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Proposal Title ECONREP: Economics Recruitment & Enrollment Project

Department/Program/Unit Economics

Proposal Leader(s) Aslihan Spaulding

Leader Department/Unit Name Economics

Additional Leaders or Participants

Additional Leader Susan Chen

Additional Department Economics

Add leader or participant? No

Background

Department of Economics is requesting funding from the PIE grant for one of three specific yet related projects. The overarching theme of the proposals is to improve enrollment and student success by increasing awareness of our program through targeted enrollment strategies, reconnecting with alumni, and increasing networking and professional development opportunities for current students with the help of the alumni. We are requesting funding from PIE for the first proposal since the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's office and Undergraduate Women in Economics are supporting the other two proposals.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal. We look forward to hearing your feedback.

PROPOSAL 1 - ECONREP: Economics Recruitment & Enrollment Project
(Total Budget: \$19,788; Total Requested Amount from PIE Grant: \$19,098;
Department Contribution: \$690)

PROPOSAL 2 - ECON: Encourage Connections Opportunities Networking
(Total Budget:\$17,640; CAS Contribution: \$12,400; Department
Contribution:\$1,590; Undergraduate Women in Economics
Contribution:\$3,650)

PROPOSAL 3 - REAP: Reconnecting with Economics Alumni Project (Total
Budget: \$5,700; CAS Contribution:\$1,450; Undergraduate Women in
Economics Contribution:\$4,250)

Goals and Objectives

Please refer to the attached document for figures.

Historically, the Department has had a relatively low number of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, while the primary source of our majors is through internal transfers (between 50-60% between the 2016-2020 academic years), typically after students have taken the required Principals class(es): ECO 101 & 102. In addition, high schools in the state do not require Economics might be a significant factor in low numbers of FTICs compared to related majors such as Business and Mathematics. Thus, educating high school students about Economics as a major could potentially increase our FTICs, especially given the most recent trend we have observed in Figure 1.

One of the recommendations from our last program review (2014) was "Diversify strategies for student recruitment and enrollment management; outreach initiatives might include working through the regional recruitment group to attract more new beginning freshmen to the program from feeder high schools." Indeed, in the two most recent recruitment cycles, the total number of admitted FTICs exceeds that of internal transfers for the first time, and the upward trend is robust.

As indicated in Figure 2, the number of FTIC applications for Economics has grown exponentially, and so has the number of admits. However, the number of freshmen who eventually chose Illinois State Economics remains stagnant. Nevertheless, the growth of FTICs still outpaces that of external transfers.

Proposed Strategy or Plan

1. The Department will collaborate with University Marketing Communications (UMC) executive director Brian Beam on creating a promotion campaign with the help of Strategic & Creative Marketing (SCM) company representatives. They specialize in digital marketing for college recruitment. The goal is to target Chicago area high school students (or students downstate) to create awareness for opportunities to study Economics at Illinois State University and to increase internal transfers within the University. The Department met with the representatives from SCM and has obtained a proposal (along with the pricing) for our recruitment, which consists of five steps:

- 1) Discovery session and digital marketing strategy plan
- 2) Social/digital paid ads to increase brand awareness and clicks and lead generation campaigns for three targets, including high school students, potential internal transfers at ISU, and other college-age students (community college) who are not already enrolled in a university program
- 3) Blog posting to increase search engine optimization and data collection
- 4) Create custom videos of the Department for social media or website
- 5) Website copy revisions for better recruitment

Other marketing strategy includes working with UMC specialists to redesign our program brochure and create panel cards that we can use for prospective students, including those who attend open houses on campus and in our principles classes (ECO 101 and ECO 102).

2. The Department plans to recruit current economics students as Economics Ambassadors, who will help with student recruitment, orientation, and peer advising. They will also participate in professional development opportunities to help them further achieve their own future goals and aspirations. Although internal transfers have been down in recent years, it is still the most viable source of new majors. Given relative low credit hour requirements in both sequences, it is appealing to those who are excited about the subjects covered in the intro courses. In addition, to help educate high schoolers about economics, the Department will ask the ambassadors to promote our program to their alma mater.

3. As part of recruitment efforts, the Department will design postcards with program pictures and information for direct mailing to potential students and high school guidance counselors.

4. In addition to email communications, the Department will send cards/letters to the admitted students, especially those who attended ISU recruiting events.

5. The Department will work with alumni to create short videos on "Why major in Economics?" The videos will be shared through social media outlets (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram), the departmental website, and ECO 101&102 to promote the program. The Department will send a thank you gift to appreciate alumni who participate in this activity.

6. Given the importance of recruitment, the Department plans to establish a Student Recruitment and Retention Committee to oversee these efforts, both on and off-campus.

Proposal Beneficiaries

Economics Students, Alumni, Faculty, and Illinois State University. We will monitor the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. We will pay attention to key performance indicators, including cost per click, click thru rate, number of visits to the website, and social media analytics.

Expected Outcome/Deliverables/Indicators of Success

- Increase brand recognition & getting more clicks to the Department website and social media
- Lead generation of High school students, Students at ISU who may be changing majors, and College-age students/ Community college students not already enrolled in a university program.
- Recruit students to become Economics Ambassadors.
- Design, print, and share promotional materials such as postcards with potential students and high school guidance counselors.
- Create and send cards/letters to the admitted students
- Alumni videos on "Why major in Economics?" and share the videos through social media outlets (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram), the departmental website, and ECO 101&102 to promote the program. Thank you gift to alumni who participate in this activity.
- Establish a Recruitment and Retention Committee to oversee these efforts, both on and off-campus.

Sustainability

We will work closely with the UWE student organization, Economics Ambassadors, and Economics Advisory Board (Alumni) to continue our efforts.

We will closely monitor the ROI of the marketing campaign (in collaboration with Strategic Creative Marketing). The impact of this campaign may be realized longer term.

- As we improve the sense of belonging among Economics students, their affiliation with the Department will grow and last as future alumni who may give back to the Department (time, funds, employment, and networking opportunities for future Economics students).
- Actively participate in Set Redbirds Up for Success Campaign and Birds Give Back annual day of giving fundraising.
- By reviving the Economics Advisory Board and actively engaging with the members of the Board and the Economics Alumni (with the help of Kate Childs, Director of Development), we hope to improve relationships with Economics alumni and bring additional donations to the Economics Foundation to support our initiatives.

Anticipated starting date

Sep 01, 2022

Anticipated ending date

Jun 30, 2023

Budget

19098.00

Will department/school/unit funds be utilized?

Yes

Budget Breakdown

<https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/13375061757>
