Welcome to the latest in a series of periodic publications from the Office of Grants Development. The goal of this publication is to provide basic information to faculty and staff about the grants process at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and to disseminate samples of the types of grant funding that are available. Future topics include the status of various pieces of legislation involving grants for community colleges and various grants applied for and received at NOVA. If you have any suggestions about topics to include or would like answers to specific questions, please contact Deborah Rosen, the director of grants and special projects, at drosen@nvcc.edu or at 703-323-3440 or Robert Henderson, college grants writer at rhenderson@nvcc.edu at 703-323-3493.

NOVA Involved in Many National Initiatives

NOVA’s State Department Exchange Program Begins June 15

The first tranche of foreign students arrives this summer on the campuses of the Community College Consortium led by NOVA. This groundbreaking program for the College under the guidance of Dr. Paul McVeigh and Dr. Syedur Rahman will provide up to 50 disadvantaged and underserved students the opportunity to study for a year at four of America’s leading community colleges, including NOVA, Miami Dade, the Maricopa Colleges in Phoenix, and the City College of San Francisco. This powerful consortium is also seeking other State Department funded awards with NOVA.

VCCS Professional Development Streak Continues for NOVA

Congratulations to NOVA Colleagues who have won Professional Development and Mini-Conference Grants from the Commonwealth for the Fall of 2010: Gillian Backus (LO), Integrated Science Course for non-Majors; Charles Evans (LO), Local Digital History Archive; and, Philip Tirpak (AN), What’s Up DOCC? Developing an Assessment of Oral Communication Competencies.

Disadvantaged Nursing Student Scholarships

The College has once again applied for funds under the Health and Human Services program entitled, “Scholarships for Disadvantaged Nursing Students.” Funds awarded under this program are used to pay for the tuition, supplies, and other expenses of needy students enrolled in the nursing program full-time. The scholarship determination is based upon the students’ level of need which does not exceed the cost of attendance (tuition, reasonable educational expenses, and reasonable living expenses). When notifications arrive that funding is approved, decisions about individual students will be made by the Office of Financial Aid.

National Center for Academic Transformation

NOVA has applied to the National Center for Academic Transformation (N-CAT) for a grant to re-design its developmental math sequence. Virginia’s Community College System (VCCS) is en-
gaged in a strategic planning process to develop a plan for 2010 – 2015. The central focus of the new strategic plan Achieve 2015 is improving student success at all 23 colleges in the VCCS by increasing the number of credentials completed in the next six years by 50%. The current structure of developmental education in mathematics results in some significant barriers to student success throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. A VCCS Developmental Math Redesign Team is currently working to restructure the developmental math courses with the goal of removing the barriers that keep many students from advancing to college level courses, by redesigning content and processes to promote significantly higher success rates. NOVA has been actively involved in this process.

The proposals include offering precollege Arithmetic and Algebra as a modularized curriculum with required modules determined by the student’s program of study. As opposed to replicating high school or remediating all deficiencies that a student brings, the VCCS seeks to prepare students for success in the courses they need. Using a mastery-based learning strategy, students will be able to move quickly through the modules and will need to complete only the modules required by their program and learning needs. NOVA advanced to level two of the application process and by August 1, we must submit a complete plan describing how we intend to carry out our restructuring, how much it will cost, and what costs will be saved. We will then learn if NOVA has been selected to receive funds from N-CAT.

Two NOVA Proposals Submitted to Lumina

Proposals for two initiatives at the College have been submitted to the Lumina Foundation’s Adult Degree Completion Initiative. The first, written by Dr. Steve Sachs, is designed to expand our existing Adult Learner online initiative aimed at adults 25-45, who have a community college Certificate of some kind or at least 15 college credits, and at least five years in the workforce. These individuals have established they can do college work, and are candidates for completing their Associate Degree through a combination of self-study and online learning. Of special interest will be those with military service—especially in technical fields. By the third year of the project, we expect to serve an additional 300 students and 500 students by the fourth year.

The components of the program proposed for this grant will expand adult learner initiatives by allowing those qualified to complete degrees more quickly and less expensively through credit for life experience and credit by exam. These programs provide key tools to online advisors for giving adult students hope for completing a degree in a “reasonable” and “personally realistic” timeline. These new tools motivate adults to return to college, take on the additional work, and realize tangible benefits in the short-run, not years in the future. For adults with some college credit, the ability to earn additional credit without having to attend traditional 16-week courses for years and years should provide an even greater investment in degree completion. Both tools, in combination with the services already offered through ELI, should provide an attractive path that can be marketed to adults to encourage a return to college and degree completion. These two programs will greatly enhance ELI’s Adult Learner Initiative.

The second proposal, written by Mr. Bill Browning, expands upon an existing partnership between NOVA and Goodwill Industries. In December 2009, NOVA and Goodwill Industries International® (GII) hosted at the Alexandria Campus national leaders from The Aspen Institute, Jobs for the Future, MDC, and the American Association of Community College leaders from six communities around the nation for the kickoff meeting of a new workforce development initiative. The momentum has continued with seven formally-committed community college and Goodwill pairs joining the Consortium, and a dozen others expressing interest in joining. By combining the assets of the nation’s 1,100 community colleges with 159 local Goodwill job training providers, Northern Virginia Community College and Goodwill Industries International aim to bend the curve nationally on college and career success for thousands of vulnerable low-income family breadwinners who lack a college or career credential.

Recognizing that low-income adult breadwinners need to achieve labor market success before they can progress towards long-term credentials, the Consortium will focus on delivering rapid job placement and wage gains.

The three participating college-Goodwill partnerships aim to achieve the following:

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By Year 4, the initiative will enroll 1,000 trainees, producing commensurate increases in outcomes, using the multipliers noted above. We hope both initiatives are selected to move to the next level of the Lumina competition.

**Overused Words but Underestimated Components for Successful Funding: Capacity Building and Sustainability**

Oh no, here come those “c” and “s” words again! Like them or not, they are MAJOR keys to successful grant funding. Whenever you write a grant proposal, you need to put yourself in the mindset of the decision-maker. Two questions any funder asks: Does the requesting institution have the capacity to carry out the project/program? How will they pay for the project/program after the grant ends? No funder wants to give a band-aid if they can provide a long-term solution. With the funding scarcity of the last few years likely to continue, understanding how to build capacity and to think creatively about sustainability are essential tools for those requesting grant dollars.

**What is sustainability?** “To sustain” means to keep in existence, to supply with necessities, to encourage, and to maintain competently (American Heritage Dictionary). Funders want to support programs that produce results, and it benefits those requesting funds to have a strong evaluation component for their program. You should develop a sustainability blueprint for growing your program from the “seed” stage to full fruition and blossoming, which includes evaluation. A common mistake is that we plan to document and evaluate, but let it fall by the wayside. Evaluation done right requires discipline to maintain the quality and relevance of your results, which will lead to program sustainability – particularly in securing its future through various funding strategies.

Cheryl A. Clarke, author of *Storytelling for Grant-seekers* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2001), shares a menu of fundraising strategies for sustainability:

- Fee for service (tuition or course fees)
- Entrepreneurial business ventures
- Memberships
- New donor acquisitions (Develop donor base, do not allow one donor to dominate)
- Allow donors to give online (ELI, on line courses)
- Corporate sponsorships (partnerships)

The business model for NOVA’s growth pivots on increasing enrollment (credit or noncredit). Grants helps us achieve sustainability, but only if we consciously build our project to help the institution to pay for itself.

**What is capacity building?** Barbara Blumenthal provides a simple definition, "actions that improve nonprofit effectiveness" (*Investing in Capacity Building*, The Foundation Center, 2003). We can insert “program” or “college” for “nonprofit” and ask, what actions can be built into the blueprint of your proposal to ensure program effectiveness in the long-term? Your castles and your programs must be built on stone, not sand, to stand the test of time. For example:

- You have an “aha” moment and envision your a program that will improve the lives of your students or contribute to the community;
- You gather like-minded people into a team and create a plan for the project;
- You include an evaluation component and a strategy to “stick to it” in the plan; and,
- You create strategies for sustainability that contribute to the business model and the strategic vision for the College.

You should include these in your blueprint and relieve funders’ anxieties about giving “band-aids” in lieu of getting substantial “bang for their buck.”

NOVA’s 2015 Strategic Vision: Gateway to the American Dream is a good place to check on whether your idea is contributing to or detracting from the strategic plan. Make certain your dream castles are grounded in reality and funders will help you build them. Remember, the Office of Grants Development has master Masons who can help you build your dreams into reality using recognition from the community of foundations, the Commonwealth, and the Federal government.

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