## **Pitch Perfect**

ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF EDUCATION GRANTS ACADEMY SEMINAR



OCTOBER 11, 2024

## **Who's that??** JESSICA VENABLE, PHD, GRANTS ACADEMY FACILITATOR



Jess Venable, PhD Partner, Thorn Run Partners

Jessica (Jess) Venable co-leads the firm's Grants Enterprise Strategy consulting practice, which assists clients in increasing the extramural funding base needed to support programs and services, research, outreach and engagement, partnerships, and the innovation ecosystem.

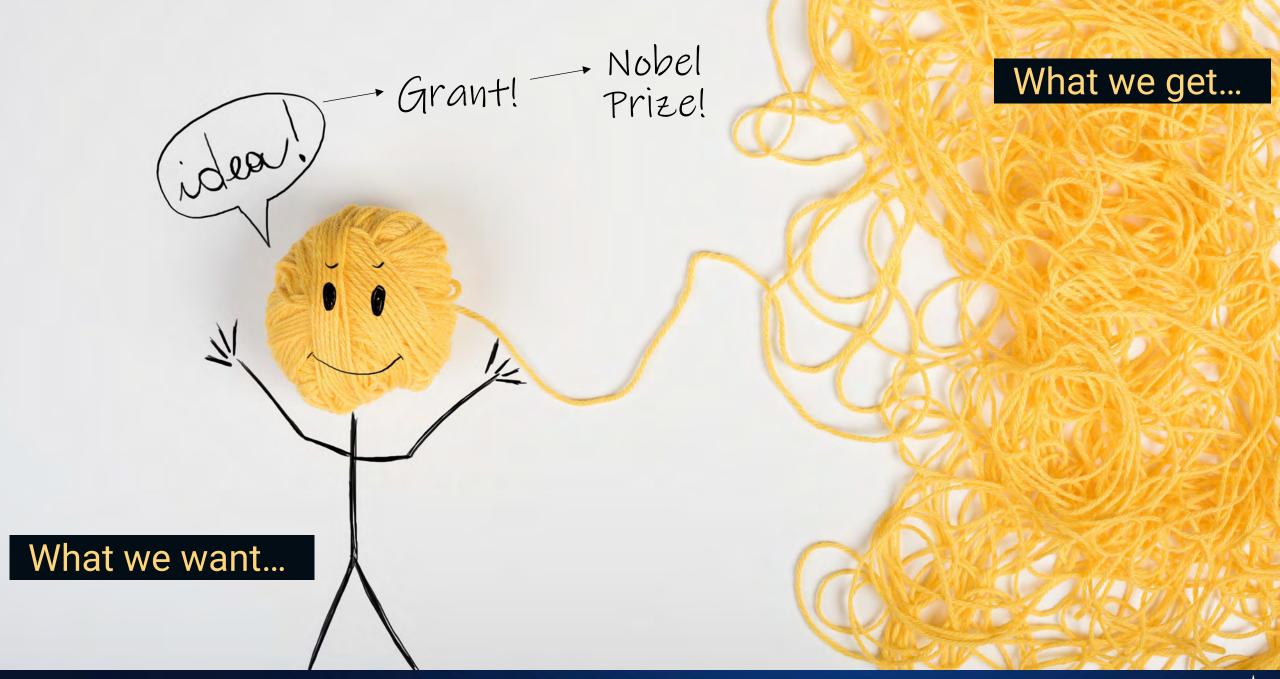
With more than 25 years' experience, she delivers a unique combination of solutionsfocused consulting services including strategic planning, government relations, public relations, grants enterprise development and capacity building, partner engagement, Team Science, program design, and grant proposal development.

Jessica also leads Thorn Run Partners' Grantsmanship Initiative. Successful grantsmanship requires a skillset that is built, continually developed, and adapts to evolving contexts. Using a "coaches" approach to learning, Jess helps grant writers self-discover solutions to proposal development, while challenging conventional thinking about research funding that create barriers across cultures and institutions.

Her client portfolio spans the higher education, non-profit, and local government sectors, for whom she has helped win more than \$700 million in competitive grant awards across the past decade alone.

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### Writing a successful grant application is an art

Although the "science" is primarily being evaluated, presentation and respect for the requirements of the funding agency are key aspects that can make or break an application.

Source: Kraicer, J. (1997). The Art of Grantsmanship. https://www.hfsp.org/sites/default/files/webfm/Communications/The%20Art%20of%20Grantsmanship.pdf





### Grantsmanship.

The art of acquiring peer-reviewed funding, secured through (for example) grants.

### **Grant Writing.**

The **process** of crafting a proposal or grant application for submission to a funder.



## OMG, another training? On a Friday??

PITCH PERFECT: HOW TO CAPTIVATE FUNDERS

- Craft proposals that inform and persuade
- Position your research as a solution to needs and priorities
- Create compelling oral and written narratives

## Blah, blah, blah. Just tell me the rules for writing a grant and I'll do those things.

- Give me a template.
- Give me a checklist.
- What work?
- What doesn't work?
- Tell me what to write, and I'll write it.
- Why are you so annoying?



## Blah, blah, blah. Just tell me the rules for writing a grant and I'll do those things.

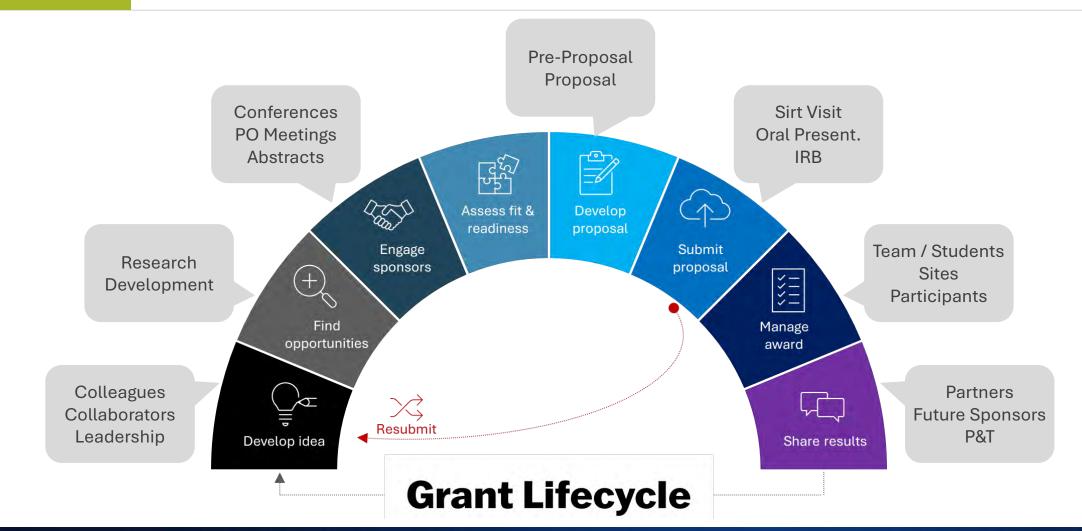
My epiphany came when I realized that grant programs do not exist to make me successful, but rather **my job is to make those programs successful.** 

**Source:** Porter, R. (2007). Why academics have a hard time writing good grant proposals. The Journal of Research Administration, 38, 161-167.



### I'm a researcher, not a salesperson...

PITCHING YOUR RESEARCH ACROSS THE GRANT LIFECYCLE







## Because grants don't just fall out of the sky...



## **Extramural funding for research**

SOURCES & MOTIVATIONS



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## **Grantmaking priorities**

SOURCES & MOTIVATIONS

### Now What? Call for Proposals

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What? Agency Mission & Strategic Plan

### So What? National Priorities

Why? Societal Challenges





## **Grantmaking priorities**

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SOURCES & MOTIVATIONS



Taxpayers & citizenry

Education community

Industry

Foundation, association boards & leadership

### Advocacy, lobbying groups

Community sentiment



Current events

New findings & reports

Federal Advisory Committees

Assessment teams



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### SOURCES & MOTIVATIONS



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

August 17, 2023

M-23-20

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM:

SHALANDA D. YOUNG Shalank D. Young DIRECTOR OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

ARATI PRABHAKAR Arat Pral DIRECTOR OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Multi-Agency Research and Development Priorities for the FY 2025 Budget SUBJECT:

Our Nation has immense aspirations today: achieving robust health and ample opportunity for each person in every community, overcoming the climate crisis by reimagining our infrastructure, restoring our relationship with nature, and securing environmental justice; sustaining global security and stability; building a competitive economy that creates good-paying jobs; realizing the benefits of artificial intelligence while managing its risks; and fostering a strong, resilient, and thriving democracy. The purpose of public science, technology, and innovation is to open doors to make these aspirations possible

Because Federal research and development (R&D) is integral to the just, vibrant, and ambitious future that America seeks, President Biden is prioritizing R&D funding and mobilizing America's powerful R&D ecosystem. To make its vital contribution to our future, federal R&D must sustain America's leadership position in science and technology. It must take aim at and achieve bold, barely feasible goals. Federal R&D must translate into new products and services, new industries and jobs, new policies and regulations, and new standards and practices. And it must bring the power of innovation to important national missions that have not traditionally benefitted from R&D-from K-12 education and workforce training to construction and traffic safety.

This memorandum outlines the Administration's multi-agency R&D priorities for formulating fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget submissions to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These priorities should be addressed within the FY 2025 Budget guidance levels provided by OMB. Clear choices will be required given constrained discretionary funding caps. Agency budget submissions should include an addendum that details how each request level addresses these priorities. Agencies engaged in complementary activities are expected to consult with one another during the budget formulation process to maximize impact by coordinating resources and avoiding unnecessary

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### **BUILDING A MORE EQUITABLE &** RESILIENT NATION

#### **Insights from Social & Behavioral Science**

### CLIMATE CHANGE Changing Climate

Social scientists have developed models to forecast the relationship between the costs of future natural disasters and potential changes in climate and patterns of future development. These models show that social forces like development are among the strongest predictor of economic losses across all scenarios of climate change. development, and damage projections. These findings suggest that decisionmakers have considerable ability to Influence the nature of future economic losses from disasters by influencing development patterns in regions exposed to extreme events. »More info

#### EDUCATION

Impacts of Long-Term Remote Learning on STEM Across the country, students were engaged in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Science Foundation partnered with researchers at different universities to improve remote learning and study its impacts on students of all ages. For some, remote learning offered opportunities to students, such as online activities intended to provide STEM learning for children at home. For others, remote learning presented new obstacles. Researchers at the University of Chicago found a digital divide between learners, citing that 1 in 6 students taking STEM courses online experienced technology difficulties, including lack of internet connectivity in their home. Researchers at Montana State University discovered other challenges beyond technology, such decreased mental health of graduate students due to food and housing insecurity. In some cases, these obstacles resulted in dropouts or changes in career path. With students back in and coverage, they can take time to collect and publish. the classroom, it is essential to understand the challenges faced during remote learning to best help them recuperate decisions with limited data on the current state of the lost learning opportunities. »More mild.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY The Importance of Sleep in Preventing Workplace Accidents & Injuries

According to analyses of the National Health Interview Survey, decreasing self-reported sleep hours and increasing

weekly work hours are associated with significant increases The Importance of Social Patterns in Planning for a in work-related injury risk. Among commercial drivers, crashes, near crashes, and crash-relevant conflicts tend to occur when drivers are sleep deprived. Social and behavioral science research has informed industry standards that improve workers' attention and reduce workplace injuries and dangerous errors in transportation, manufacturing, health care, and protective services. »More

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

The Multiplier Effect of Better Housing Better housing saves money, makes residents healthier and more comfortable, improves air quality, decreases greenhouse gas emissions, and reduces racial disparities. Many of the more than 30 million Americans who live below the poverty line crowd into smaller, older homes. Often these dwellings have structural deficiencies like pest. infestation, mold, peeling paint, and exposed wiring. Inadequate housing influences health and disproportionately affects low-income families and communities of color. Social science research suggests that retrofitting low-income housing in particular can be a highleverage way to tackle some of our nation's most pressing health, social, and environmental challenges. »More into

#### ECONOMY Social Media as an Unemployment Early Warning System

A team of researchers at the University of Michigan developed a method to use real-time data from Twitter to estimate job losses in the U.S. economy. Although official economic indicators set the standard in terms of accuracy Policymakers are left to make significant economic economy and the labor market. The research shows the potential for using alternative data sources to provide novel measures that, when combined with official statistics, can provide policymakers, market participants, and the public with improved ability to track economic activity. «More Info

### **Priority Research Areas**

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has identified priority areas for research and funding that have the potential to improve mental health care over the short, medium, and long term.

To support these priority areas, teams of NIMH staff and researchers provide guidance on scientific, funding, and policy matters across the Institute. NIMH staff also facilitate the development of research initiatives and funding opportunities. Each team makes substantial contributions to their respective fields that deepen our understanding of science and mental health within the Institute and the larger biomedical research community.

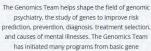
NIMH continues to support the use of Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) as a framework for investigating mental disorders across many different research areas. RDoC encourages investigators to explore the basic biological and cognitive processes that lead to mental health and illness outside the confines of diagnostic categories. RDoC research focuses on transdiagnostic constructs of psychopathology, along a range of functioning, to help understand the development, progression, and treatment of mental illness.

Suicide is an urgent, complex public health crisis. The Suicide Research Team was formed as part of NIMH's commitment to helping reduce the suicide rate by 20% by 2025.

Suicide

### Mental Health Disparities

The Disparities Team promotes innovative and highimpact mental health research that enhances our understanding of minority mental health and health disparities, reduces mental health disparities and their impact on individuals and communities, and moves us toward achieving mental health equity.



discovery to clinical translational efforts.

Genomics

### **Global Mental Health**

The Global Mental Health Team helps shape and advance NIMH's efforts to improve the lives of people living with or at risk for mental illnesses in lowresource settings worldwide.

## Because program officers and reviewers are human ...





## **But... I'm brilliant!**

ROLE OF PROGRAM OFFICERS





## NIH Review Panel, 1950s

## NIH Review Panel, 2010s

## But... I'm brilliant!

COMPETING FOR ATTENTION



Number of pages in the average federal grant application.



Percentage of workers who check their email while on other calls.



Percentage of people who effectively multitask.



Attention span of the average person.



## Because successful grantsmanship requires a different approach...



## A different sort of writing...

**GRANTWRITING PRINCIPLES** 

Scholarly pursuit: Reflects individual passion Sponsor's goals: Adopts service attitude **Past oriented**: Describes completed work **Future oriented:** Describes planned work **Theme-centered:** Clear theory and thesis **Project-centered**: Clear objectives, tasks, products **Persuasive:** Sells to the reader **Expository**: Explains to the reader **Impersonal**: Tone is objective, dispassionate **Personal**: Conveys excitement **Lengthy:** Encourages verbosity **Constrained:** Rewards brevity **Specialized terminology:** Aimed at limited audience Accessible language: Aims at broad audience **Academic Writing Grant Writing** 

Source: Porter, R. (2007). Why academics have a hard time writing good grant proposals. The Journal of Research Administration, 38, 161-167.



## ... requires a different sort of thinking.

SALES PRINCIPLES

Know your	Value Proposition	Storytelling &	Clear & Concise
Audience		Emotional Appeal	Communication
Positioning &	Credibility and	Outcomes & Return	Call to Action
Differentiation	Social Proof	on Investment	
	Brand Consistency	Adaptability & Responsiveness	



## I'm a researcher, not a

## salesperson.

- Intellectual freedom
- Oversimplification
- Commercialism vs
  Academic identity
- Time and energy
- Credit
- Quick results



## Would you buy it?

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**CREDIT**: *Mad Med*, season 1, episode 13, "<u>Smoke Gets in Your Eyes</u>"

# Break



## What does this have to do with grant writing?



## Sales principles in grant writing

SALES PRINCIPLES MAPPED TO PROPOSAL SECTIONS & REVIEW CRITERIA

Know your	Value	Storytelling &	Clear & Concise
Audience	Proposition	Emotional Appeal	Communication
Positioning &	Credibility and	Outcomes & Return	Call to Action
Differentiation	Social Proof	on Investment	
	Brand Consistency	Adaptability & Responsiveness	



### **Pitch Practice**

### RESEARCH, 3 WAYS

- Read the sample abstract, Page 1.
- Discuss how this abstract might be revised so that it incorporates key sales principles.
- Review the proposed revisions, Page 3.

What do you notice

What do you like?

What don't you like?

### **The Proposed Research**

### Active Learning at Scale: Advancing Knowledge in Learning Science and Generative AI

This project seeks to deepen our understanding of active learning within scalable educational contexts by developing the Active Learning at Scale (Active L@S) framework. This framework will allow postsecondary students to engage with course content and practice essential skills through generative learning strategies, such as note-taking, summarizing, self-explaining, question answering, and retrieval practice. These strategies, guided by large language models (LLMs), will facilitate an exploration into how diverse student populations respond to adaptive learning tools across various settings. Through this research, we aim to advance the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of large-scale, generative learning technologies and the mechanisms that influence learning efficacy.

Guided by learning science and cognitive theories, this project will employ a human-centered design approach, iteratively developing the Active L@S framework within the existing mobile platform, INFLO. This research will integrate an LLM to produce contextually relevant, research-informed prompts and feedback mechanisms that adapt to student responses in real-time. By applying machine learning, data engineering, and natural language processing techniques, the project will explore how individual differences impact the effectiveness of active learning. Through extensive A/B testing, this work will contribute to a nuanced understanding of the conditions that foster successful learning outcomes in large, diverse student cohorts.

This research focuses on the foundational aspects of active learning and technology-enhanced learning environments, with implications for how adaptive and personalized learning experiences can be effectively implemented on a large scale. The integration of LLMs in education is at an emergent stage, and this project will explore the theoretical implications of using Al-driven tools to support generative learning across multiple domains. Findings from this research will contribute to the literature on learning sciences, human-computer interaction, and educational technology, offering insights into the interactional dynamics between learners and adaptive AI.

The project will systematically examine active learning processes and outcomes through controlled experimental designs, involving over 100,000 students across multiple institutions. Data collection will include student demographic information, system usability assessments, and satisfaction surveys, as well as granular data from digital learning activities. Using a combination of Bayesian analysis, machine learning algorithms, and natural language processing, the research will identify patterns in student engagement and learning effectiveness, while accounting for individual and contextual factors. These analyses will allow for a comprehensive exploration of the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of large-scale active learning.

The Active L@S platform will be integrated into the Canvas LMS, allowing for future research on adaptive learning systems within established educational technologies. Research findings will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and scholarly reports, furthering academic discourse on the role of generative AI in supporting scalable, evidence-based learning interventions. This project will enrich the theoretical landscape of learning science and inform subsequent studies on the application of AI in diverse educational settings.

Adapted from D. MacNamara. Active Learning at Scale Transforming Teaching and Learning via Large-Scale Learning Science and Generative Al

### HANDS-ON EXERCISE

### Pitch Practice

You have been invited to a dinner with a major donor to the COE, known to award \$1-2M grants to faculty to advance their research.

The donor often requests a concept paper on the spot. She may present your concept to her board of directors, or she could fund it without their approval.

You have been looking for the "right" funding opportunity, but no luck yet.

You decide to update your brief write-up on that project in case the donor requests it.



### HANDS-ON EXERCISE

## Pitch Practice



# Now what?







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## We look forward to working with you.