



National Organization of Research Development Professionals

# Enhancing Faculty Grantwriting Skills: The UPRM Experience with Grantwriting Initiatives and Writing Bootcamps

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# Agenda



- UPRM & R&D Center
- Proposal Development Unit at UPRM
- **Share Experiences of the 5 Grant Writing Initiatives (GWI) & Bootcamps at UPRM**
- Lessons Learned & Evaluation
- Final Comments
- Acknowledgements



# Creation of the PDU

UPRM created a **Proposal Development Unit (PDU)** in 2009, addressing three priorities:

1. improve the grant writing skills of its faculty,
  2. submit more competitive proposals, and
  3. diversify its funding portfolio.
- This office received operational funds through the combined support of the UPR and the **NIH-EARDA/ BRAD Award# G11HD060438-8**.
  - Uses the U Kentucky PDO as model (mentor).



# PDU: Proposal Development Unit

- Started with **1 proposal specialist** in **2009**.
- It has evolved into 2 proposal specialists and 2 part-time graduate students (in the field of English) and 1 administrative assistant
- The PDU provides various services to researchers, including funding searches and grant proposal editing; as well as seminars and workshops on research development topics of interest to faculty.
- Has coordinated five GWIs in the last five years.

**The experiences and lessons learned from these five GWIs is presented here.**



# **GWI 2012: NIH Grant Writers Initiative 1:**

**Goal:** Create a **Community of NIH Researchers & Grant Writers** to strengthen UPRM faculty funding.

## **Request for Applications (RFA)**

- **GWI-RFA was announced Oct. 31, 2011** with an application deadline of **Nov. 25, 2011**.
- **GWI performance period: Jan 2012-Dec 2012.**
- **Review Committee:** 4 Associate Deans of Research of each of the four Colleges at UPRM, + NIH-EARDA PI + Proposal Specialist.
- **Applications** required: **Letter of support** by their academic **department director** to certify support + **Research Statement + CV**



# Qualities of GWI participants:

In the RFA's *Eligibility Information*, it was emphasized that applications should be from **UPRM faculty who exhibited three main qualities:**

1. **be open to share their work** and participate in discussions,
2. **have already a project idea** to develop, and
3. **be committed to submitting a proposal**, preferably to NIH, by the end of the training program.

Ten (**10**) applications were reviewed, and **8** participants selected late December.





# Incentives for Participation

- Become part of select group with unique access to **the Proposal Development Unit resources, staff and associated consultants (including internal and external facilitators and a writing coach)**
- **Included a 2-credits additional compensation** to encourage attendance to all GWI activities,
- **A trip to the NIH Regional Seminar on Program Funding and Grants Administration**, offered by NIH Staff -April 17-18, 2012, Indianapolis, IN



# 1<sup>st</sup> NIH GWI: Yr 2012

**2.5days  
Kickoff  
Retreat:**  
Jan. 27-29,  
2012 - In-  
house/on-  
site

**On-site  
Seminars  
& RFP  
Selection**

**NIH  
Regional  
Seminar  
on Program  
Funding  
and Grants  
Administra-  
tion; April 17-  
18,  
Indianapolis,  
IN**

**Individual  
meetings  
with  
participants**

**Wrap-  
up  
Retreat  
(1 day)**  
June 7,  
2012

**8 faculty** (mostly new hires and junior faculty):

- five (5) from the College of Arts & Sciences,
- two (2) from the College of Engineering,
- one (1) from the College of Agricultural Sciences





# 1<sup>st</sup> GWI –Training

**It was a ‘training experience’ for the UPRM PDU staff and writing facilitator/coach.**

*Our writing coach, an active English professor, had extensive experience with writing retreats in PR and had participated in the National Writing Project (NWP) retreats, but lacked knowledge about the NIH grant writing style.*

## **2 ½ days Kick-off Retreat (Jan 27-29, 2012)**


- Dr. Don Frazier, from the University of Kentucky as **invited guest lecturer/Trainer**. He introduced the participants to the proposal writing process, the NIH grant application and its peer review process.
- Participants started writing their specific aims and overall proposal scheme.



**2012 Grant Writing Retreat Participants:** Mauricio Cabrera, Arlene Heredia (PDU), José Huerta, Karen Ríos, Luis Ríos, Saylisse Dávila, Rose Méndez, Sandra Maldonado, Yazmin Detrés, **Don Freiser (UK)**, Ellen Pratt (Writing Coach)



## (Cont.) 1st GWI

- **Follow up biweekly meetings** were celebrated on **Friday afternoons at 1:30 pm (Moodle “course” page)**
  - Topics discussed - 
- **NIH Regional Seminar** on Program Funding and Grant Administration - All 8 participants attended. (Community)
- Ended with **Wrap-up Retreat on June 7, 2012**
  - participants presented their proposal development plan for target funding opportunity (FOA), and proposed date of submission in Summer/Fall 2012.



Date	Activity
<b>Jan. 27-29, 2012</b>	Training on NIH grantwriting - Frasier
Feb.10	<b>Program Announcement (PA):</b> 'Reading' a PA and establishing a plan
Feb. 24	<b>Proposal Format</b>
March 9	<b>Budget and Budget Justification</b>
April 13	<b>Writing for Compliance</b>
<b>April 17-18</b>	NIH Regional Meeting: Indianapolis
May 4	<b>Managing criticism: Critiques &amp; Resubmission statements</b>
<b>June 7, 2012</b>	Wrap-up Retreat





# Short Term Results

- **Five** of the eight participants submitted 8 proposals for external funding: **2 to NIH**, 2 to NSF, and 4 to private institutions, totaling an overall budget request of: \$2.065 Million.
  - Of the NIH proposals submitted, one was a training grant (**T15**) and the other was an AREA **R15**. Not approved.
- The remaining **three**, 2 have submitted local proposals as Co-PI. One did not submit.



# Experiences learned – adjust GWI

**Selection of participants is critical.** Recommendation:  
Target researchers with some preliminary data.

**GWI Timeline –Recommendation:** Bootcamp near end to  
devote more time to actual writing.

**Travel to/participation in the NIH Regional Seminar on  
Program Funding and Grants Administration** - defined by  
participants as extremely useful, both in content and for  
'community-building' purposes.

- ***Ideal: Send Pls to Regional first, if possible.*** Since  
Regional was held in the summer, local lectures  
repeated information at the Regional.





# 2<sup>nd</sup> NIH GWI: Yr 2013

Kickoff  
Meeting  
(Intro)

On-site  
Seminars  
& RFP  
Selection

2 ½ days  
Grant  
Writing  
Bootcamp  
— May 29-  
June 1, 2013-  
Ponce Hilton

NIH  
Regional  
Seminar  
June 26-28,  
2013 in  
Baltimore,  
MD

Individual  
meetings  
with  
participants

**2013 NIH GWI: 8 applicants → 6 selected:**

**4 Engineering; 1 Arts & Sciences; 1 Business**

**Short term successes: 1 submitted K01 – Approved!**



# 2<sup>nd</sup> NIH GWI Bootcamp - 2013



- **6 participants+3 facilitators+PDU staff +Writing coach**
- Reshaped Intensive Agenda:
  - Guided writing – by sections / with facilitators with writing coach



# 2013 GWI – Bootcamp Agenda



## 2013 NIH Grant Writing Initiative

### Detailed Agenda

#### Wednesday – May 29, 2013

3:00 pm	Hotel check-in
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm	<b>Staff meeting (Lobby)</b> Go over last minute details, verify materials, resources, rooms, etc. – Marisol, Arlene, Ellen
6:00 pm to 9:00 pm	<b>Bootcamp Introduction &amp; Welcome Dinner (La Cava)</b> Marisol: Welcome statement & introductions (15 min.) Ellen: <u>Grantwriting</u> lab dynamics, materials, blog, expected outcomes (1 hr.) Arlene: Logistics details (5 min.)
<b>Homework</b>	<b>Draft - Specific Aims</b> Participants are expected to work on their S.A. section and have a draft to finalize during the morning session.

#### Thursday – May 30, 2013 (Salón 1)

8:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast included with room
9:00 am to 12:00 am	<b>Specific Aims</b> Introduction to the S.A. section Writing time (2 hrs.) Facilitator: PDU
12:00 noon to 1:00 pm	Lunch @ La Terraza
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm	<b>Writing time</b> Work on Approach section (3 hrs.) Facilitator: Dr. Pastrana
4:00 pm to 4:30 pm	
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	
	<b>Peer Review Meeting</b> Discuss review findings and recommendations. Facilitator: Dr. Chaparro
10:30 am to 12:00 noon	<b>Writing time</b> Revisions according to reviewer comments. BREAK - 10:30 am
12:00 noon to 1:00 pm	Lunch @ La Terraza
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm	<b>Abstract</b> Introduce section, tips (15 min.) Writing time (1.25 hr) Facilitator: PDU
2:30 pm to 3:30 pm	<b>Q&amp;A – Putting all together</b> BREAK - 3:30 pm
3:30 pm to 4:00 pm	<b>Retreat Evaluation &amp; Closing</b> If good progress has been made during the bootcamp, we'll try to wrap-up ahead of time, ~2:30PM.

#### Friday – May 31, 2013 (Meeting Center 2)

8:30 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast included with room
9:00 am to 10:00 am	<b>Check-in</b> Present <u>finished S.A.</u> , Significance, and Innovation sections Participants will succinctly discuss any improvements made and share their progress.



## 2013 NIH Grant Writing Initiative

10:00 am to 12:00 noon	<b>Approach</b> Introduce Approach section, tips (30 min.) Writing time (1.5 hrs.) Facilitator: PDU
12:00 noon to 1:00 pm	Lunch @ La Terraza
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm	<b>Writing time</b> Work on Approach section (3 hrs.) Facilitator: Dr. Pastrana
4:00 pm to 4:30 pm	
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	
	<b>Peer Review Meeting</b> Discuss review findings and recommendations. Facilitator: Dr. Chaparro
10:30 am to 12:00 noon	<b>Writing time</b> Revisions according to reviewer comments. BREAK - 10:30 am
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2:30 pm to 3:30 pm	<b>Q&amp;A – Putting all together</b> BREAK - 3:30 pm
3:30 pm to 4:00 pm	<b>Retreat Evaluation &amp; Closing</b> If good progress has been made during the bootcamp, we'll try to wrap-up ahead of time, ~2:30PM.

**Guided writing – by sections / with facilitators  
Check-ins + Blog + Homework + Mock review**



# Lessons Learned & Short Term outcomes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> NIH GWI

- Small, cohesive group.
- Most submitted NIH proposals (R15, SCORE, K01), one submitted to another agency.
- **The K01 proposal\* was approved!**  
Maribella Domenech (ChemE)

## *Evaluation:*

- Blog 👎
- Request for more 'non-structured writing time'

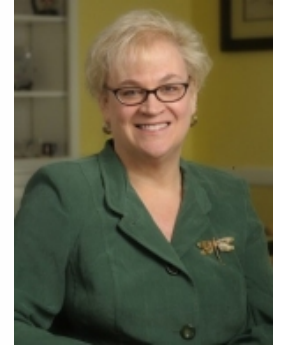
\* First K01 award at UPRM.





# 3<sup>rd</sup> NIH GWI 2014-2015

- **14 participants:**
  - **8 UPRM** participants selected; balanced from various faculties (1 Chem, 1IndEng. and 2MechEng, 1 ChemEng, 1Social Sc.)
  - **6 PUCPR** participants (Science-Biol/Chem)
- **3 1/2 day bootcamp** (Jan 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> at PUCPR)
- **Individual F/U Meetings** until each one submits a proposal by Summer 2015



**Feb. 13, 2014: In house NIH-OER Full day NIH training seminar – at UPRM**

- **Sally Rockey**, NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research -lead speaker
- **Michael Sesma** – PO @NIGMS







# Lessons Learned & Short term outcomes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> NIH GWI

- Large group – more difficult to manage
  - UPRM+PUCPR (MOU)
- **Highlights of the event: GWI graduate & K01 awardee – Maribella Domenech -presented her experience as 1<sup>st</sup> time proposal writer – and provided hints on writing a successful proposal**
- *Evaluation & Participant's feedback:* Request for more **'non-structured writing time'** (less on-site lecturing)



# Overall Lessons from NIH GWIs

- Most applicants are **new faculty without preliminary data**, which renders them uncompetitive for NIH applications...
- So we steered them to grant opportunities (seed money) that allowed them to generate more robust preliminary data -
  - 50% received funding from the Puerto Rico Science, Technology & Innovation Trust for this.
- Structured follow-up is necessary after the Boot-camp in order to not lose contact with participants, and to ensure that they submit a grant.



## (Cont. ) NIH GWIs

- There may not be immediate reward in terms of participation--immediate grant funding, however participants reported that the grant writing initiative helped them to **get over the inertia of writing their first Federal Grant proposal**, provided methods for writing better proposals, and over a longer period has contributed in many cases to other types of funding.
- One of the intangibles is building a more robust grant writing culture at the university.



# 4<sup>th</sup> GWI: CAREER 2015-16

- Call for applications closed on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>
- **Evaluations**
- **10 participants**, mix of engineering (6), sciences (3) and agriculture (1)
- **Goal:** Each one submits a proposal by July 2016.
- Incorporated a Pre-bootcamp Writing Session!



# 4<sup>th</sup> NSF CAREER GWI: Yr 2015-2016

October 2015  
Kickoff

Kickoff  
Meeting  
(Intro)

On-site  
Seminars  
&  
RFP

1-day Pre-  
bootcamp  
Writing  
Session  
(on Campus)  
Dec. 18, 2015

3 days  
Grant  
Writing  
Bootcamp  
(Jan 16-18,  
2016)

Follow up  
meetings &  
Mock  
Review  
Panel

Career planning  
Broader impact  
Evaluation/Assessment









## Spring Semester:

- Monthly Follow-up meetings
- **Consultation with Dr. Susan Renoe (U Missouri – Director **Broader Impacts** Network)**
- Mock review panel
- Target: Proposals by July 2016.





# Lessons Learned & Short term outcomes from the 4th GWI (NSF)

- **The 1-day on campus Pre-Bootcamp + 3 days off-campus Bootcamp was a success!**
  - Bootcamp with ‘non structured writing time’ – with **facilitators** on site (former NSF Career awardees (2) collaborated to provide advice + PDU staff & evaluator)
- **Location: Off campus/Room** with good access to internet + open space to breath, chat & accommodate different styles of writers – in a beautiful setting – Aguadilla, PR (oceanviews)
- **Group of 10** – large to handle; ease: respond to a similar program announcement (NSF Career) (but different areas).



## (Cont.) Lessons Learned – NSF GWI

- **Monthly follow-up before and after the bootcamp** did indeed result in participants feeling more connected.
- **7 out of 10 participants** submitted the NSF CAREER proposal by June, as planned.
- 2 of the 3 who did not submit the CAREER award submitted a different type of NSF grant.
- Although none of them received the grant, however they all **received positive feed-back** and **5 of the 8** have indicated that they will be **resubmitting** based on this feedback this summer, and the PDU staff will be actively assisting them.



# 5<sup>th</sup> Collab GWI - 2016-2017

- Focus: **Collaborative proposals with Institutional Benefit**
- **3 groups:**
  - Teacher Preparation
  - Statistics and Flipped Classrooms
  - Business Administration/Engineering and Innovation Education
- **18** participants









# 5<sup>th</sup> GWI in progress- Lessons learned to date

- **Kept the 1-day on campus Pre-Bootcamp + 3 days off-campus Bootcamp format – Best suited for UPRM culture!**
  - **Location: Off campus/ Aguadilla Oceanview Room** with good access to internet + open space to breath, chat & accommodate different styles of writers
- 
- Participants were willing to pitch in the expenses for hotel accommodations – for devoted writing time.





# Lessons learned - Collaborative proposals GWI – In progress

- Working with groups: 3 groups -difficult to control and coordinate meeting times (18+ people)
  - In the future, focus on one group with a particular funding opportunity in mind
- Participants with varying degrees of expertise
  - How do you give a primer on grant-writing to those who need it without losing the interest of the experienced grant-writers
- Availability of Collaborative type funding opportunities is limited & timing with respect to GWI calendar
  - Available options: Due in January before the boot-camp, or due in September or October, after...



# Grant Writing Initiatives (GWI's) - 5

GWI Year	Topic	Participants	Proposals Submitted: <b>27 so far</b>	Proposals Funded
<b>2012</b>	NIH Grants	8	6 (estimate)	0
	<i>Nursing Research</i>	7	<i>1 group proposal</i>	0
<b>2013</b>	NIH Grants	6	5 (estimate)	1 NIH K01
<b>2014</b>	NIH Grants	14 (8 UPRM)	9 (5 UPRM)	7 (4 PR Trust; 3 NIH INBRE)
<b>2015-16</b>	NSF CAREER Grants	10	7 CAREER/3 NSF	0/pending
<b>2016-17</b>	Collab. Proposals with Institutional Benefit	18	TBD	TBD

**Total: 63 participants\* – 57 from UPRM; 6 PUCPR**

**Includes Nursing Research Development Working Group (Nursing RDWG): 7 p + mentor**



# Evaluation (GWIs 1-4: 19 p/50% response)

Question (max. 5)	Mean	s
○ <b>How useful was the GWI or the RDWG activity for developing your proposal?</b>	<b>4.5</b>	1.0
○ How much do you feel you have learned from this experience?	4.2	0.8
○ <b>How likely are you to recommend the PDU writing initiatives to colleagues?</b>	<b>4.7</b>	0.6
○ Will you participate in other activities similar to these?	4.0	1.4
○ Overall, how much did your grant-writing skills improved?	4.0	0.8



# Evaluation

Question	Mean	s
○ I feel more confident in my ability to write a successful proposal	4.1	0.8
○ I improved my proposal writing skills	4.3	0.7
○ <b>I have a better understanding of the submission process to a funding agency</b>	<b>4.6</b>	0.5
○ <b>I understand better the format of a proposal and required sections</b>	4.5	0.7
○ I improved my organization skills	4.0	0.8
○ I improved my ability to organize my thoughts and ideas	3.8	0.8



# What was the most and least valuable aspect about the grant writing workshops?

## ***Most valuable:***

*The main benefit for me was that the structure of the activity meant that I did **not leave proposal writing until the last minute**. ... the GWI forced me to keep a good schedule.*

***Dedicated time without interruptions.***

*...undisturbed time for writing, and the **cheerleading of the team**.*

## ***Least valuable:***

*There were no specialists in my area so the "**coaches**" of the GWI did not understand the proposed research nor how to justify it.*

*Lack of opportunities to **see successful proposals** from UPRM.*





# Closing remarks

- *GWI's seen as a beneficial experience for faculty at UPRM*
- *Adjust GWI's to 'campus culture'*

## ***Future Challenges:***

- *Sustainability*
- *Smaller pool of new faculty / move to experienced faculty not traditionally involved in research and proposal writing.*



# Acknowledgements



**Kara Fore –Proposal Specialist  
(PS)**

**Héctor Segarra–Proposal  
Specialist**

**Dr. Luisa Guillemard -evaluator**

Administrative Staff & Grad. Students

***Arlene Heredia (former PS)***

***Ellen Pratt – writing coach***

**Facilitators:**

Drs. Jaime Ramirez-Vick; Belinda  
Pastrana, Mildred Chaparro, Ubaldo  
Córdova, Manuel Rodríguez

## Invited guests & External Resources

**Dr. Don Frasier**  
U Kentucky

**Kathy Grzech**  
Director UK-PDO

**Dr. Alfonso Latoni**  
NIH

**Dr. Susan Renoe**  
U Missouri

**NIH-OER Staff**



**Acknowledge support of NIH & UPR/UPRM**

**NIH-EARDA/ BRAD Award# G11HD060438-8**

*Establishment & Institutionalization of  
a Proposal Development Unit (PDU)  
at the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez  
**2009-2017***



**Thank you!**





## NORDP Conference Roundtable Summary

With multiple roundtables happening concurrently, NORDP attendees have to choose, and may miss out on a topic that is of interest to them, as well.

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief review of the highlights of the oral presentation you're attending. Please answer the questions below and return this completed form to the Registration Desk at your convenience. NORDP bloggers will post your summary at [nordpnews.org](http://nordpnews.org) for all conference attendees to view.

Please don't worry about eloquence. The blog team will edit for grammar and brevity as needed. You may also keep it brief – a typical blog post is about 300 words. You may use the back of the page for your responses, as well.

Roundtable Title:	Grant Writing Bootcamps – Planning & Sustainability
Facilitator:	Mansol Vera
Scribe	Jake Maas
Participants:	Wanda Hutto, Mansol Vera, Xia Wood, Jake Maas,
Do you want author credit on the NORDP blog for this summary? Choose one:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES, please include my name as author of the post. <input type="radio"/> NO, I'd prefer to remain anonymous. <div style="float: right; text-align: right;">           Hector Sota,            Molly McCue,            Mary Green         </div>
Please provide a bullet list of 5 key take away points:	1) Provide a separate space, with multiple options for different work styles, that allows faculty to disconnect from their everyday activities 2) Restrict participation to faculty eligible to submit grants, and restrict to particular agency (e.g. NIH) or competition (NSF CAREER, e.g.) 3) Develop a cadre of faculty experts willing to serve as facilitators for writing; utilize peer review; recruit a written communication expert. 4) Outcome must be a draft proposal suitable for development + submission; if possible, include monetary incentive.
Are follow up steps planned?	5) Several participants have had success combining a monthly workshop series with a culminating intensive boot camp. We exchanged contact info; Mansol will share new presentation w/ freemail list; and we are planning a session for NORDP 2018 that will be a multi-institution panel discussion of Boot Camp strategies/design.



- Credibility
- Question: how to accomodate different needs?
  - do you restrict participation? to certain divisions/depts?
  - know what are the outcomes? Submitting grants? Knowledge of grant topics.

Johnson C. Smith (HBCU)

- Incentives - \$1500 cash stipend for those who submit a high quality proposal (\$750 for those who don't).

UPR - with Coach  
 Peer Review - led by faculty  
 Grants staff on hand  
 How broad is the call? Limited to one agency

If you want to have them write, you have to have facilitators - involve faculty as coaches - Develop cadre w/ both subject knowledge / coaching skills

- Disconnect from everyday activities - separate space w/ different options for level of interaction

## NORDP Conference Roundtable Sign In

**ROUNDTABLE TITLE:** Grant Writing Bootcamps – Planning & Sustainability

[illegible]