Student Affairs Fee
Advisory Board
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Funding Request Form FY2021

Department should complete one form for each individual request

Department:
Student Life Studies

Program, Service or Operation Requested:
Salary for Graduate Assistant

General Description:
Requesting $15,000 to cover the salary for one Graduate Assistant (GANT) to move this salary from reserve to an actual operating expense.

Request Type:
☒ Full   ☐ Increase   ☐ One-Time   ☐ Partial/Matching

Type of Funds Requested:
☒ UAF   ☐ Other

General Questions

How does this address an important need and/or positively impact students?
Our Graduate Assistants (GAs) assist the data analyst in performing statistical analysis for most of our client projects (approximately 300 per year). We typically hire doctoral level students who already have taken some statistical classes and are well qualified to perform the work. This allows our data analyst to focus her time on larger division and university initiatives. In the past year, our data analyst has been added to four time-consuming committees (three in the division and one for the institution) and as the only data analyst on these committees, she is tasked with providing much of the data for the decisions that are being made. Our GAs improve the time it takes for our department to run analysis and write reports for our clients.

There is a direct positive impact for our GAs by receiving relevant hands-on experience, usually related to their degree program and career aspirations (research and measurement). There is an indirect impact for an unknown number of students because we are able to provide the results back to departments and student organizations much quicker, and they can use that information to make improvements and data-driven decisions.

Many of our clients within the Division of Student Affairs, as well as the Vice President's Office, have been asking for much more complex analysis and modeling related to student success. The GAs are able to assist our data analyst in these time-consuming projects; which often are providing information to the institution regarding the role the Division of Student Affairs plays in students' success, especially related to persistence, retention, and graduation. Furthermore, our data analyst and the GAs are able to disaggregate this data to get a better understanding of each program and who is most impacted by it in terms of gender, race, first generation, etc. This provides valuable information to departments to know the impact of their programs and services; and to which populations, so they can continue to make improvements to serve all students.

What department/Division strategic plan item does this support?
This request directly supports our department's goal of providing quality assessment services. Our GAs allow us to have quality services and to do as many projects we are asked to do. We have not been in a position to tell departments or student organizations that we are not able to do their project.

Additionally, the work of our department supports several division goals.

Goal 1: enrich student experience by working with departments in the development, assessment and improvement of their High Impact Practices (HIPs). Our department has the expertise to work with division staff in assessing student learning through their co-curricular experiences. By having a GA, our full-time staff have the time to work directly with departments and staff on these initiatives.

Goal 2: contributing to student success, including retention/persistence and timely graduation. Our department has the access to university data and student records, as well as the expertise to run analysis on these types of topics. Furthermore, by having a GA, our full-time staff have the time to explain the results to departments and student organizations allowing them to make data-driven decisions. Those decisions from all DSA departments ultimately support all the division goals.

Goal 5: ensure future effectiveness, specifically item "f" by identifying and developing division-wide assessment priorities that inform the university community about the student body and demonstrate the division's connection to institutional priorities. We work to combine data we know from multiple departments and areas to create a clear picture of students' experience. An example is looking at the different ways new students might make an initial connection within their first few weeks of classes or even just before classes begin. We combine data of those living on-campus, who attended Fish Camp, ExCEL Latin Logradores, or were selected into one of the Freshmen Leadership Organizations. We can look at the demographics of who do or do not get involved in these connections, as well as if these involved students return to campus the following fall.

Please provide data, evidence, and/or input (student faculty, staff, other) you gathered to help you determine the need for additional resources.

We track the number of projects we do on an annual basis, as well as look at the time it takes for different phases of the assessment process. Our GAs assist with the analysis on approximately 80-85% of all our client projects. When we have had vacancies in one of the GA positions, we definitely had time delays in completing projects for departments and student organizations. Our client satisfaction and feedback is important to us and we regularly gather feedback from our clients to find out how we can improve our services and timeliness.

What actions have you implemented or discontinued internally to address the identified need?

We currently fund our GA salary from our reserves, which is negatively affecting this account. We had one GA leave our department at the end of the summer 2019, and we made the decision to not refill this position to slow down the rate of our reserve account being depleted. As a department, we know that we will have delays in some of our projects being completed as quickly as they have in the past; and we are having these conversations with our clients so they can plan for this as well. Having at least one GA is a critical aspect of our department's operation. We would like to have this critical position in our departmental operation funded through our operating account to slow down the decrease of our reserve account being depleted.

By moving the funding of this position from reserves to operating expenses, we will be able to sustain our services to student organizations and DSA departments, while meeting our fiscal responsibilities of maintaining two months of operating expenses in our reserves. Failure to fund this position with operational monies may require the elimination of the GA position, affecting the ability to provide our current level of services to DSA departments and student organizations.

If funding is granted, what metrics will you use to evaluate success of this program/service/operation?

With the funding of one GA position, we are still eliminating our second position to slow down depletion of our financial reserves. We will continue to track our projects and the satisfaction of our clients; however, we do anticipate having some delays in completing projects in the same time as before. This is due to being down one GA position and the increase in complexity of the projects we are asked to do for the Vice President's Office and other DSA departments. We are currently looking at how our full-time staff can maintain this, what is feasible to change in our processes, as well as what items are less critical or not related to our mission that can be eliminated.

Have other sources of funding (fundraising, sponsorship, reserves, etc.) been considered? Please explain.

We have been using reserves, but this is not a long-term solution and is not sustainable. Our work does not easily lend itself to fundraising or sponsorship. However, the more timely and accurately we do our jobs providing information to departments, may positively impact their ability to successfully raise money.

Total Estimated Cost

Funding Description	Amount
Graduate Assistant Salary	$15,000.00
Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if Applicable)	
TOTAL INCREASE REQUESTED	$15,000.00