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# Looking for Money in All the Right Places: How One Academic Library is Making Good Use of Grant Funds

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## Abstract:

In 2007, the Florida Legislature addressed the need for technology funding at the eleven state universities by amending the Florida Statutes. The change permitted each university to collect technology fees from students at the rate of 5% of tuition. The new fees went into effect with the fall term 2009-2010. The presentation at the Charleston Conference focused on the success the UCF Libraries has enjoyed in 2009 and 2010 in securing large awards for use in providing access to relevant content and outlining the key factors that have contributed to the overall results. Each university in Florida is able to determine the process for distribution of the funds. UCF administrators decided that the technology fee funds would be awarded through a competitive bid process. All UCF departments are invited to submit proposals and these are reviewed by a student panel. Winning proposals are ranked into one of three tiers based on the overall impact they will have on students at the University of Central Florida. The tier designation given to a proposal has an impact on when it will be funded. Located in Orlando, FL, and established in 1963, the University of Central Florida (UCF) has quickly grown in size and reputation. By fall 2010, the university had grown to 56,235 students making UCF the second largest public university in the United States. In 2010-2011, the UCF Libraries expended \$6,040,023 on library resources. Over \$400,000.00 of this total expenditure was a result of technology fee awards. Keys to developing winning proposals include matching the proposal to department and university priorities, outreach to faculty, librarians, publishers and vendors with an eye toward acquiring the most relevant content for the students and faculty. Analyzing usage and turn away data and working with publishers on pricing models that result in low cost per book or low cost per article is critical to developing a winning strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Florida Legislature addressed the need for technology funding at the eleven state universities by amending the Florida Statutes. The change permitted each university to collect technology fees from students at the rate of 5% of tuition. The new fees went into effect with the fall term of the 2009-2010 academic year. Each university is able to determine the process for distribution of the funds. The University of Central Florida made the decision to establish a review committee consisting of sixteen members. The university developed guidelines for representation on the committee made up mostly of students from the main campus, and the branches and regional locations as well. Beginning in the summer of 2009 university departments were made aware of the process for submitting technology fee proposals.

Within the UCF Libraries the library director, Barry Baker, discussed options with his management

team and in the fall of 2009, two proposals were developed. Based on the success in 2009, the UCF Libraries focused on developing even stronger proposals in 2010. The result was success again with all 2010 proposals approved. Currently the library is awaiting word from the review committee regarding the proposals just submitted earlier this semester. A decision is expected by the end of November. In order to gather a better understanding of the technology fee process it is important to put it in the context of UCF and the UCF Libraries.

## About the University of Central Florida

Located in Orlando, FL, and established in 1963, the University of Central Florida (UCF) has quickly grown in size and reputation. Despite budgetary problems that developed because of national and state budget woes, the university continues to grow rapidly and improve the overall quality of education. The university administration has focused since 2007 on positioning the university to be suc-

cessful even in these difficult times. By fall 2010, the university had grown to 56,235 students making UCF the second largest public university in the United States. Along with growth has come more of the best and brightest students and the result is that the incoming fall 2010 freshman class had a average SAT score of 1237 and a average GPA of 3.8. At the start of the 2010-2011 academic year the university offered 216 degrees and had reached over \$130 million in research funding, and an operating budget of \$1.3 billion.

UCF has combined exceptional financial planning and goal oriented decision making in order to continue on a path toward greater success despite huge reductions in state support. UCF continues to focus on enhancing distributed learning, becoming a more diverse institution, and leading the way as one of America's leading partnership universities. The UCF motto is "UCF Stands for Opportunity." Building on this motto, the UCF Libraries felt well positioned in fall 2009 to use the new technology fee funding as an opportunity to provide major new library resources to the faculty and students of UCF even as the library budget continued to at best remain flat during the period between 2007 and 2009.

#### **A Glimpse at the UCF Libraries**

The UCF Libraries employ forty-four librarians with a goal of supporting the teaching and research mission of UCF. Collections and services are provided at three libraries in Orlando and at ten regional sites. With over 39,253 active subscriptions and rapidly expanding electronic collections, the UCF Libraries is keenly aware of the overall campus growth. This growth has resulted in year over year increases in usage statistics. In 2010-2011, there were 10,306,606 searches and 2,672,291 downloads. In 2010-2011, the UCF Libraries expended \$6,040,023 on library resources. Over \$400,000.00 of this total expenditure was a result of technology fee awards. These extra funds were used to provide some outstanding resources that otherwise would not have been made available. Before looking closely at how the UCF Libraries developed this recipe for success with technology fee awards it is important to provide additional background about the process at UCF.

#### **Overview of the Technology Fee Process at UCF**

UCF administrators decided that the technology fee funds would be awarded through a competitive bid process. The funds are collected through tuition payments in the fall, spring and summer terms. Because funds are not paid out until collected, a decision was made at UCF to have all proposals for the academic year be submitted in the fall and winning proposals ranked into three categories. Winning proposals may receive full or partial funding and will either receive the funding in the fall semester (tier 1) or the spring semester (tier 2). The third tier, or "contingency" awards receive funding based on summer term collections that are more variable than the fall and spring semesters. It is possible that proposals approved as contingency will not receive funding. This tier process means it is important to score highly in the competitive process in order to be placed in tier one insuring funding will be received promptly. The UCF Libraries has been successful with all six submitted proposals funded, and in all cases at the tier one level.

In 2009-2010, all UCF submitted proposals represented a total request of \$9,565,315.91. A total of \$6,421,193 was awarded through the competitive bid process that year. Now in the third year of this process the 2011-2012 proposals number sixty-seven with total requests for \$16,827,383. This means that the gap between available technology fee funds and the total requested in proposals is widening. Competition is increasing and the library continues to focus on developing outstanding proposals. The goal continues to be reaching out to the students on the committee with an offer of new and exciting content that will enhance their education and research experience. After three years of this process, the UCF Libraries has a proven track record in developing outstanding proposals. Others may find the process used to develop these proposals helpful.

#### **Keys to Developing Grant Proposals**

The first step in the process each year is to focus on library priorities and select the areas within the library that will be given an opportunity to submit a proposal. Each university unit must rank the proposals in order of importance. Since there is no limit to the number of proposals per unit, and no known limit on how much funding can be granted to any

single unit, it is a guessing game as to how the committee will react. The library has chosen a range of between two and four individual proposals in each of the past three years. The library director at UCF has most often chosen to focus the proposals on enhancements to the collection. Responsibility for these proposals, now totaling five in the first three years is placed with Michael A. Arthur, Head of Acquisitions & Collection Services.

When developing collection based proposals, there has been much outreach to teaching faculty, librarian faculty, publisher and vendor representatives and students. It is important to gather detailed information about various packages, content offerings and the type of access that can be provided to such a large and diverse student body. The UCF Libraries has chosen to focus on large packages that otherwise would not be considered given current funding. Technology Fee awards are seen as a way to acquire large amounts of new content that will be available 24X7 with unlimited access and IP authentication. It is essential to UCF that any chosen package offer perpetual rights.

These are important factors when trying to serve over 56,000 students who can be just about anywhere. Because obtaining recurring funding is more difficult with these awards the library is focused on large one time purchases such as large e-book collections or e-journal backfiles.

While the focus is on acquiring new content, some of the successful proposals from the library have provided electronic books that duplicate existing print. However, the percentage of existing print within newly acquired electronic collections is small. Another factor that has been considered is looking at usage statistics for large e-journal collections and turn away data. With some major publishers, UCF students are getting access to owned content and then through additional searches at the publisher's site find unsubscribed content leading in some cases to large numbers of turn-aways. Being able to address the large number of turn-aways through the purchase of journal backfiles was a key selling point to the technology fee review committee for one of the library proposals in 2010.

The UCF Libraries works closely with publishers and vendors to review several options each year. It is important, particularly when considering large e-book collections, to include the primary monograph vendor in discussions. Working through the vendor will help reduce duplication and results in important data included in the vendor's order database that is used by collection development librarians.

UCF continues to work with major publishers because name recognition with the student review committee is essential as it helps sell the proposal. UCF has worked closely with Springer, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Sage Publications. All monograph publishers have agreed to work with our primary vendor and met requirements for delivery of the content. Through partnerships with several key groups, the UCF Libraries has been successful with all six submitted proposals. One focused on building improvements, one focused on enhanced service and four provided much needed funding to the collection budget.

#### **Successful and Pending Collection Focused Proposals**

- 2009-2010 Springer Complete E-books 2005-2009
- 2010-2011 Oxford Scholarship Online and Oxford Handbooks Online
- 2010-2011 Springer Complete Backfiles & Protocols
- 2010-2011 Cambridge Books Online (Management & Music)
- 2011-2012 Cambridge Books Online (all content not owned by UCF) Pending
- 2011-2012 Sage Backfiles(complete access from volume 1 to current holdings) Pending

#### **What the Library Has Learned in the Process**

The library has now received over \$550,000.00 of technology fee funding for collection enhancement just in 2009 and 2010. These funds were used to provide access to outstanding collections, and usage data indicate that faculty and students are making good use of the resources. Success with these proposals is contingent on several factors. The person submitting the proposal needs the support of the library administrator and must reach out to individuals who can provide ideas and feedback regarding potential products. It seems apparent that

sticking with major publishers is a winning strategy. Going for the largest amount of content that seems feasible given the award criteria has worked well for UCF Libraries. It has resulted in huge amounts of new content and may improve the overall appeal of the package in the eyes of the review committee. It often means that the cost per book or cost per article is very low. Publishers are eager to sell complete packages in order to get their content in the hands of faculty and students, and discounts have been generous for these collections.

There are drawbacks to the process at UCF, and these are worth noting as other grant opportunities may provide different options. First, the money is tied to a specific proposal to purchase a product or service and it must be spent exactly as requested. There is little room for flexibility and therefore if the library indicates it will purchase a certain product with the money it will be required to do so. It would be helpful if the funds were given up front to be used for the purpose of enhancing collections with the understanding the library would then negotiate the best options over time and report back to the committee. It is not likely that such latitude will be given often so it is important to be pleased with the chosen product and to negotiate the best price before moving ahead with the proposal. It is also important to note that focusing on packages that will be successful may mean purchasing content that a library might not otherwise purchase. UCF Library tends to purchase electronic books from a broad range of publishers because the individual book meets parameters of the approval plan or after selection by a collection development librarian. With many of the technology fee proposals the purchase has included complete

publisher content. This results in the purchase of books that would not have been selected individually. However, it does place the content in the hands of users who can now access books that would not otherwise have been selected.

In the end it is important to work with quality publishers and work hard to know the faculty and students at the institution. Students on the review committee at UCF have demonstrated, based on questions they have asked about the library proposals, that they are comfortable learning about these products and they understand the issues. User surveys and focus groups along with discussions with various faculty and library colleagues go a long way toward picking the right products to submit for consideration.

#### **Latest on the 2011 Submissions**

It is exciting to report that both collection focused technology fee proposals were 100% funded by the review committee at the tier one level. The UCF Libraries was notified on November 21, 2011, just after returning from the Charleston Conference. The first award will pay for access to 5,888 electronic books from Cambridge University Press and these will greatly expand the number already available to UCF students and faculty. The second award will cover the cost of the Sage Deep Backfile Collection giving UCF students and faculty complete access to Sage journal content. With these successful proposals the UCF Libraries has now received over \$950,000.00 in new funding which has been used to provide much needed new content to the students and faculty at the University of Central Florida.