As one respondent commented: “Keep doing what you’re doing. ORSP is perhaps the most organized, efficient, and on the ball office on campus. I cannot think of any way it needs improvement.”

Additional feedback was obtained via a questionnaire to all who have accessed the services of the office within the past year (See Appendix 3.). Several of the items did not apply to all respondents—especially those items that focused on IRB and IACUC. Once again, the items indicate high levels of satisfaction with the service provided by the office. Consistent with data reported in Appendix 1, “reviewing and approving proposals and budgets” and copying, mailing, submitting proposals” are special strengths, though it is common for over 70% of the respondents to be “Satisfied” or “Somewhat satisfied” across all items. Items that garnered the most responses in the “Dissatisfied” and “Somewhat Dissatisfied” categories (though only 10-15% of those responding) included “faculty/staff development for grant-related service areas”, “disseminating information on funding opportunities”, and “assisting with proposal preparation”. Feedback about the IRB and IACUC especially is very positive. The responses in Appendix 3 also provide some evidence that respondents believe that the University is either at the beginning stages or worse when it comes to providing pilot funds, start-up funds, and facilities/administrative recovery for grant writers. However, 60-70% of respondents believe that pilot funds, etc. are at least somewhat important in the process of securing funding. Almost 74% indicate that UW-W provides proposal-writing support and most believe that this support is vital to their scholarly activity.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Research and Sponsored Programs currently has a budget of \$10,000 to support student help and \$10,000 to fund services and supplies. The office has one full-time classified staff member, Denise Ehlen--a program assistant 4. The Office of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education Services has heavily subsidized the office since 1998 when a substantial portion of RSP resources was reallocated to the fledgling LEARN Center. Approximately \$65,000 in subsidy support was provided in 2002-2003.

IMPROVEMENTS / MODIFICATIONS

The current organization and funding of RSP is inadequate to continue service-intensive functions (finding funding opportunities, assisting with proposal development and project budget development, management of compliance, and day-to-day administration). The client base for the office has grown beyond the resource capacity. Nationally, institutions similar to UWW submitted 48.95 proposals per central sponsored projects administrative FTE in 2002 (as reported in the Higher Education Benchmarking Survey on Research Administration, see Appendix 4). RSP, an office with one FTE, coordinated the submission of 251 proposals.

RSP must evolve from a reactive service provider to a more proactive partner in the identification and acquisition of extramural funding. The campus must 1) allocate more resources--staff and budget to RSP and/or 2) reevaluate and redefine office goals.

Grant-related responsibilities should be coordinated by three professional FTE—a director of grant support services (academic staff position), a project manager (academic staff position), and an administrative specialist (classified or academic staff position). Two additional professional and permanent FTE are needed for efficiency and consistency in service. In addition, High-stakes tasks cannot and should not (continue to) be delegated to student employees. Appropriate clerical duties (for example, web development and maintenance, data entry, duplicating, etc.) would continue to be coordinated by graduate (one FTE) and undergraduate students.

Finally, the office should become part of the LEARN Center and responsibilities/services merged and redefined. The major activities of the LEARN Center are the promotion of “(a) strategies for improving learning and teaching, (b) assessment of the effectiveness of learning and teaching, (c) effective use of technology in teaching and learning, **(d) acquisition of extramural support for innovative learning and teaching improvement initiatives** [emphasis added]” (Division Annual Report, 1999-2000).

The current pre-award infrastructure is no longer adequate to meet campus needs, to comply with state and federal mandates, or to continue to cultivate extramural grant activity. Significant reallocation of resources, restructuring, and articulation of grants-related goals and services is essential.