Increasing Competitiveness in Foundation Grant Support
Faculty Development Panel Discussion
February 21, 2018

Resources available to you:

- **Pivot**: funding opportunity searchable database, that includes: foundations, federal government, and other private sources of funds, all in one place.
- **Development Office grant opportunity database**: curated list of nongovernmental funding agencies and current grant opportunities. Limited to foundations and corporations that have invited Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) or Requests for Proposals (RFPs).
- **List of development officers by college/school/unit**.

Know the Landscape:

- Foundations are structured, learning organizations (to impact change), so they shift priorities over time.
- Support of past grant topics is not a good indicator of future funding directions: they're constantly evolving.
- Figure out how your research aligns with your selected funder’s core mission statement.
- Understand your field and others’ contributions: your research may not be as unique as you think.
- Some foundations offer specific calls with deadlines: this is a way for them to understand what’s happening in the field. Informs their strategy for funding.
- Some foundations are more flexible: ideas/proposals may be submitted at any time.
- When preparing concept papers: treat as mini-proposals: become really good at explaining the relevance of your research to people outside your field.
- Foundations typically fund high risk, high reward research (vs. federal gov’t).
- Keep in mind all the different Foundation cultures: UT’s central Development Office or your C/S/U development officer can help.

How to Engage:

- Social media: it’s becoming more prevalent. For instance: Gates Foundation.
- Prospect identification: your development officer can help you find a good match.
- Read lots of other people’s proposals: volunteer as a reviewer.
- Go to professional meetings and introduce yourself to foundation program managers: ask if they need reviewers!
• Find a mentor: work on a coherent development plan (your development officer can help) and use it to start a conversation with a faculty member who has a successful track record with foundation support.
• Be a mentor: encourage your mentees to design a coherent development plan.
• Find out what a Foundation’s future goals are: these are typically not on the website. Go to professional meetings and talk to program managers in person.
• Tap into existing resources and connections: i.e. Ford Fndn. President (Darren Walker) is UT Austin alum.
• Find a natural alignment: Rapaport Center is an interdisciplinary center for human rights, and Ford supports research in social justice.
• Be prepared to network (share your elevator pitch): attend campus events and recognition ceremonies involving Foundations you’re interested in.
• Leverage other expertise from UT, and also work with people that the Foundation has funded before.
• Serve on advisory boards of competing initiatives.
• Keep the relationship alive: after receiving a grant ask how you can help (as an early researcher), invite funder to events related to their investment in your research (as a PI).

Who can help?
• Get to Know your Development Officer: not only for guidance but also to identify early on any conflicts with fund-raising goals at the institutional level or in other areas on campus that could interfere with your funding success (i.e Capital Campaign).
• Development officers will help with large and small applications, but alignment with foundation goals is important.
• Your Development officer might be able to help with etiquette questions, for instance contacting the Foundation on your behalf during periods of long waits (for funding).

Lessons learned:
• Think strategically but be flexible: your work will be enriched even if it’s redefined as a result.
• Think in the context of your career: don’t reinvent yourself just to get the money.
• Show respect for others in the field: acknowledge others’ work and demonstrate how yours contributes to the field.
• Keep the Foundation engaged post-funding: after the grant, invite the granting agency to events or outreach programs resulting from the funding.
• Be prepared to dedicate bout 20% of your time to fund raising.