

Collaborative Research
Notes from Vicki Colvin's discussion
September 14, 2009

Why would you want to do collaborative work?

- Where the funding is
- Where the cutting edge of research is
- Fun

Hallmarks of writing collaborative grants:

- Controlling the writing is difficult
- People are busy and the writing always runs late

When writing the grant, there are two choices to managing the writing:

- Engage everyone at every step. If you decide to go this route:
 - Thirty-seven Signals Software – sets up a framework online
 - Begin early as it takes a lot more time
 - Can be frustrating on the PI/"chief synthesizer"
 - Must make all the writing sound like "one voice" - challenging
 - PI sometimes gets poor advice and must be willing to make decisions and manage the personalities to keep the collaboration together
- If you decide to be the primary writer but need a group to contribute information:
 - Provide a specific template for the information you need
 - After putting their information into the proposal, be sure you send a copy for their review and edits
 - Know who is driving the grant
 - Know who the people are who are most invested

General Advice to Faculty/Researchers

- Sit on collaborative research review panels
- Learn the review process – talk to people who have reviewed grants
- As you write, take the time to read through the grant as if you are a reviewer on a panel
- Ask others to read and review as if they are on the review panel
- Understand educational outreach and its importance
- Develop the "right" graphic that can be the "key" to understanding the relationship of the parts to the whole. This is very important for reviewers.
- Highlight what's innovative and "unconventional"
- Match the pieces of the RFP to the proposal
- As you meet potential collaborators, get to know them and have frank conversations about communication preferences
- Center grants are the only way to get infrastructure support: equipment and staff
- Make sure your collaborators make sense and that you aren't just selecting them because they are well known researchers

Finding Collaborators

- Senior faculty
- Other faculty who serve on thesis committees
- Sometimes as a junior faculty, you must "campaign" to get a senior faculty member to write with you
- Be careful getting pulled into research you don't want to do. But, remember, senior faculty, when they ask you to work with them, really do believe you would be an asset and/or interested in the work. When this happens, if you don't want to collaborate:
 - Ask your mentors how to respond without hurting the relationship
 - Depend on senior faculty advice
 - Sometimes you just do the project
 - If you are going to decline the opportunity, do it early before too many of the plans and commitments are in place

