

Association News

Report on the APSA Research Grant Program¹

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The APSA Research Grant Program makes small grants available to scholars not affiliated with PhD-granting institutions to support research in all areas of political science. The Program is competitive and peer-reviewed, and is intended to advance opportunities for independent scholars and those in institutions with more limited internal resources than are typically available in the PhD programs.

This paper provides an overview of the Research Grant Program. It is written with several questions in mind:

- what is the caliber of work produced by projects receiving Program support,
- is there “value-added” from APSA support by allowing funded projects to go forward or improving their productivity
- who most often makes use of the Program, and
- how well is it meeting demand.

The analysis is based on a mail survey of applicants, funded and unfunded, who applied between 1988 and 1991, and on the 1993 applications. Forty-nine surveys were returned, 24 from grant recipients and 25 from unfunded applicants.

Program Background

The Research Grant Program was established in 1984 to make research resources more readily available for independent scholars and for political scientists in institutions without large research budgets. There is no restriction on topics or methodology, and proposals are required only to address a significant problem in the field.

Proposals must specify a research design; how the project relates to previous research developments; and how it contributes to scholarship within the field. They are limited to five pages or less in length. The principal investigator must be an APSA member, and a political science faculty member at a college or university that does not grant a PhD in political science, or a political scientist not affiliated with an academic institution.

Individual grants do not exceed \$1,500 and are not renewable. The award money may be used for activities such as travel to archives, travel to conduct interviews, or purchase of data sets. Travel to professional meetings, secretarial costs except for preparation of the final manuscripts for publication, and salary support for the principal investigator are excluded from funding.

The APSA Council has budgeted \$15,000 annually for the Program since 1987, starting with a \$10,000 budget in 1985 and \$12,000 in 1986. About 12 awards are made per year averaging \$1300 each, from pools of from 30 to 40 applications. The APSA Research Support Committee reviews and rates all proposals on the basis of scientific merit, and recommends the top applications to the Council for funding.

Profile of APSA Research Grant Projects

APSA-funded research grant projects on average have a total budget of \$2000, of which typically \$1300 is funded by APSA and the remainder from the applicant's home institution. Grantees most often use the funds for travel expenses, research assistance, and office expenses like photocopying, printing, and mailings.

Projects are usually completed within a year of the award. Twenty-one of the 24 survey respondents

had produced at least one work product from the project after one or more years. One respondent had not produced any work products three years after receiving funds, and two others who had been funded one year before the survey did not yet have results.

A few respondents reported altering the scope of their project—either elaborating or eliminating dimensions studied. Budgetary changes usually implied cutting back on projected expenditures. For example, two recipients eliminated personal interviews and others cut back on travel and research assistance. In one recent case, the recipient asked, and received, permission from the Research Support Committee to shift the funds to a different topic to exploit a new research opportunity which arose unexpectedly as a result of an election.

Projects are reportedly productive. Typical outcomes of funded research projects are conference papers, journal articles, and books or chapters of books. Eighteen of the 24 recipients of funds responding to the survey produced conference papers, presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting (five), IPSA Meeting (one), APSA Meeting (eight), Urban Affairs Association Conference (two), among others. Seven produced journal articles, published in *The Annals*, *Polity*, *Judicature*, *Urban Affairs*, *Common Market Studies*, *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Politische*, and *Legal Medicine*.

Three of the 24 recipients in the survey wrote either monographs or chapters of books, and three were in the process of writing monographs and chapters. Four grant recipients completed books and four other manuscripts are near completion or are in submission to publishers. Eight award winners produced other research works.

¹ Kate Petty and Alys Brehio, APSA interns from Georgetown University, assisted in preparing this report.

Caliber of Work Produced

Independent measures of the caliber of research work are difficult to obtain. Perhaps the single best measure is the receptivity of the academic community to the work which results. All but three of the 24 projects surveyed produced written products which entered the academic community in some form or another—most typically conference papers. As noted, many (18 of 24) recipients produced conference papers.

Eleven of the 24 respondents reported they had produced journal articles, book chapters, or books—research products which typically are peer reviewed. The journals in which articles have appeared are not all top tier, but are in many cases important topical ones for the development of work in specific fields. Almost all of the other respondents said they also had articles, chapters, and books pending, which means they at least are seeking peer-reviewed outlets.

Finally the Research Support Committee itself has found the pool of proposals each year sufficiently deep to provide more than enough fundable proposals for available funds. While this does not speak to the question of the overall caliber of work resulting from funded proposals, it does indicate that there is a high expectation of success for each proposal funded.

Profile of Unfunded Proposals

To explore whether APSA funds really are needed for the projects to advance, we asked applicants who did not receive funds to report on the fate of the project they proposed. APSA does not retain ranking or scoring information, however, so there is no way to determine whether these unfunded applicants were rejected for lack of funds or because of flaws in their research proposals.

Among the 25 projects studied that did not receive APSA funds from the Research Grant Program, nine (about a third) fell by the wayside. The others proceeded with less or no funding, frequently were scaled back, and less frequently

produced products which are presented or peer-reviewed.

Of the nine who did not continue their projects, six tried to find alternative support but could not. The remaining three did not look for additional funding because of involvement in other research activities.

Of the 16 unfunded applicants in the survey who did proceed with their project, 10 found alternative funding. Five of these 10 projects were supported by the applicants' schools. One was supported by Fulbright funds, one by a grant from the Canadian Embassy, and two by school release time arrangements. Funding sources were not identified in two cases. The other six projects proceeded without financial support, with researchers absorbing costs themselves: of these, three attempted to find supplementary funding and could not, while the other three did not attempt to look.

The median amount spent on the 16 research projects which APSA did not fund was \$1,500, about \$500 less than the corresponding amount for grantees that APSA funded, and projects were often reported to have been scaled back in scope. Funds were used for expenses such as photocopying, printing, and mailings; travel was less often reported than in APSA funded projects.

Work generated by those who did not receive APSA grants was assessed to determine quantitatively and qualitatively what was produced. Of the sixteen who continued with their research projects without APSA funds, half (8) completed conference papers. The papers were presented at ISA Meetings (two), APSA Meetings (three), MPSA Meetings (one), ECSA Meetings (one), and international conferences (three). Two applicants produced journal articles which appeared in *Current Politics & Economics of Europe* and *East European Quarterly*, and one other article is awaiting publication. Two of the applicants wrote monographs or chapters of books, and one was in the process of writing a monograph or chapter. One completed a book, one is in the process of writ-

ing a book, and two have submitted manuscripts for consideration.

Comparing Funded and Unfunded Applications

The following findings emerge from a comparison of funded and unfunded applicants regarding the impact of the Research Grant Program:

- about one-third (9 of 25) of unfunded proposals were not pursued at all; none of the funded proposals was abandoned
- ten of the 25 unfunded proposals (40 percent) found alternative funding elsewhere; six others (24 percent) were undertaken by the researcher without funds
- most APSA research grant winners also obtain additional funding—over two-thirds supplement their APSA grants with funds from other sources
- median total project size for work APSA funded was about \$500 larger than for the 10 unfunded projects which found support elsewhere
- projects supported with APSA funds were more likely to be productive than those APSA did not fund: 88 percent of APSA-funded projects generated at least one research product compared to 62 percent of projects APSA did not fund that continued anyway
- projects supported with APSA funds were more likely to generate work likely to have been peer-reviewed (journal articles, book chapters, etc.) than non-APSA-funded projects: 46 percent of APSA-funded projects had such products compared to 25 percent of projects APSA did not fund that continued anyway.

Value Added from APSA Funding

Projects receiving APSA funding are more likely to go forward, likely to be larger, more likely to generate research products, and more likely to produce peer-reviewed results than projects APSA does not fund. The extent to which this effect results from differential quality between funded and unfunded proposals can't be deter-

mined from this study, though the effects are present even when those unfunded proposals which also could not find funding elsewhere are excluded.

APSA funds are not the only resource for many of the applicants to the Program. But they do not often appear just to substitute for other funding; and when combined with other resources work to make projects larger and more productive.

Who Uses the APSA Research Grant Program

The Research Grant Program is targeted to independent political scientists and faculty members at schools that do not grant a PhD in political science. This targeting was intended to direct resources to scholars in environments where the balance among academic demands is not tipped as much in the direction of research productivity as it is in PhD institutions, because of teaching load, absence of graduate students, and smaller numbers of colleagues in one's field; and in order to reach scholars in circumstances where institutional resources may be limited.

There are no direct measures to test these assumptions about relative need, but several indirect measures from the Departmental Survey reflect on them. As an indicator of opportunity for research productivity, the average size of the annual teaching load and numbers of separate course preparations shows distinct differences between PhD and other programs. Faculty at PhD institutions average 2 courses taught per faculty member per year, while those at MA institutions average 3.4; faculty at undergraduate institutions offering the BA in political science average 3.5; and faculty at schools combining political science and other fields in their BA program average 4.1. Numbers of separate preparations per year increase similarly.

There is a less dramatic difference evident in the actual internal institutional funding for research-related activity among the schools, e.g., relatively similar amounts are available per FTE for travel to con-

ferences. PhD schools report about \$355 per FTE for such travel, MA schools \$415, public undergraduate schools \$300, private undergraduate schools \$450, and small combined degree programs \$367. These numbers, however, may mask greater differentials in other resources, such as reflected in wide differentials in external funds from grants in contracts.

Faculty from BA schools apply disproportionately for APSA research grants: 58 percent of grant applications are from faculty in BA schools, which house 41 percent of faculty in institutions eligible for the Program. Thirty-seven percent of applications are from faculty in MA schools (comprising 45% of eligible faculty), and 5 percent are from undergraduate social science and combined programs (with 14 percent of eligible faculty).

But faculty from MA programs disproportionately win them. Faculty in programs offering Masters degrees earned 55 percent of the awards made to academically based political scientists. (One award in the study sample was made to an independent scholar.)

Comments from Program Applicants

The survey asked respondents for any suggestions or comments they might have regarding the Program. One person said that the Program was "a wonderful source of 'seed' money for those of us who may not do the kinds of work where getting funding is easier." Another suggested that APSA expand the Program because "those of us at liberal arts undergraduate institutions need this kind of assistance to encourage our scholarship. Perhaps the APSA could seek donations from our colleagues to this Program, as it has with other scholarship funds."

Another said, "I think the overall grant Program is well conceived. It is especially helpful that the small grants go to faculty from non-PhD-granting institutions." Others said that they were unsure of the criteria for a competitive application, however, noting that proposals that were denied were returned

to the authors without reviews or comments explaining why they were not accepted.

Finally, most respondents said the projects funded by the Research Grant Program contributed favorably to professional advancement. The grant money allowed them to polish their research and make contacts, they said, and several reported that the projects materially contributed to receiving promotions and tenure.

APSA Heads to New York City

APSA's 90th Annual Meeting will be held September 1-4, 1994, at the New York Hilton and Sheraton New York hotels, in the heart of the "City that Never Sleeps."

You and your colleagues will be within walking distance of Times Square and its surrounding Broadway and off-Broadway theatres, as well as TKTS, the half-price same-day ticket distributor. Also within steps of both hotels is Carnegie Hall, Central Park, Rockefeller Center, Fifth Avenue shopping, and Radio City Music Hall.

You won't want to miss the Museum of Modern Art or the Whitney Museum, just blocks from the New York Hilton, or venture to one of the 150 other museums and 400 galleries in Manhattan alone. And don't forget your appetite—New York offers the best in American, Chinese, Argentinian, Indian, Italian, Mexican, Thai, Ethiopian, and Irish, along with wine bars, juice bars, coffee houses, seafood, and vegetarian!

The APSA has negotiated low rates for attendees of this special event, the 90th Annual Meeting. And if you preregister for the meeting by May 1, 1994, you have the chance to win two free round-trip tickets on American Airlines to anywhere in the continental United States. Be sure to find the preregistration form, hotel and airfare information located in this issue. See you in the Big Apple!