

2006 Evaluation of the *AdvanceVT* Research Seed Grant Program

Interviews were completed with all ten women who participated in the *AdvanceVT* Research Seed Grant Program during the two year period of 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. Interviews were completed between February 15th and March 22nd of 2006. Participants were asked if they would prefer the interview to be completed over the phone or in person. Each participant signed an informed consent form. At the completion of each interview, the researcher typed up field notes from the interview. Field notes from each interview were sent to each participant for review. The participants were instructed to review the field notes to make sure their comments were accurately represented. They were told they could make changes to the field notes as they saw fit. The participants made very few changes to the field notes. The lack of changes attests to the quality of the data.

The following is a summary of the responses to the interview questions, reported in the form of “majority” and “minority” responses. “Majority” responses indicate that most of the participants noted this experience. “Minority” responses indicate that at least one individual expressed this idea.

Question #1- What were your expected outcomes from your participation in the *AdvanceVT* research seed grant program?

Majority Report

- Participants were interested in funding to work or broaden their research.
- Participants wanted to obtain preliminary data to be able to work on a larger grant proposal.
- Participants were interested in learning more about a specific area of research.

Minority Report

- Participants wanted assistance providing money for graduate students to assist them in working on a research project.
- Participants were interested in getting funding to assist them with travel expenses.

QUOTE: *“The seed grant enabled me to further my career.”*

Question #2- Did the program enhance your research skills and/or abilities?

Majority Report

- Participants felt that the seed grant money allowed them to learn a new skill or tool and to better understand their area of interest.

Minority Report

- Participants felt that the seed grant allowed them to make contacts with others that were interested in their research topic.
- Participants indicated that the seed grant money enabled them to hire a graduate student which indirectly allowed that student to gain more expertise in their area of research.

QUOTE: *“The seed grant allowed me to gain new knowledge and make a contact that I would not have had otherwise.”*

Question #3- How has your participation in the seed grant program influenced your research interests?

Majority Report

- Most participants indicated that they had identified particular research interest prior to applying to the seed grant.

Minority Report

- Participants felt that the seed grant helped to clarify direction or focus.

Question #4- How has your participation in the seed grant program influenced your career path or career goals?

Majority Report

- Participants indicated that they were already on their particular career path.
- The seed grant allowed participants to more easily reach their goals and objectives.

Question #5- Have you submitted a proposal for external grant funding based on the work funded by your seed grant?

Majority Report

- All participants indicated that they have submitted or plan to submit external grant proposals.

Question #6- Do you have any suggestions on how the program could be improved?

Majority Report

- Participants felt that the program was helpful setting the future direction of their work.

Suggestions

- Provide money for second year or reward one recipient for their year of success.
- Meet with other grant participants during the year and/or at end of the year.
- Create a fund for entering doctoral students.
- Monitor the research and provide assistance or feedback.
- Get more practical advice after receiving grant.
- Publicize seed grant progress throughout the year.

QUOTE: “The seed grant program gave me a leg up that I would not have had otherwise.”

Question #7- Have you participated in any other *AdvanceVT* activity?

Majority Report

- Participants indicated that they have participated in *Advance* activities that are not associated with their seed grant.
- Participants indicated that the activities they have participated in have been helpful.

Minority Report

- Time constraints have influenced participation in *Advance* activities.

Question #8- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in the AdvanceVT seed grant program?

Majority Report

- Participants felt that the seed grant was a great opportunity to get started in a new area.

QUOTE: “The seed grant was very useful in jump starting my research.”

Summary

One theme that seemed consistent throughout the questions is that the participants felt that receiving the seed grant had benefits that exceeded the financial benefits. Many participants expressed that receiving the seed grant suggested to them that their research was valued and important. This message was also relayed to their graduate students. Many suggested the idea that their hiring female graduate students to further learn their new area of research contributed to the growth of minorities in their area of interest.

All participants indicated that they felt that their expectations of the seed grant program were met. A couple participants explained that the funding was only a small step in their goals and further funding or work is needed. A couple other participants indicated that the seed grant actually working in their proposed area changed their thoughts and direction on their research.