

Summary of ACES Grant Recipient Interviews 7-12-06

The following interviews reveal how even limited funding can make a significant impact on a researcher's career, as well as on the research itself:

"The ACES Opportunity grant has had the highest impact so far in my career in that the \$20'000 has allowed me to pay a graduate student half a salary, so I could keep the work in the lab going and spend time with my newborn without having to take a break professionally. It has substantially contributed to my ability to publish 2 articles in a timely manner, and 3 others that are in review. I have presented these papers at conferences, which have made possible broader professional exposure".

This researcher stated she feels ACES has contributed substantially to her feeling 'liberated' to attend to her children, making her feel good in her role and responsibilities as mother, while staying productive professionally, which was very satisfying. Since receiving the grant, she has been able to write 5 new research proposals, because she knows only about 10% of proposals get funded. She thinks that ACES' focus should be less on helping 'mediocre' faculty succeed, but on creating a culture that is less frustrating to women.

* * *

"I used my ACES grant for a trip to Germany to complete a paper with a German colleague, with whom I had collaborated. I had submitted it twice to different journals, where both times it was rejected. I'm now hoping that my colleague will resubmit it to a different journal and see what happens.

While in Germany, I also was asked to give a talk in an information technology company, which gave me exposure and recognition not just among faculty, but among practitioners, which was very nice. I combined the trip with a conference in Spain, where I presented a paper with a colleague. At that conference I developed a new collaboration that I'm currently working on. Also, the grant made possible an invitation of a distinguished speaker. She came to give a talk at our campus, and we are now collaborating on a paper. Subsequently, I also developed a paper with a colleague in my own department, who is now, however, leaving Case. I am currently working with two other women colleagues (one from the University of Colorado), which whom I'm completing an additional paper". This researcher is planning to leave Case this summer for another University, where she was offered a tenured position.

* * *

"The ACES grant had a big impact on my research because I could hire part time students to help me with my data gathering. This way I was able to involve 12 research sites in my study, making it very robust once it is completed – which incidentally was beyond my wildest expectations. I had included the 12 sites as possibilities, never expecting that I would get the cooperation from each one of them. But they were all curious about finding out the responses to my questionnaire, because no one had done this kind of a study

before. The funding was critical in providing the necessary assistance this summer, as my time is very limited due to my full teaching load each semester, during which I am completely devoted to the students and don't have time for research.

I'm currently continuing the study by funding it from my own pocket, as I have an expert methodologist involved, and a statistician for the data analysis and I don't want to stop in midstream, now that it's going so well. I expect to have several papers come out of this research. Right now I can envision at least 5, which has become much more extensive than anticipated, because of the wide interest in the other data centers. In that way this research has generated unexpected collaborations with other researchers, which has been a wonderful surprise. I just hope I get additional funding to support this study. It's very hard to get funded by large organizations, if you don't have already a name established.

I'm in a sort of catch-22 position: my role as instructor does not require research, yet I am very interested in it. With the full course load I have no time to do it, and as it stands, in order to move up to the next level in my professional career, I have to show publications. Having no publications, it is very hard to write grant proposals to major funding agencies, because they tend to favor widely published individuals. So, newcomers like me almost have no chance to receive substantial funding. In that way, the ACES grant was extremely critical for me to move ahead to this next step. I am very excited about this current research, which I wanted to do for a long time".

* * *

"The ACES funding was critical as a 'bridge fund', as it allowed me to support a graduate student whom I had trained to do my kind of research until I received my first grant. I have eventually received a career award, but that hadn't started yet, while my student was 'ready to go' and my research had been in progress from some start-up funds that were now exhausted. I was since able to publish two papers and had two presentations at national meetings (with international exposure). As a result of the Case Research Show case, has been able to develop collaboration with another team in the School of Medicine (Pediatrics), of which one paper was the outcome. Through this process she was able to write an RO1 grant proposal from NIH which was awarded last November. She found that while initial start up funds are available, they are often not enough to produce sufficient data to be able to apply for a bigger grant, and such bridge funding is crucial in obtaining such needed data.

* * *

This scientist has not used her grant yet, because her initial plans were thwarted by a political situation which discouraged her type of research on the population she had sought out, which is in an Asian country. "I have in the mean time identified another population in Africa, and established a new, unexpected relationship with an internationally known Asian woman researcher, with whom I'm now collaborating around the originally intended study. I am anticipating that this research will allow me to compete in the NSF grant competition for larger awards, because by then I will have some results of samples on hand. Currently I'm collaborating on the African research

project with an entire team, from lab technicians to administrative assistants and two other researchers from the Univ. of Chicago and the Cleveland Clinic. My work is oriented to comparing phenotypes to genotypes, and I hope to find a 'candidate' gene to write about. I'm expecting at least one publication to come out of this research and to be able to use it for talks at conferences to gain exposure. My future plans are to focus on specific genes”.

* * *

“The Opportunity grant had a significant impact. It allowed us to go into a new direction: we had concentrated our efforts on the role of a particular gene in breast cancer, and because we were able to receive funding and start a project on the same gene's role in the heart, which I would not have been able to do otherwise, we found the gene had a similar regulatory role in both tissues. That was very exciting. We previously had only been funded to do breast cancer research, but our research now has broader meaning because of the grant. Two papers have resulted from this research so far, but several more are anticipated. One paper was submitted to PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences) and is in revision and the other, a collaborative paper with two other research labs, has been submitted. This was an interdepartmental collaboration at Case with Engineering and Pediatrics at University Hospitals that was also a result of the ACES funding. This paper has been presented at FASEB and at the Annual Meeting of the Optical Society of America. A future presentation will be made at the next Weinstein Meeting in Cardiovascular Development. My plans based on this research include seeking grant funding from NIH in October, 2006, and from the American Heart Association to be submitted in January, 2007”.

* * *

“I used my 3000 dollars to go to a conference that otherwise I would not have been able to go to, because it was too expensive. This conference was in Berlin, where I presented a paper and met other faculty who, as I discovered to my surprise, had actually followed my research and asked me questions about it! I was so happy to find I am not working in a vacuum, and to see that other researchers valued my work. I developed two potential collaborations with other researchers while at the conference. Since the European conference I also feel I am more aware about the limited exposure I used to have with just an American audience. For example, my most recent paper has been accepted for publication in a British journal - not necessarily an avenue I would have chosen if I hadn't gone to the conference in Berlin...”

* * *

“The ACES grant made it possible for me to do a study that reinforced my dissertation and was the basis for two papers. One paper I presented this past November at a conference and another I presented to a company. As a result of this last presentation, I was asked to serve in a consortium called ‘A new way of working’. I was also able to partially support a graduate student who extended my work. The result from that has been submitted to a conference, and as result the two of us plan to collaborate on future

publications together. A further result of my exposure was that I made a connection with a group at Stanford. Based on conversations with them I am now focused on writing a book. However, I am also anticipating at least five papers to come out from this study. My next plan is to apply for an NIH grant in the fall. Based on my new connection in the consortium, I attended a conference right in the town where I live, which I would have never even knew existed. So, this connection was so valuable because of the new relationships I was able to form.”

* * *

“The ACES grant has definitely helped. It has allowed me to help organize and attend an important small conference in my field. Because of this conference, I am now an associate editor on a monograph. With this came increased visibility, and when I came up for my tenure review, my taking leadership to organize that conference was looked upon very favorably. In addition, the grant allowed me to provide childcare while I attended this conference. My student and I have since collaborated on and submitted a paper. In terms of my research, there have not been specifically new developments - I am continuing the projects that I was involved with before”.

* * *

“The ACES grant support was coming just at a critical moment because funding from NIH was under review and it seemed to take forever. The grant allowed me to continue collecting data, which otherwise would not have been possible. I will have a paper to publish within a few weeks because of it.

I just returned from a conference in Brazil, where I conducted a seminar on my research. By chance I met a former post-doc from my school in back in Europe, and now I’m considering collaborating with him on a project in the near future. He seemed to be very inspired by my work and is pursuing a similar question.

I also used the funding to present a paper at an annual meeting in Austin this past November, 2005. Currently, I have no other plans than to generate more data”.

* * *

“The ACES funding has helped me support a graduate student who is extending my research interest. Without this grant he would not have been able to finish his doctorate this early, which he is now able to do this summer. As a result of the funding, we were able to attend an international technical meeting together, where he presented his findings. He is planning to present the findings at three other meetings. The funding helped support an ongoing collaboration with a researcher at Drexel who is aligned with our research, which otherwise would have had to be put on hold. As a result of the funding I felt much more productive in my research, even though no new ideas have emerged so far. Currently, I am building on the previous research area that is now partially carried on by this graduate student”.

* * *

“My ACES grant allowed me to buy a piece of equipment for a brand new project, which was great. It also partly supported a lab technician. We are working on and hope to discover a new gene, for which we really need major funding from NIH. In order for us to apply for an R21 grant though, we have to show preliminary data that looks promising enough for them to fund longer term work. The ACES grant helped us move faster towards that goal. I now have the data to apply for such a major grant. I hope to be able to publish a paper by the end of this summer for the journal "Development". So far, I have not presented these preliminary findings at a conference, but I'm planning on it”.

* * *

“I was able to use my grant to join a colleague in my department to attend a conference in Europe to present a paper we had completed together. At this conference we met a researcher from another university here in the States, who subsequently visited us in our department, and the three of us have since worked on a paper that we're submitting very soon. Actually, I have just returned from a visit to her campus just two weeks ago, and the three of us, my new collaborator and my department colleague, have been planning to collaborate on future projects. Without this initial funding, I know I would not have attended the conference. So it has really enriched my connections”.

* * *

“I was having difficulty getting funded through NIH. This year was particularly hard, because in the past I have had less trouble getting funded by them, but somehow the review process was held up, and I don't know why that was so. The ACES grant allowed me to continue the research I was involved in, and since I was able to show the ACES support, my department provided the other half of the money needed for the supplies needed for two years of research. My department also funded lab assistants.

The ACES grant also helped as a morale booster at a time when I had my own doubts about the research progress, and when NIH took its time in the review process and I didn't hear from them, it was so nice to have ACES acknowledging my work. NIH had denied my grant proposal request after three internal reviews.

In the last 12 months, since the ACES grant, I was able to develop a collaboration with a researcher in pathology, which eventually resulted in us getting a multi-institutional research project going, for which we received a mega award for \$600'000. This now will fully support my lab for two years. My collaborator will have enough support to hire a senior researcher, which will be of great help.

The ACES grant was essential for this current development. One of my graduate students was able to extend my research, and is now close to submitting an article for a scientific paper. Currently, a new grant proposal is in review at NIH, which scored a 2.5, which means I most surely will get funded. It's just a feeling of renewed excitement about my work”.

* * *