Poverty and the Economy
Faculty Research Grants Program

Program Evaluation for the
FIRST THREE GRANT CYCLES
2005 to 2008

UGA RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE & OUTREACH
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
Table of Contents

3 Executive Summary

4 Introduction

5 Program Goals

5 Evaluation Methods

6 Results

12 Conclusion

13 References

[CD] Appendix (Electronic File on the Included CD)

Grant Recipients by Cycle

Online Survey Results

• New Revenue Generated
• Responses to Questions
• Scholarly Output by Grant Cycle
• Benefits to Researcher/Research by Grant Cycle
• Community Benefit/Research Transfer by Grant Cycle
• Collaborations by Grant Cycle
• New Revenue by Grant Cycle

Grant Summary by Cycle

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Executive Summary

The Initiative on Poverty and the Economy was created in 2005 to use the unique talents of the University of Georgia’s research, teaching, and service faculty to create sustainable activities designed to address issues of persistent poverty specific to the working and nonworking poor. One aspect of the initiative is the Poverty and the Economy Faculty Research Grants program, which supports sound scholarly research that will promote public policy designed to improve both individual and community prosperity.

Jointly supported by the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), and the University of Georgia Research Foundation (UGARF), the competitive grant program fosters applied research and creative scholarship related to poverty while contributing to the overall excellence of UGA’s research program. In particular, this program supports research that builds on understanding public policy barriers that inhibit or limit an individual’s ability to participate fully in the economy.

During the six-year program, UGARF has awarded a total of $100,000 annually in a competitive proposal process (total of $600,000), beginning in the 2005-2006 academic year. The program has provided support for 29 grants – four to five each year. This report only examines the outcomes of Poverty and the Economy Faculty Research Grant Program during its first three cycles: 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008.

Analysis of the first three grant cycles shows that the program contributed to scholarly output, secured extramural funding, and benefited the community, teaching and research. Among the achievements realized by this seed grant program during the first three years are the following:

- The return on investment was 668 percent; nearly 40 percent of respondents applied for subsequent extramural funding. The amount of new revenue generated to date as a result of a $299,452 investment in seed grants from UGARF between 2005 and 2008 is $2,361,787. Of the 15 proposals funded by UGARF, six have received external funding from one or more sources to continue projects and one is in the process of revising a proposal that had been submitted. A total of 20 proposals were submitted to external funders and nine were funded.
- A total of 41 papers or presentations resulted from the grant program (8 presentations and 5 journal articles from the first cycle; 13 presentations and 5 journal articles from the second cycle; and 7 presentations and 3 journal articles from the third cycle).
- More than half of the grant recipients (51.6 percent) said that they are continuing the research initiated with the funding.
- The research initiated with the grant led to a new line of inquiry for 29.0 percent of recipients.
- Nearly 26 percent of respondents said a new community initiative was created as a result of the grant and 11 percent said a new method was adopted. Other results included creating new nonprofits, business, and possibly a new federal program.
- Investigators said that the grants helped build capacity to reinforce links between research, teaching and service related to poverty and the economy. Others responded that instruction was enhanced. The work was applied in several graduate-level program evaluation classes, provided perspectives on the barriers to saving for low-income populations, and informed work with schools serving families living in poverty.
Introduction

Poverty places an unimaginable burden on the people caught in its continuous cycle and on the communities in which they reside. In the rural South, persistent poverty hurts the economy, threatens the potential economic vibrancy of communities, and will continue to do so until the region gains the ability to produce and sustain wealth.

The Initiative on Poverty and the Economy was created in 2005 to use the unique talents of the University of Georgia’s research, teaching, and service faculty to create sustainable activities designed to address issues of persistent poverty specific to the working and nonworking poor. With 91 counties in persistent poverty, Georgia is at the heart of the South’s poverty belt — a 242-county region in the southern United States that has experienced persistent poverty for the last three decades and has not been served by federal initiatives.

This effort aims to motivate civically engaged students, identify and promote public policy, and work in collaboration on-campus and throughout the state and region to improve local and regional economic well-being and community prosperity. This initiative reflects the university’s commitment to our land-grant mission to serve all aspects of society.

One aspect of the initiative is the Poverty and the Economy Faculty Research Grants program, which supports sound scholarly research that will promote public policy designed to improve both individual and community prosperity. Jointly supported by the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach (OVPPSO), the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and the University of Georgia Research Foundation (UGARF), the competitive grant program fosters applied research and creative scholarship related to poverty while contributing to the overall excellence of UGA’s research program. In particular, this program supports research that builds on understanding public policy barriers that inhibit or limit an individual’s ability to participate fully in the economy.

Initially, the grant program was intended to last three years but after the success of the first three years, it was extended for a second three-year period. During the six-year program, UGARF has awarded a total of $100,000 annually in a competitive proposal process (total of $600,000), beginning in the 2005-2006 academic year. The program has provided support for 29 grants — four to five each year (Completed list is in the Appendix).

Multiple outcomes have been expected, including a better understanding of how the university can address the issue of persistent poverty through teaching, research, and outreach; reinforcement of the linkages between research, application, and policy; and new knowledge about persistent poverty and the conditions associated with it. This grant program also was expected to initiate new research programs that have the potential to be supported by extramural funding.

Program Goals

This report examines the extent to which the following goals were achieved by the first three cycles of the grants:

- Build on the understanding of the public policy barriers that inhibit or limit an individual’s ability to participate fully in the economy and build personal wealth.
- Better inform how UGA can address persistent poverty through teaching, research, and service.
- Demonstrate connectivity to existing University programs and competencies (e.g. economic development, health care, family and children, housing, and education/workforce development).
- Reflect collaboration across academic and service units.
- Reflect adequate participation on behalf of the academic and/or service unit.
- Initiate new programs of research with the potential for continuation based on extramural funding.
- Demonstrate potential extramural funding sources subsequent to UGA funding.
- Reflect capacity-building for the University; reinforce the linkages between research, application, and policy; and show greater return on the University’s investment in both its public service and education programs.
- Apply and/or transfer research findings or results to end users.

Evaluation Methods

**Final reports.** Principal investigators (PIs) for each grant submitted a final report at the end of their grant; that material was reviewed for this report.

**Online survey.** An online survey provided follow-up information about scholarly work products that resulted from the grant; influence the work had on the recipient’s research program; benefits to research, teaching, and the community; and new revenue that resulted from the work. Participants were also asked if the research supported by the grant program:

- Contributed towards understanding public policy barriers that limit full participation in the economy;
- Helped inform ways UGA can address persistent poverty through teaching, research, and service; and
- Fostered collaboration across academic and service units.

A link to the online survey was sent to 41 PIs, Co-PIs, and collaborators from the first three grant cycles; seven did not respond. Three individuals received more than one grant during this period and responded for a single grant. Two responses were disqualified because respondents answered for a grant not in the first 3-year cycle. One or more responses were received for each grant with the exception of one where the PI had left the University of Georgia. A total of 32 responses were received.
Results

During the program’s first three years, 15 proposals were funded, 41 faculty (PIs and Co-PIs) were involved in those proposals, and 32 responded to an online survey about the impact of the funding (a 76 percent response rate). Of the proposals supported by the program, 93.9 percent were based on the Athens campus and 6.1 percent in Griffin. The total funding awarded during the three-year period was $299,452 (Table 1).

Most of the PIs or Co-PIs were seasoned researchers with 10 or more years of experience (57 percent) at the faculty level. Only 3 percent had less than 3 years experience; nearly 40 percent had 3 to 10 years experience. Researchers included faculty from three public service units, cooperative extension, and 11 schools and colleges (Table 2).

More than half of the grant recipients (51.6 percent) said that they are continuing the research initiated with the funding. The funding helped 29.0 percent of the researchers focus on poverty and the economy, and for another 29.0 percent, the research initiated with the grant led to a new line of inquiry. Only 19.4 percent said that their current research was unrelated to the research initiated with the funding.

Table 1. Summary of the funding history and outcomes for the first three cycles of the Poverty and the Economy Research Grants program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of grants awarded</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total dollars invested</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$99,452</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$299,452.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average investment dollars</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$19,890.40</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$19,963.47</td>
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<tr>
<td># of proposals SUBMITTED for subsequent external funding</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of proposals that RECEIVED subsequent external funding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total subsequent external funding received</td>
<td>$1,506,000</td>
<td>$812,787</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
<td>$2,361,787.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average subsequent funding dollars</td>
<td>$502,000</td>
<td>$406,394</td>
<td>$14,333</td>
<td>$295,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent return on investment</td>
<td>1406 %</td>
<td>717 %</td>
<td>- 57%</td>
<td>688 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total subsequent dollars from FEDERAL funding</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td>$797,787</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$2,297,787.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total subsequent dollars from STATE funding</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$21,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total subsequent dollars from OTHER funding</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
<td>$43,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># principal investigators represented on grants</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship: # papers/presentations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
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RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The amount of new revenue generated to date as a result of a $299,452 in seed grants from UGARF is $2,361,787 (nearly 7 times UGA’s original investment). Out of the 15 projects funded by UGARF, a total of 19 proposals were submitted to external funders and eight were successful. Whether the seed grants directly account for subsequent external funding was not determined in this study.

- The 2005-2006 grant cycle generated eight proposals for external funding; three were funded for a total of $1,506,000.
- The 2006-2007 grant cycle generated six proposals for external funding; two were funded for a total of $812,787.
- The 2007-2008 grant cycle generated five proposals for external funding; three were funded for a total of $43,000.

The total return on investment (Paller & Cerra, 2006) for the first three grant cycles was 688 percent.

\[
\left( \frac{\text{outside funding} - \text{internal funding}}{\text{internal funding}} \right) \times 100 = \\
\left( \frac{\$2,361,787 - \$299,452}{\$299,452} \right) \times 100 = 688\% 
\]
A total of 13 articles and 28 presentations resulted from the grant program: 8 presentations and 5 journal articles from the 1st cycle; 13 presentations and 5 journal articles from the 2nd; and 7 presentations and 3 journal articles from the third (Table 3). The peer-reviewed journal articles appeared in the following journals:

- Family & Consumer Sciences Research Journal;
- Family Therapy;
- Family Therapy Magazine;
- Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law;
- Housing and Society;
- Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics;
- Journal of Urban Economics;
- Journal of Extension;
- Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health;
- Middle School Journal;
- The Family Journal;
- The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues; and
- Urban Education.

Table 3. Forty-one publications and presentations were produced as a result of the Poverty and the Economy Faculty Research Grant Program. Peer reviewed journal articles are listed below; a complete list is available in the appendix.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>ARTICLES</th>
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INFLUENCE ON THE RECIPIENT’S RESEARCH PROGRAM

Nearly half of the researchers (48.3 percent) have continued the research initiated with this funding. The supported research initiated new lines of inquiry for 31 percent of investigators and helped 31 percent focus or refocus on poverty and the economy. A fifth of respondents (20.7 percent) currently do research unrelated to the projects funded by this program. Only 20.7 percent plan to seek collaborators from other disciplines in their future research.

Table 4. Collaborations of faculty from academic and public service units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Collaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2005-2006 | • Agriculture (Griffin)/ Education  
            • Carl Vinson Institute of Government /Education /Business /Law  
            • Education/Arts & Sciences /Fanning  
            • Environment & Design/Small Business Development Center  
            • Family & Consumer Sciences /Business |
| 2006-2007 | • Carl Vinson Institute of Government / Social Work/ Family & Consumer Sciences  
            • Education, Family & Consumer Science s(1 dept)  
            • Family & Consumer Sciences (2 depts)  
            • Family & Consumer Sciences (3 depts)/Extension |
| 2007-2008 | • Agriculture / Family & Consumer Sciences  
            • Carl Vinson Institute of Government /Public Health/ Family & Consumer Sciences  
            • Education, Journalism |
| TOTAL     | • 6 collaborations between academic and PSO units; 6 collaborations between different academic units |

BENEFITS TO RESEARCH, TEACHING AND THE COMMUNITY

The benefits to research, teaching and the community fall into three general areas: application or transfer of research findings or results; understanding policy barriers; and capacity building that reinforces the links between research, teaching and service. Respondents indicated that the research led to other effects (18.5 percent) or not applicable (37.0 percent).

In the area of transfer of findings, nearly 26 percent of respondents said a new community initiative was created as a result of the grant and 11 percent said a new method was adopted. Other results included creating new nonprofits (3.7 percent), business (3.7 percent), website (3.7 percent) and possibly a new federal program (3.7 percent). The funding also helped to institutionalize or modify a program and validated methods used at the Alternative School.

Only 3.7 percent of respondents indicated that the results of their grant resulted in a policy change.

Investigators indicated that the grants helped build capacity to reinforce links between research, teaching and service related to poverty and the economy. Nearly 40 percent applied for additional funding. Others responded that instruction was enhanced, the work was applied in several graduate-level program evaluation classes, provided perspectives on the barriers to saving for low-income populations, and informed work with schools serving families living in poverty.
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Understanding public policy barriers that limit full participation in the economy.

- 57.1 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the research supported by the grant program contributed to understanding policy barriers that limit a person’s ability to participate fully in the economy.

Informing ways that UGA can address persistent poverty through teaching, research, and service.

- 66.7 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the research supported by the grant program helped inform ways in which UGA can address persistent poverty.

Fostering collaboration across academic and service units.

One of the program’s goals was to increase interdisciplinary collaboration (Table 4). Eight of the 15 funded seed grants involved collaborations with faculty in another college, school, or public service unit; six involved an academic and public service unit collaboration. In addition, 67.9 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the research supported by this grant program reflected collaboration across academic and public service units. However, only 20.7 percent of respondents said that they would seek collaborators from other disciplines in the future.
Conclusion

The Poverty and the Economy Faculty Research Grant Program achieved all of the program goals and the return on the investment was robust for the first three grant cycles. The research projects supported by this program were able to secure extramural funding to continue to support the work. For several researchers, new areas of inquiry resulted from the work done on the seed grant. The program also reflected strong collaborations across academic and public service units, and research findings benefited local communities in many ways – creating new community initiatives, nonprofits, business, a website, and possibly a new federal program.

Respondents said that the work helped inform how UGA can help address persistent poverty through teaching, research, and service. The goal that was not fulfilled was related to understanding policy barriers related to poverty.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

• The 688 percent return on investment (ROI) for the first three years of this program is inline with successful seed grant programs reported in the literature. The ROI could be further enhanced by providing assistance to help PIs seek further funding and clarify the expectation that they should do so. Nearly half of the PIs did not report pursuing external funding to continue the research.
• Research shows that the return on investment is usually not realized until five or more years after the seed grant was received. While PIs provided an annual report to help monitor the program’s impact, future evaluations could include questions to determine ROI and other factors.
• Future evaluations should include questions to determine whether the seed grant can be directly attributed to subsequent funding. Providing researchers with sample questions from the beginning can improve the quality of the data collected. Also, data should be collected for at least five years after the end of the grant.
• One of the program goals was to foster interdisciplinary collaborations and interactions between academic and public service faculty. While the program successfully fostered such interactions, only 20.7 percent of respondents said they would pursue collaborations across disciplines in the future. Uncovering the barriers to collaborations and the thinking behind so few considering such collaborations would be helpful to future efforts.
• Consider offering fewer but larger grant awards when interdisciplinary research is a goal.
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Hanson, Christopher S., Dona Schneider and Ann Marie Hill. 2008. Seed grants as a means of stimulating cancer research funding. Health Policy 88: 243-249.


Paller, Mark S. MD, MS; and Cerra, Frank B. MD. 2006. Investing in research: The impact of one academic health center’s research grant program. Acad. Med. 81: 520-526.


University of South Florida, College of Arts and Sciences, Internal Awards Program.
