NMSU Researchers Receive NASA/EPSCoR Award to Develop Future Astrobiology

Photo: Nancy Chanover, Department of Astronomy faculty member and David Voelz, Associate Professor of Klipsch School of Electrical and Computer Engineering
A collaboration of faculty from NMSU’s Departments of Astronomy and Electrical & Computer Engineering, New Mexico Tech’s Earth & Environmental Science Department, and researchers from NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center were recently awarded two NASA grants from the EPSCoR program and the Astrobiology Science and Technology Instrument Development program. The proposing teams include PI Nancy Chanover and Co-PI’s David Glenar (NMSU Astronomy) and David Voelz (NMSU EE). These grants, together totalling more than $1.3 million, are for the development of infrared instrumentation for in-situ organic detection. The goals of these projects are to design, build, and test an instrument prototype that can be used for a future astrobiology mission.

In sample return missions from comets, asteroids, or Mars, robust sample screening and selection will be essential for achieving core goals of the NASA vision. Specifically, sample screening is critical for achieving the goals of understanding the production and processing of organic molecules in the solar system and their relationship to prebiotic chemistry and habitable environments. In what will likely be strictly in situ missions for the next decades to icy moon targets such as Europa or Enceladus, automated sample screening will provide the information necessary to select the most interesting targets for introduction into analytical laboratories that are restricted to a very limited number of samples due to relatively short battery lifetimes. In these cases, identification of organic functional groups by a prescreening tool followed by organic compound analysis by a mass spectrometer would greatly increase the probability of mission success.

The NASA EPSCoR award will fund the development and field testing of a point spectrometer based on acousto-optic tunable filter (AOTF) technology, for a “quick look” in situ detection of organic species at millimeter size scales. This instrument will be paired with a miniature Time-of-Flight Laser Desorption Mass Spectrometer (TOF-LDMS) and will prescreen samples for evidence of volatile or refractory organics before the laser desorption step and subsequent mass spectrometer measurement. The NASA ASTID award will fund the laboratory integration of the AOTF and TOF-LDMS and the demonstration of the combined system. These instrument development efforts will merge the capabilities of two sensors with significant prior investment by NASA, and will result in a powerful tool for astrobiological exploration of our solar system.

The development of instrumentation for astrobiological investigations will significantly strengthen the research capabilities relevant to NASA’s Science Mission Directorate within the state of New Mexico. Through partnerships with scientists and engineers at NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center and industry, and with students at NMSU and New Mexico Tech, this program will contribute to the science and technology capabilities, higher education, and economic development of New Mexico.

This project will expand New Mexico’s participation in NASA research, will develop NASA’s future workforce through student participation, and will enhance the economic viability of the state.

Dr. Nancy Chanover, Associate Professor in NMSU’s Department of Astronomy

Dr. David Glenar, Senior Research Associate in NMSU’s Department of Astronomy

Dr. David Voelz, Associate Professor of NMSU’s Klipsch School of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Recipients of the 7th Annual URC Awards for Exceptional Achievements in Creative Scholarly Activity

Dr. Jason Ackleson
Recipient of the Early Career Award for Exceptional Achievements in Creative Scholarly Activity

Associate Professor Jason Ackleson teaches in the Department of Government at New Mexico State University. From 2003-2008 he was Associate Dean of the New Mexico State University Honors College. A native New Mexican, he spent several years in the United Kingdom as a Truman and British Marshall Scholar. There he earned his Ph.D. in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. At LSE he also served as the senior editor of Millennium: Journal of International Studies.

Working and publishing on questions of security, borders, and globalization, his current research addresses migration and border security. Policy analysts have cited his work in testimony before Congress, and he has appeared on local and international media, including NPR and CNN. He is active in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Excellence in Border Security and Immigration, a national university consortium led by the University of Arizona. Within the Center, he is working on major multi-year research grants that are examining border risk management and international governance. His publications include articles in Political Geography, Geopolitics, and Knowledge, Technology, and Policy.

Researchers have described Dr. Ackleson as a “leading international scholar” of border theory.

Dr. Ackleson teaches courses in international relations, comparative politics, and political science. His commitment to students extends through his work as faculty advisor for the award-winning NMSU Model United Nations program, a leading student simulation of international politics and diplomacy.

Dr. Jesus J. Barquet
Recipient of the Distinguished Career Award for Exceptional Achievements in Creative Scholarly Activity

As a literary critic, he has published Consagración de La Habana (Winner of the “Letras de Oro” Prize in Essay in 1991, at the University of Miami), Escrituras poéticas de una nación (Winner of the “Lourdes Casal” Prize in Literary Criticism in 1998, in Havana, Cuba), and Teatro y revolución cubana (2002). His articles have appeared in many scholarly journals from the Americas, Europe and Japan, such as Revista Iberoamericana, Afro-Hispanic Review, Inter-American Review of Bibliography, Ollantay Theater Magazine, Temas, Caribe, World Literature Today, and Latin American Theater Review.

As a poet, he has published six books of poetry and three plaquettes: among them Unno rompido sueño (Winner of the 2nd Prize in the Chicano/Latino Poetry Contest in 1993, at the University of California-Irvine), Naufragios/Schipwrecks (Honorable Mention in the Frontera Pellicer-Frost Binational Poetry Prize in 1998), and Sin fecha de extinción (2004).

He has co-edited six anthologies of Hispanic and US-Hispanic literature: Más allá de la Isla (1995), The Island Odyssey (2002), Poesía cubana del siglo XX (2002), Haz de incitaciones (2003), Crossed Pollination (2004), José Angel Valente: A Selection of His Poetry (2005). He was also the Recipient of:

1. a Cintas Fellowship in Creative Writing in 1991,
2. a Writer-in-Residence position in Altos de Chavón, Dominican Republic, in 1994,
3. a Fulbright Fellowship in Research/Teaching in 1997, Bogota, Colombia,
4. a Cuban Artist Fund Award in 2004, and
5. two Rotary Fellowships for teaching, in 2000 and 2005, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
Dr. David M. Boje
Recipient of the Distinguished Career Award for Exceptional Achievements in Creative Scholarly Activity

David M. Boje is endowed Bank of America professor in the Management Department at New Mexico State University, and past holder of the Anderson professorship. His main research is the interplay of storytelling methods and ethics. His current books (for Sage) The Storytelling Organization and Critical Theory Ethics for Business and Public Administration (Information Age Press), and just released Handbook of Managerial Psychology (with co-editors). Boje books include Managing in the Postmodern World (with Dennehy), Narrative Methods in Organization and Communication Research, He has published over 120 journal articles, including ones for Administrative Science Quarterly, Management Science, Management Communication Quarterly, Organization Studies, Leadership Quarterly, and other fine journals. He is President of Standing Conference for Management & Organization Inquiry (http://scmoi.org), editor of Tamara Journal (http://tamarajournal.com) and associated editor for Qualitative Research in Organization & Management (QROM) and Journal of Organization Change Management. He serves on 14 other editorial boards.

Dr. Liz Horodowich
Recipient of Early Career Award for Exceptional Achievement in Creative Scholarly Activity.

Liz Horodowich is a historian of Renaissance Italy. She earned her BA from Oberlin College in 1992 and her PhD in European history from the University of Michigan in 2000. Her research focuses on the history of language and foul language in particular, investigating swearing, cursing and insults in sixteenth-century Venice and the ways in which Italian states punished foul language and encouraged civility in the urban world.

This research has culminated in her recent book, “Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice” published by Cambridge University Press, in April 2008. Her articles have been published in some of the most prestigious journals in the field of history, including “Past and Present” and “Renaissance Studies”, and she is the recipient of grants and fellowships from a variety of organizations, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, The American Philosophical Society, and the American Historical Association. She was most recently honored with a fellowship from Harvard University at the Villa I Tatti in Florence.

Because she is on sabbatical in New York, working on her next book, “A Brief History of Venice,” she could not be here today, but her award will be accepted by the History Department head, Jeffrey Brown.

Dr. Harriet Kramer Linkin
Recipient of the Distinguished Career Award for Exceptional Achievements in Creative Scholarly Activity

Harriet Kramer Linkin completed her PhD in English Literature as the Austin Warren Fellow at the University of Michigan, which awarded her the Clarence Thorpe Prize for her dissertation on Renaissance and Romantic poets, in 1985. She began her professional career at NMSU in 1986 as an Assistant Professor of Nineteenth Century British Literature, was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor in 1993, and promoted to full Professor in 2000.

She has developed an international reputation for her groundbreaking studies of the work of women poets during the Romantic period, and is the scholar of record for the influential Irish poet Mary Tighe. To date, she has published more than thirty essays and articles in peer-reviewed journals and collections on Romantic-era writers and has published three books: Approaches to Teaching Women Poets of the British Romantic Period (1997)–winner of the Sonia Giop Award, Romanticism and Women Poets: Opening the Doors of Reception (1999), and The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe (2005)–the first scholarly edition of the poet’s work in two centuries. She has found NMSU to be an incredibly supportive environment for scholarship and teaching. In 1989, she received the Patricia Christmore Junior Faculty Award; in 1996 she received the El Paso Natural Gas Faculty Achievement Award. She was honored to serve as the English Department Head from 2004–2008, and is thrilled to be getting back to the classroom full-time this year to be inspired by the great students at NMSU.
NMSU Faculty Wins Outstanding Ornamental Publication Award

By Hamid M. Rad/OVPR

Dr. Geno Picchioni, Associate Professor of NMSU’s Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences along with authors Mario Valenzuela-Vazquez (Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez) and Wayne A. Mackay (University of Florida), shared the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS)’s Outstanding Ornamental Publication Award for their paper entitled, “Correlative Supply and Demand Functions in Lupinus havardii: A Forgotten Side of Cut Flower Physiology?” (J. Amer. Soc. Hort. Sci. 132:102–111).

The authors were honored at an awards ceremony on Monday, July 21, 2008, during the 105th ASHS Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Q&A

Congratulations on winning this prestigious award! Please tell us about this project. Why did you decide to study Lupinus havardii?
The species produces attractive flowers that are appealing to retail florists throughout the US, and it is native to the Chihuahuan desert. In the 1990s, co-author Wayne Mackay brought it out of the wild and into cultivation because of the desirable features of the plant. Several NMSU graduate students (including co-author Mario Valenzuela-Vazquez) selected it for graduate study, beginning the late 1990s.

Did you have external funding for this research?
Yes. Funding sources for this project included: the Fred C. Gloeckner Foundation (Harrison, New York), USDA Hispanic Serving Institutions Grants, USDA Rio Grande Basin Initiative, and the New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station.

What’s going to be your next big research project?
We will continue to look at postharvest physiology of Big Bend Bluebonnet, as well as finish up several other studies involving the mineral nutrition of ornamental plants.

You’ve been teaching Ornamental Plant Production. Tell us about its importance.
Ornamental crop production in nurseries and greenhouses has been a growth segment of New Mexico agricultural economy, which has created jobs for our students. We need to teach methods of ornamental crop production in a manner that sustains the industries growth, including ways to use water and fertilizers more efficiently, recycle wastes, and conserve energy. In these ways, students will be better job-prepared to meet the challenges facing the industry.

What is your advice to students who might be interested in pursuing graduate degrees in Plant and Environmental Sciences?
Develop a sincere interest, a passion for one’s subject. Be willing to free up sizable, uninterrupted blocks of time in the library to become an authority on the subject and a better writer. Make all of one’s tedious and time-consuming moments on the laboratory bench or in the field. Be more than just an exercise. Make these moments count and contribute to real and important deficits in the scientific literature. But first, do the homework!

Dr. Picchioni can be reached at gpicchio@nmsu.edu
Dr. Arterburn Appointed Interim Director of the Institute for Applied Biosciences

Dr. Jeff Arterburn was appointed interim director of the newly formed, University wide Institute of Applied Biosciences (IAB). Dr. Arterburn is a professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. He joined NMSU in 1992, with a research focus on organic chemistry.

About the goals of the IAB, Dr. Arterburn explained, “The IAB provides a new mechanism for pursuing important research challenges at NMSU, with the establishment of research teams focused on synthetic biology and emerging pathogens. Nascent IAB projects involve studying and combating emerging viral diseases along the Rio Grande corridor, and developing new strategies for the production of biofuels. The goal of the IAB is to field innovative multidisciplinary collaborative research teams with unique expertise to address significant scientific problems and opportunities for the state and region, that can successfully compete for large research grants from federal, state and private agencies, and generate new opportunities for economic development.”

Two new faculty members aligned with the emerging pathogens focus area have been hired through the IAB. Dr’s Immo Alex Hansen, and Peter Hraber will be joining NMSU as the first group of institute line members, in August 2008. Their laboratories will be housed in the Department of Biology. “It will be a pleasure to welcome them into our academic community, and you will be hearing much more about these individuals and their plans in the coming months,” says Dr. Arterburn. The IAB also plans to offer affiliate member status for NMSU faculty and staff, in order to provide opportunities to dedicate extra effort towards advancing research in these critical projects. “Collaborative science is the new paradigm for academic research and education, and thanks to our outstanding faculty, students and staff, NMSU is well positioned to take the lead with initiatives that are important for the New Mexicans and the nation,” he added. Dr. Arterburn can be reached at 646-2738 or, via email at jarterbu@nmsu.edu.

Dr. Heinz Nakotte Appointed LANL Instrument Scientist

Dr. Heinz Nakotte, Department of Physics faculty member, has been appointed as the Instrument Scientist of the Single-Crystal Diffractometer, SCD, at the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE), Los Alamos National Laboratory. Single-crystal neutron diffraction is used to determine crystal and magnetic structures in materials. Unlike X-ray diffraction, neutrons provide a strong contrast for light elements, such as hydrogen, which makes it the technique of choice for many biological and chemical systems.

SCD was based at the Intense Pulsed Neutron Source (IPNS), Argonne National Laboratory, until IPNS was shut down earlier this year. The IPNS SCD is a world-class diffractometer, and it had undergone major upgrades as recently as five years ago. Outgoing director Ray Teller suggested shipping SCD to LANSCE where it would replace the obsolete and outdated Los Alamos Single-Crystal Diffractometer. A condition for moving SCD to LANSCE was that Dr. Nakotte would be in charge of the instrument, as he had frequently used SCD at IPNS. During that period he gained the trust of the IPNS Instrument Scientist, Art Schultz, who wanted to leave SCD “in good hands.”

SCD arrived at Los Alamos in early July, where it was set up and became fully operational in a record time of only four days. This was only possible with the help of Art Schultz and Rich Vitt (both from IPNS), Joe Peterson and Karunakar Kothapalli (NMSU graduate students), and the LANSCE Mechanical Team. The operation of SCD is supported through a User Consortium consisting of researchers from a variety of different backgrounds (physics, chemistry, biology, and materials), and through a sub-contract, LANSCE provides some support to Dr. Nakotte’s group for the running and maintenance of the new SCD-LANSCE.

Dr. Bob Czerniak Appointed Interim Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Bob Czerniak assumed the position of the Interim Associate Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the Director of the college Research Center. He continues supervision over WRRI, EML and the Anderson Hall’s IT as Associate VP for Research.

Dr. Wynn Egginton Appointed ERB Director

Dr. Wynn Egginton accepted the position of Director of the Office of Educational Research and Budgeting (ERB) at the College of Education. ERB facilitates grant applications and management of funds for all departments at the College of Education.
SPOTLIGHT ON NMSU GRADUATE

NMSU Astronomy Graduate Working at NASA's Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute

By Hamid M. Rad/OVPR

Brandon Lawton from the Department of Astronomy successfully defended his dissertation this July. Lawton’s research is on the evolution and presence of organic molecules in early epoch galaxies; he will soon start working at NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, MD. He says the best advice he ever received: “It’s not always the most gifted person that succeeds, but instead the most tenacious, i.e., don’t give up!”

Q&A

Where are you from?
I was born and raised in Olympia, Washington.

How did you become interested in Astronomy?
I became interested in astronomy at a young age. My brother, Brett introduced me to science fiction shows such as Star Trek, and my neighbors, Tom, Jane, and Matt Gallagher allowed me to look through their telescope at the dark Lacey, Washington skies. Once I saw Jupiter and Saturn with my own eyes I was hooked. My parents, encouraged my studies in physics and astronomy, and I owe a great deal to them for their support and encouragement.

Why did you choose NMSU for your graduate studies?
I applied to NMSU for several reasons. My advisor at the University of Washington, Dr. Paula Szkody, encouraged me to do so. NMSU also has access to good telescopes such as the 3.5 meter telescope and the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, both at Apache Point Observatory, in the Sacramento Mountains. I was thrilled to be accepted to the program in August 2002.

Why did you decide to pursue a Ph.D?
I decided to pursue a Ph.D because I love the pursuit of new knowledge and being at the forefront of discovery. I also really enjoy teaching the subject and discussing it with anybody who has the slightest interest in astronomy.

You have quite interesting research interests, “organic molecules in other galaxies and the interstellar medium of galaxies.” Please tell us about their importance.
Galaxies are composed of stars, planets, gas, dust, and even an exotic material known as dark matter. To understand how humans, or life in general, can exist in the Milky Way galaxy, or the Universe in general, it is important to learn how the constituents that were important for our existence arose in the Universe. Organic molecules (molecules with an abundance of carbon), are considered a crucial ingredient in the prebiotic soup that later gave rise to biological molecules such as RNA and DNA. The step from prebiotic soup to life is still not understood, but much is being learned thanks to the recent crossover of subfields that has given rise to new fields such as astrochemistry and astrobiology. Much of the organics on the early Earth were formed in space, thus, the interstellar medium (the space between stars) has the seeds of life in abundance. The step from prebiotic soup to life is still not understood, but much is being learned thanks to the recent crossover of subfields that has given rise to new fields such as astrochemistry and astrobiology. Much of the organics on the early Earth were formed in space, thus, the interstellar medium (the space between stars) has the seeds of life in abundance. My PhD focused on other galaxies to see if these same organics were in abundance, or if our galaxy was somehow special. Interestingly, the answer to that question depends on the galaxy. Galaxies that are experiencing massive star formation appear to have these organics in relative abundance. However, more dust poor and likely primordial galaxies do not show the tell-tale signs of organics. Further work in this field will examine how the abundances of organics have changed with cosmic time. It may be that we are living in a period of time where organics are finally prevalent enough in the Universe such that life of some form is more common.

What was your experience like at the Department of Astronomy? Did the faculty share your interests?

“It’s not always the most gifted person that succeeds, but instead the most tenacious, i.e., don’t give up!”
The faculty at the Department of Astronomy were wonderful and personable. They are always willing to share ideas. The recent success of many of the graduates from our department attests to the strengths of the astronomy department at NMSU.

Did the department have adequate equipment to support your research?
The department did have adequate equipment for my project, but I was also partially funded by a NASA fellowship and the New Mexico Space Grant. Without those fellowships, it would have been much more difficult to complete this work. The astronomy department has a lot of room to grow and become a premier astronomy institution. However, this greatly depends on continued funding from the university, particularly in continuing our activities with the Sloan Digital Sky Survey and other telescopes at Apache Point Observatory, as well as securing funding for Solar astronomy.

Tell us about your advisor.
My advisor was Christopher W. Churchill. He was instrumental in my success and helped a great deal in getting me a good post-doctoral position. There are many great professors in our department and each one contributes a great deal to our success in extragalactic, stellar, and planetary astronomy.

You seemed to travel quite a bit to present your research. You went to China, UK, Puerto Rico. Tell us about your travels. How were you able to afford these trips?
One of the great joys of doing research is to be able to share your work with others across the globe. I have secured travel funding to present my work in China, Puerto Rico, the UK, as well as many places around the U.S. I have truly learned a great deal about astronomy and other cultures from these trips. The NMSU astronomy department has been very successful in getting their grads out to study and present their work abroad. Other grads in our department have recently traveled to India, Germany, Australia, Portugal, Israel, Greece, Italy, Chile, France, and Puerto Rico. These trips are sometimes paid for by grants through the advisor, or in my case, through travel grants, the NASA fellowship, and the NMSU Space Grant Consortium.

NASA Graduate Student Research Program

fellows funded your research for three years. How did you get that funding?
I received the NASA Graduate Student Research Program (GSRP) by writing up a comprehensive research proposal and applying directly to NASA. It is a competitive fellowship, but our department has done well in securing it. Past NMSU astronomy recipients are Melinda Khare and Carrie Anderson. Currently, Sean Lindsay recently got awarded the NASA GSRP fellowship.

What is your message to students who might be interested in Astronomy? Would you recommend pursuing graduate studies at NMSU?
For students who might be interested in pursuing a career in astronomy, I would suggest several things. Be sure to take as many physics courses as possible, and try to put a good effort in doing well. As with many other sciences, understanding astronomy is dependent on understanding physics. But don’t be scared by that, physics isn’t supposed to be easy, but it is interesting. Also, I would encourage students to get to know a professor in the department and see if there are any small projects they can work on with that professor. This is a great hands-on way to get to know how astronomy is actually done. I would certainly recommend graduate studies at NMSU. Not only are the professors great to work with, but we have access to great telescopes and clear skies. You couldn’t ask for anything better.

Do you have words of advice as far as career for our graduate students?
I wouldn’t presume to know what is best for other grads. Every student takes their own path. If a career in research is important, though, my advice is to travel to conferences and make as many connections outside of NMSU as possible. As with any endeavor, building personal relationships with important people in your field can be crucial to securing a good job after graduating.

Dr. Brandon Lawton can be reached via email at lawton.brandon@gmail.com
Dr. David Boje, NMSU’s College of Business Faculty Member

Not Just a Bedtime Story: NMSU Professor Applies Storytelling to Business Management
By Grace Ann Rosile

Storytelling is not just for kids anymore. David Boje, of New Mexico State University’s College of Business, will conduct three presentations related to storytelling in organizations, including leading a prestigious All Academy Showcase Symposium, at the August 2008 annual national meeting of the over-10,000 member Academy of Management in Anaheim, CA.

Boje has been creating insights on organizational storytelling since his seminal 1991 article about an office supply firm. Then in 1996, another key article showed how Disney, creator of some of our most well-know stories, is itself a storytelling organization. These articles appeared in the two most prestigious academic journals in the business management field, the Administrative Science Quarterly and the Academy of Management Journal.

Now, a dozen years after the Disney article, and right next door to Disney in Anaheim, CA, Boje will join several other prominent Disney scholars for an All-Academy Showcase session entitled “Questions We Ask the Disney Smile Factory.” Also this year, Boje’s decades of “storying around” in organizations is culminating with his new book, Storytelling Organizations (Sage 2008).

Although David’s story as a scholar continues, this year’s chapter has a very happy ending. New Mexico State University will give Boje an award for his internationally-recognized ca-
“Not Just a Bedtime Story” continues

Boje’s new books for 2008 are:


3. Handbook of Managerial Psychology (3 Volumes); Editor(s): Yochanan Altman (London Metropolitan University), Frank Bournois (Université Paris (Pantheon-Assas)) and David Boje (New Mexico State University); ISBN: 978-1-4129-4490-8; Publication date: February, 2008; Publisher: SAGE Publications, London.
   - Volume One: Individual Perspectives: The psychology of management and managing - leadership, personality, communication, teams (groups), careers, influencing and decision making, sense making, organizational behaviour
   - Volume Two: Group and Meso Level Perspective: Managing the new workplace: psychological correlates - personality, well-being (stress, work life balance), comparative (cross cultural), gender and diversity, identity, personal development
   - Volume Three: Organizational and Macro Level Perspectives: Managerial Psychology: theory and applications - epistemologies and methodologies, psychoanalysis, cognitive processes, psycholinguistics


Boje’s 3 presentations at the upcoming August 2008 Academy of Management meetings are:

1. All-Academy Showcase Presentation: Questions We Ask the Disney Smile Factory presented by Boje, Van-Maanan, Yoko Brannen, & Gardner (Note: Gardner is an NMSU PhD grad mentored by Boje.)

2. Panel Presentation: Natives Questioning Western Narrative Ways presented by Boje, TwoTrees, Rosile, Gladstone (Note: Gladstone is an NMSU Ph.D. student working with Rosile and Boje.)

3. PreConference Workshop: Not Mickey Mouse: Methodological Writing to Address Qualitative Questions presented by David Boje

Grace Ann Rosile can be reached at garosile@nmsu.edu
The Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC) is currently implementing a new electronic system to create, submit and track grants and proposals for New Mexico State University (NMSU). The Academic Research and Grants Information System (ARGIS) was developed at the University of Central Florida and deployed in 2001. OGC has been working with UCF personnel to implement a customized version of ARGIS that will work with our university environment.

ARGIS provides a web-based interface to an electronic proposal submission, tracking and reporting system. This will allow researchers and other users to use any web browser to create a new proposal, submit for review, obtain all approvals, and submit proposals to the sponsoring agency. ARGIS will eliminate the need for paper packets to be hand carried from colleges to OGC and then to the Sponsored Projects Accounting office. The goal is that ARGIS will enable the NMSU sponsored projects to become paperless and easily manageable by PIs.

ARGIS will be valuable to the faculty who are writing and receiving grants and contracts. The Principal Investigator (PI) will be able to use ARGIS to enter proposals directly into ARGIS to begin the electronic routing process; the PI can do this directly or may choose to work closely with the college research center to enter proposals. Once the proposal is entered into ARGIS, the proposal will be routed electronically through the review and approval cycle. Each college will create a routing system that is tailored to their specific college. After all signatures are received at the college level, the proposal will be routed to OGC, who will do the actual submission to the agency.

ARGIS will also be valuable at the award stage. When an award is received in OGC, we will enter it into ARGIS, modifying any information that has been changed since the proposal was submitted. The PI and college personnel will have access to view the proposed, awarded, and funded budgets. ARGIS utilizes a role profile to delegate the authority each person has to view data. ARGIS will provide the capability to print the standard NMSU forms that are required for a proposal or award, including the Proposal Award Form, the Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) template, the Grant and Contract Administration (GCA) form, and the New Fund Request (NFR) form. ARGIS will eliminate the need for the PAF to be routed to all parties for signature – this will be done electronically.

ARGIS will also provide several customized reports that researchers and others can run to look at proposal submissions and funding. For example, a PI will be able to run a report to show all of his or her grants and contracts for the last ten years, or all current grants and contracts. PI’s will be able to track their individual efforts, and Deans can look at funding across the entire college, or by department. Reports will also be available to compare proposal submissions or awards funding to previous months, fiscal years, or a user customized period of time.

OGC personnel are currently importing NMSU historical proposal and award data into the system, and will begin an incremental rollout of ARGIS to the NMSU campus once that effort is completed, and UCF has finalized all customization for NMSU. OGC is currently working with the College of Agriculture and Home Economics research center (thank you, Ag!) to test the ARGIS system, including the electronic routing process. After thorough testing of ARGIS, OGC will provide training to PI’s, research centers, and department heads in the near future.

It is expected that PI’s will be able to directly obtain expenditure information from ARGIS, which will communicate with Banner through Operational Data Store (ODS).

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