

April 27, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Interested Parties in the California State University System

FROM: Miguel Ceja, Coordinator, Faculty Research Fellows Program,
Center for California Studies, CSUS

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals

PROJECT TITLE: School Funding Formulas – What Works and What Doesn't? Lessons
Learned from Other States

The Senate Office of Research has requested assistance from the California State University Faculty Research Fellows Program to examine and evaluate school funding formulas used in other states in comparison to California and provide policy alternatives that promote equitable funding and greater student success relative to the student populations being served.

Qualified California State University faculty and staff should submit proposals in response to this request. We prefer that the principal investigator is a full-time faculty or staff member of the CSU system, but it is not necessary. Part-time faculty and students can be included as secondary investigators and assistants. The enclosed attachment provides background on the issue, a description of the project, timeline, budget, and requirements for the submission of a proposal.

Proposals are due **May 21, 2007** and should be mailed or faxed to:

Tim Hodson, Director
Center for California Studies
Faculty Research Fellows Program
California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081

Fax: (916) 278-5199

The decision date for funding is May 29, 2007

Sign-off by the principal researcher's campus research office is required as is conformance with Chancellor's Office's Executive Order Number 890 (<http://www.calstate.edu/EO/EO-890.pdf>). Researcher(s)' salary, travel, and incidental expenses are usually paid through CSU, Sacramento. If researcher(s) desire the payment of travel and incidental expenses through the principal researcher's home campus, indirect cost can be paid on these items provided the total budget (including indirect cost) does not exceed \$15,000.

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY RESEARCH FELLOWS PROGRAM**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Project Title/ Description

School Funding Formulas – What Works and What Doesn't? Lessons Learned from Other States

Examine and evaluate school funding formulas used in other states in comparison to California and provide policy alternatives that promote equitable funding and greater student success relative to the student populations being served.

Background

According to The American Institute for Research, “school funding formulas are used by states to determine the financial needs of school districts and direct funds to those with greater financial needs or numbers of difficult-to-serve student populations such as students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.”¹ While each education finance formula purports to ensure that every education dollar is used to accelerate student success, the formula and the results vary from state to state.

When compared to other states, California has experienced a significant decline in the quality of its K-12 educational system over the last three decades. Indeed, national data suggests that California students rank among the lowest in student achievement. Moreover, data shows that California’s per-pupil spending has experienced a steady decline since the 1980s, resulting in a per-pupil spending rate that falls below the national average.²

The current proposal is interested in the following questions:

1. How have school funding formulas been developed in other states and how does this compare to California’s education finance system?
2. How are decisions made regarding school funding formulas and the use of state education funds in states that are comparable to California?
3. In what states is there evidence that the funding formula has improved student success?
4. What can California learn from other states to improve the efficiency, equity and adequacy of its education finance system?

Expected Output

1. Examine current education finance system in California and assess how it compares to other states.

¹ American Institute for Research, <http://www.air.org>.

² Carroll, S.J., Krop, C., Arkes, J., Morrison, P.A., & Flanagan, A. (2005). California’s k-12 schools: How are they doing? Rand Corporation.

2. Review and analyze the literature on school finance and the impact of funding formulas on student success.
3. Investigate funding formulas in comparable states and identify “best practices” that can be introduced in California.
4. Develop policy proposals based on existing data and relevant literature to improve the efficiency, equity and adequacy of California’s education finance system?

Project Timeline

Proposals are due **May 21, 2007**. Proposals should be no longer than seven pages (excluding vitas). Notification of award occurs by May 29, 2007. A draft report will be due on **September 14, 2007**. The entire project must be completed by **October 31, 2007**.

Project Budget

- \$15,000 from 06-07 Faculty Fellows Budget

Proposal Requirements

The written proposal should include the following:

1. Introductory statement that demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter.
2. Description of researcher’s(s’) qualifications to perform the study and applied public policy research. If available, please include evidence of successful and timely completion of projects for public sector clients.
3. Explanation of how the desired data will be gathered and reported on.
4. A specific timeline for completing the project requirements in the allotted period.
5. A proposed budget that indicates the portion to be devoted to faculty time (including incidental expenses) and any need for non-incidental operating expenses.
6. At least two references who could advise the Faculty Research Fellows staff on the quality and timeliness of the principal researcher’s work.
7. Telephone and e-mail address for principal researcher(s).
8. A resume or vita for each person funded under the project.
9. Sign-off of local campus research office is preferred, but not required.

Proposals should be no longer than seven pages (excluding vitas).