

# **Outcomes of LEAP Individual Growth and Department Enhancement Grants, FY 2007**

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## **Executive Summary**

Final reports for the LEAP Individual Growth and Department Enhancement Grants for 2007 were evaluated to identify the individual and institutional outcomes of this pilot faculty development program. Qualitative analysis of these reports shows that the proposed activities for both Individual Growth and Department Enhancement grants have been carried out with vigor. Both programs address faculty needs identified in previous analyses and yield a high level of activity for a relatively minor amount of funds.

Most Individual Growth grants focused on scholarly and creative work. Concrete products include grant proposals written or underway by two-thirds of grantees, and manuscripts, presentations, or performances completed and/or underway by 90% of grantees. Thus the grants fostered an impressive level of scholarly productivity, particularly given the short time frame, and recognizing that proposals and manuscripts are not appropriate outcomes of all projects. Participants reported a wide variety of other professional benefits to their research, teaching, leadership skills, and scholarly networks, and significant positive impacts on their confidence, morale, and motivation to pursue further professional work.

The results of Departmental Enhancement grants emphasized collegiality, communication, and pursuit of shared goals that help to enhance department function and maintain the engagement of both early-career and senior faculty. Because collegiality and climate are thought to be particularly important to women and minority faculty, these initiatives may also help in retaining a more diverse faculty. Together, these experiments in faculty development offer a well-received and fruitful mechanism to meet identified needs of individuals and departments at relatively low cost but high “bang for the buck.”

### **1. Introduction**

LEAP established two new grant programs in 2007. Individual Growth grants were provided to faculty members seeking to expand their career horizons, change research directions, strengthen diversity or enhance work/life balance. The awards targeted faculty making career transitions, beginning new scholarly or creative activities, or restarting scholarly work after a period of providing substantial university service. Department Enhancement grants were offered to improve departmental life, whether enhancing collegiality and communication or improving the physical environment for faculty, staff, and students. Both programs were very well received, drawing many applications and leading the review committee to increase both the number of grants and the number of dollars awarded over the amounts stated in the original request for proposals (RFP). Awards were made in February 2007 for completion during 2007.

In this report, we analyze the reports submitted by both Individual Growth (IG) and Department Enhancement (DE) grant recipients to summarize the outcomes of these projects for individuals

and the institution; to share participants' advice for improving the program; and to consider the implications of sustaining this program beyond the lifespan of LEAP's funding.

## **2. Method**

A qualitative analysis was performed on the text data provided in participant reports. One- to four-page final reports were received from all 21 IG grantees and from 6 of 9 DE awardees, between November 2007 and February 2008, for projects completed 12/31/07. One DE awardee withdrew from participation, while two awardees requested extensions and thus provided only brief progress reports. As additional background, the evaluator reviewed the RFP sent in January 2007, read the proposals submitted in spring 2007, and attended a campus event in December 2007 celebrating awardees' work.

The reports were entered into a database in N'vivo 7 qualitative analysis software and the text was coded for content. In coding, each text statement expressing a distinct idea was given a code, or label. Codes were re-used when the same idea recurred in another report, and new codes were added as new ideas emerged. These individual codes were then gathered under several broad themes: the intended purpose of the project; how project funds were used; the personal, professional and institutional outcomes of the project; and advice about the program and other professional development needs. These themes are discussed below. Because the full text of the reports is available to institutional readers, we have been sparing in citing direct quotations from faculty reports.

As a measure of weight of opinion, the frequency of use was counted for particular codes or groups of codes. In some cases, the total number of statements is counted; this differs from the number of persons making a statement, as individuals may make multiple statements (e.g., most people reported multiple outcomes of their projects). In other cases, it is preferable to report the number of persons expressing a given idea. The nature of frequencies reported is always made explicit in context. Codes are counted conservatively, with a maximum of one instance per report for a specific code, to avoid skewing counts when individuals repeat ideas. For IG grants, a total of 272 distinct statements were coded under 94 different codes. For DE grants, 78 statements were coded using 51 codes.

## **3. Findings: Individual Growth Grants**

### 3.1 Demographics of Awardees

IG awardees include 16 associate and five full professors. Assistant professors were not eligible. Prior evaluation work for LEAP has shown that mid-career faculty have a particular need for opportunities to reconsider career choices, pursue new career directions, and/or reinvigorate their scholarly work after periods of in-depth attention to departmental or institutional service, family, or other responsibilities (Laursen & Rocque, 2006). The grant RFP addresses this need and the profile of awardees is consistent with that aim.

Six men and 15 women received IG awards. Seven of 21 grantees came from STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields, four from social sciences, and ten from arts and humanities, including journalism and library science. These distributions are consistent with LEAP's philosophy to offer programs to men and women in both STEM and non-STEM fields. They are also consistent with the ADVANCE program goal to support women STEM scholars.

### 3.2 Purpose of Projects

A total of 26 statements were made about the purpose of the IG projects (some projects had multiple purposes). The majority of projects (18, or 69%) had scholarly goals, most often to pursue a new scholarly direction (10): gathering pilot data for a new project, gathering research materials, or pursuing training in a new method or field. Other scholarly purposes cited included building on prior work, restarting a project that had been laid aside, completing an existing project, and applying research to practice. In addition to scholarship, other purposes included: developing teaching interests (2 projects), developing leadership in one's field (2 projects), improving work/life balance (2 projects), outreach and cultural exchange (1 each).

### 3.3 Use of Funds

The average IG grant size was \$6265, with amounts awarded ranging from \$1520 to \$10,000. The most common award was \$7500 (10 grants) to provide a course release. In several cases, budgets were reduced from what was requested, requiring adjustments to the proposed plans. However, in all cases the funds were used to support the proposed projects, through the following activities: course release (7 projects), travel to exhibits, libraries, institutes, conferences, or to conduct field work (5), computers and other equipment (5), books and research materials (4), student assistants (3), and production of publicity materials for a singer resuming her classical voice career (1). Three reports did not specify how funds were used.

### 3.4 Project Outcomes

Several types of project outcomes were reported. Concrete products included articles, books, and performances; grant proposals; and courses. Faculty built new relationships with colleagues and with other institutions, involved students in scholarly work, found ways to integrate research, service, and teaching, and enhanced the work of their departments and the institution. They also reported personal benefits, such as intellectual stimulation and gains in confidence and morale.

#### *3.4.1 Scholarly Products*

Grant proposals for funding to further develop research and creative work initiated or advanced under IG grants were a common product. Eighteen faculty reports discussed grant proposals: four faculty had already written proposals, two of these had proposals already funded, and ten had proposals planned or underway. Two others cited possible future proposals. Most proposals discussed were to external funding agencies. While it is too soon to determine the overall success rate of proposals, preliminary indications suggest that the IG grants have stimulated grant-seeking activity by recipients, and have fostered early positive outcomes.

Manuscripts for articles and books were another common product. Six faculty reported manuscripts completed under IG grants, eight reported progress on manuscripts underway (e.g. book chapters written, papers in preparation), and four reported plans to write manuscripts based on their IG project work. Three faculty reported live performances and/or multimedia products, four had given talks or workshops, and three had scheduled future presentations. Some projects had direct local impact: three faculty had given presentations in Boulder or on the CU campus. Particularly given the short time since funds were awarded, this represents a high level of scholarly productivity stimulated by the IG grants. Only two faculty reported no scholarly products underway, saying that it was too soon to report on their work. The Faculty Affairs office may wish to follow up on these reports to further document scholarly products of IG grant funding, and/or to suggest language for acknowledging program support in published works.

### 3.4.2 Professional Benefits

In addition to concrete products, awardees described several other professional benefits. Though framed as individual career benefits, these often have ramifications for the institution: enhanced reputation and visibility, quality of teaching and student engagement, and campus leadership. A total of 64 statements about professional benefits were made by 21 faculty, including:

- Progress in scholarly or creative work (29 observations by 18 faculty). Benefits include new projects initiated, new scholarly directions pursued, pilot data gathered, knowledge or tools gained, research findings applied to practice, and invitations received to serve as a guest scholar or artist. As one faculty member wrote,

*Overall, the receipt of LEAP funding impacted my career in important and inspiring ways: it gave me the freedom, at mid-career, to pursue multiple tracks of research, one within my original area of specialization, and one which is entirely new.*

- Inclusion of students as research assistants and collaborators (9 observations by 7 faculty). One faculty member cited collaborative work that enhanced a student's application for a prestigious fellowship; others noted dissertation progress and student-coauthored articles.
- Development of professional networks (8 observations by 6 faculty). Faculty described new collaborations initiated, contacts that were expected to lead to future collaborations, and new institutional relationships. For example, one faculty member had fostered an agreement for a cultural exchange with a Russian theatre school. Another noted:

*This project has also allowed me to initiate and foster two new collaborations that will impact my career by allowing for more interdisciplinary work.*

- Enhancement of their teaching (6 observations by 5 faculty). Faculty described new courses developed, existing courses substantially reworked or enhanced, and renewed interest in teaching. One faculty member described students' helpful input to a textbook he was writing. Another noted the importance of teaching as a form of scholarly work:

*I regard successful teaching as being, itself, a "product" and in my case an audible, visible, and tangible product since my multimedia students create music, films, animation, DVDs, and web sites.*

- Miscellaneous professional benefits (9 observations by 9 faculty). Statements address integration of research, teaching and service; growth in leadership skills and ability to contribute to the institution; and positive publicity for their work from national media.

*One important outcome was the impact that the experience had on my understanding of the business as well as the passion supporting higher education. With this broadened perspective, I feel better able to envision and articulate the contribution I can make to CU as an institution.*

*By broadening my understanding and perspective, I believe has – and will continue to have – a positive impact on my ability to perform in my current position as department chair. I will be able to be a better advocate and leader for my department.*

- Finally, three faculty noted specific ways in which their work benefited under-served populations, including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and people in poverty.

### 3.4.3 Personal Benefits

While the professional benefits cited by faculty from the IG grants are substantial, also noteworthy are benefits that may be described as personal or affective, but that support faculty

morale and confidence to do their professional work. Nine observations by six faculty cite such benefits: a sense of institutional support, growth of confidence, an opportunity to reflect on one's career, time to focus on scholarly work; fulfillment, intellectual stimulation, and new creative energy. One faculty member described a change in scholarly identity as a true “paradigm shift,” while another described her sense of being supported by the institution:

*There are many uncertainties that come with a major shift in research focus and practice, including the fear that one is making an enormous mistake! For me, the LEAP grant provided a tremendous boost to my confidence that I am on the right path. The grant signifies that my colleagues appreciate the difficulty of significantly changing course and that there is institutional support for such career development.*

Several faculty also mentioned that the grant had come at a critical time in their careers:

*It is impossible to imagine that I could have made this kind of progress without LEAP's support, given the reality of twin toddlers and limited childcare. I'm deeply grateful to have had such support at this point in my career, which has allowed me to move in a related but fundamentally new and experimental direction in my research, and to make substantial progress toward the completion of my second single-authored book.*

It is significant that faculty mention these benefits, as academics often neglect the role of emotion in intellectual life. Yet the importance to faculty of feeling valued, supported, and energized to do their professional work is a recurring theme not just in this data but across all the data sets we have gathered for LEAP (Laursen et al., 2005; Laursen & Rocque, 2006; Rocque & Laursen, 2007). Another indication of the importance of these benefits is the frequency with which faculty expressed gratitude—not merely the traditional acknowledgment of grant support, but expressions of personal gratitude for the support of the program and its staff. Eight such statements were made in the reports, and even more often included in accompanying cover notes.

### 3.5 Advice to the Program

A total of 35 statements offered advice to the program. Of these, over half were supportive: hopes that the program would continue, and statements that no changes were needed to the program or the RFP. Several appreciated the program's simplicity and flexibility, including a fast turnaround of proposals and a “one size does not fit all” approach.

*The process worked well for me – it required just enough background and detail in the proposal to make its benefits clear but not so much effort that it became difficult to find the time to write the proposal.*

Five comments offered specific advice: increase the consideration of institutional service in making awards, remove “age bias” from the RFP language targeting associate professors, extending the time period of awards to increase flexibility, and publicizing past grants to aid future applicants. Several of these are good ideas that are readily implemented. The choice to target associate professors can be made explicit and can refer to evaluation evidence identifying this need (Laursen & Rocque, 2006). Overall, little need for change to the program is seen.

Ten comments addressed other faculty development needs. Suggestions included more support for sabbaticals, particularly full-year sabbaticals, and other forms of support for mid-career faculty. A recurring theme was the need to recognize service in providing institutional rewards.

*There is almost no attention devoted to Associate Professors (except for LEAP) to provide them guidance and support on achieving the rank of Full Professor. Academia seemingly only values*

*the independent, entrepreneurial scholar who blazes selfishly ahead without thought to the needs of their department or their institution.*

*Often, faculty members who get pulled into departmental or college service can end up without enough uninterrupted time to devote to their own research. This ends up in a difficult spiral whereby they then end up not being in a position to write the most competitive research proposals for funding which would allow them to spend more time on research, etc. A year-long sabbatical... that would help a mid-career faculty member revitalize her research or move into new research areas in this highly focused way, would have a very positive impact.*

Other comments addressed the need for better mentoring (a need also seen in prior data):

*It would be great if LEAP/Faculty Affairs could help foster a culture and standard for effective mentoring. Currently it is inconsistently applied so that many junior faculty do not get a sense that CU actually wants them to achieve promotion and tenure.*

Finally, a third cluster of comments noted the need for opportunities for leadership training, particularly for women—again, a need articulated in separate evaluation data:

*I was struck by the considerable investment other institutions make in developing women as leaders and administrators. ...Given the impending shortage of higher education administrators, and the peculiar challenges that may face women who fill those positions, sponsoring women's involvement in intensive and in-depth professional development seems to me a wise investment for CU.*

In addition to this advice from faculty reports, we suggest that language in both the initial call for proposals and the request for final reports be quite specific in requiring faculty to address desired points. Some otherwise-meritorious projects may not have been funded because proposers did not explicitly address program goals. Likewise, the accuracy of our outcomes analysis is limited by the fact that some grantees did not directly address the requested points.

## **4. Findings: Department Enhancement Grants**

### 4.1 Demographics and Use of Funds

Six of the nine DE grants awarded went to STEM units, two to arts units and one to social sciences.<sup>1</sup> The average grant was \$11,427, with four grants at the maximum of \$14,000. Projects sought to improve the climate and collegiality of departments through a variety of means. Three focused on interactions among faculty; two on interactions across the entire departmental community; and two emphasized improvements to the physical environment to improve comfort and morale for students and staff. One project focused on fund-raising to support graduate students and future departmental initiatives. Funds were spent on a range of needs: computers and software, furnishings, library resources, travel, special events such as research symposia, and course buyouts for faculty to coordinate the proposed activities. Faculty development activities included a range of models: workshops, retreats, training and interaction with consultants.

### 4.2 Project Outcomes

The most common outcome reported for DE grants was improvement of collegiality (13 coded statements). These included enhancements in: sense of community, participation in service and governance, communication, members' sense of departmental support, and overall department function. Projects emphasizing faculty interaction reported outcomes such as these:

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<sup>1</sup> From here forward we use the word department generically, to refer to all academic units.

*Since the retreat, there has been a clear improvement in communication, in professional relationships, in understanding, and in outlook in the department. We have identified not only a good number of common objectives, but also effective strategies for attaining them. Also, we just plain get along better. ...We are, as a direct result of the intervention, moving forward.*

*We are still in the early stages, but feedback so far has been quite positive from both junior and senior faculty. The newest professors in particular seem to feel welcomed and cared for. The senior faculty have renewed and stepped up their commitment to mentor junior faculty.*

Projects emphasizing broader community interaction noted outcomes such as these:

*This conference has brought together CU faculty, students and scientists at CU, NCAR, NOAA and CORA, increased communication and interaction, and trained the students to present posters. This conference also created opportunities for CU students to work with scientists at NCAR, NOAA and CORA, and thus contribute to enhancing ATOC.*

*For me the great thing is that [the improved space] is multifunctional. It works as a place to have a meeting, a place to study and a place for social interaction which I would otherwise not get this year, as I am writing my dissertation. (from a graduate student)*

Other outcomes include: funds raised for the department, job opportunities publicized to students, improved support for teaching assistants, growth in individual faculty skills through their leadership role in the project, policy changes and faculty development for a new career track for clinical instructors, and progress on developing a graduate certificate program. One grant proposal was written to extend one of the new initiatives developed.

#### 4.3 Advice for Improvement

A few statements offered advice to the program. Most of these supported its continuation and noted the lack of availability elsewhere on campus for funds to improve departments.

*This is the first time that I am aware of there being a source of funding for projects that aim to enhance academic units and assist mid-career faculty with professional development. I think both are essential if we seek continual improvement of our campus.*

Another suggestion emphasized the need for follow-up, particularly in connection with faculty development efforts to improve departmental communication and develop a shared vision.

*We would very much like to hold another departmental retreat—this one having more of a concrete “strategic planning” bent. That is, now that we have learned how to behave more effectively as a group, we would like the chance to apply this behavior to the tackling of [specific issues].*

This suggestion is both insightful and realistic in acknowledging that developing and practicing these skills is a long-term project beyond what can be achieved in a one-shot effort.

A third suggestion essentially described the coaching program that LEAP had supported earlier to foster interaction of senior and early-career faculty across departments:

*...Create an all-campus junior faculty mentoring program, so that untenured faculty members could obtain mentoring from faculty members outside of their own department, school or college. This model serves to open up a wider range of potential mentors with myriad areas of expertise, which is especially helpful to small departments. It also would avoid an issue we face in our School, mentors eventually will be placed in the position of evaluating their mentee for reappointment or tenure. Finally, an across-campus faculty mentoring program would foster a greater sense of faculty community across department lines.*

Ironically, the coaching program was suspended because it was under-subscribed by early-career faculty. That does not detract, however, from both the perceived value—as in this suggestion—and the measured outcomes—as documented in evaluation findings (Laursen et al., 2005)—of that program. Faculty Affairs may wish to re-examine the notion of cross-departmental coaching and consider creative changes to improve its reception while preserving its successful elements.

## 5. Conclusions

The proposed activities for both Individual Growth and Department Enhancement grants have been carried out and, often, extended by the awardees. Both programs address faculty needs identified in previous analyses and yield a high level of activity for a small investment of funds.

The level of scholarly productivity fostered by the IG grants is impressive, particularly given the short time between awards and reporting: two-thirds of faculty report grant proposals written or under development, and 90% report manuscripts, multimedia products, presentations or performances completed or underway. Participants report a wide variety of other professional benefits as well as significant positive impacts on their confidence, morale, and motivation.

By their very nature, Departmental Enhancement grants result in fewer quantifiable outcomes, but the reported gains emphasize collegiality, communication, and pursuit of shared goals that help to enhance department function and engage both early-career and senior faculty. Because evidence from the literature indicates that collegiality and climate are particularly important to women and minority faculty, these initiatives may be argued to help retain a diverse faculty.

Overall, these programs are innovative, relatively low-cost means of investing in faculty development for both individuals and departments. They require no elaborate infrastructure and address identified needs in a manner (i.e., competitive grants) consistent with faculty culture. The opportunity to achieve specific outcomes in a timely manner and to receive positive faculty feedback are features that would seem to make these programs attractive targets for raising an endowment similar to that supporting the University of Wisconsin's Vilas Life Cycle Program, a program with similar aims to the current LEAP-funded effort.

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