

CIC FIRST OPPORTUNITY PARTNERS GRANT PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2015—COVER PAGE

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 8, 2014

ICUT Foundation

NAME OF STATE FUND MEMBER

Ray Martinez, President

NAME AND TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THIS GRANT PROJECT

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PLEASE LIST POSSIBLE SOURCES OF MATCHING FUNDS:

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TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM FIRST OPPORTUNITY PARTNERS GRANT PROGRAM: \$ 25,000

TOTAL AMOUNT OF FUNDS TO BE RAISED FROM THIRD PARTIES (1:1 MINIMUM): \$ 25,000

BRIEF ABSTRACT OF PROPOSAL

ICUT requests \$25,000 from CIC's First Opportunity grant program, to be matched by \$25,000 in grants from private foundations. Our *ICUT Mentoring Initiatives Project* will assess current best practices at ICUT institutions as well as identify capacity-building needs and foster program enrichment through support grants. ICUT will engage in a thorough inventory and needs-assessing activity to identify ICUT member programs and practices that successfully assist first generation and under-represented college students via mentoring programs, including peer, near-peer, and alumni. ICUT will generate a best practice reference guide and a related workshop to provide at least seven ICUT institutions with professional development, strategic planning assistance, and capacity building for improving programs. Three key factors are cited in support of the ICUT Foundation request: this proposal directly addresses priority areas of the First Opportunity grant program; the outcomes will directly benefit member colleges and students from underserved populations; and, as an added benefit, this matching grant will get the ICUT Foundation back into fundraising, which has been on hold in recent years.

Please note that FOP grants are for program expenses and support to member colleges, allowing only modest expenses for personnel or other indirect overhead costs as specifically itemized and essentially related to the project. Grants for "bricks and mortar" are not eligible for support.

Complete proposal must be submitted by email to jcox@cic.nche.edu by September 8, 2014

Questions? Contact: Jacalyn Cox (202) 466-7230

Proposal Narrative

Project Title: The ICUT Mentoring Initiatives Project

The Consortium: The Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT) is a vibrant mix of 38 colleges and universities that together represent approximately 20 percent of the total student enrollment in Texas' four-year colleges and universities. The ICUT Foundation is the 501(c)(3) fundraising arm for the consortium, and the State Fund Member of CIC. As may be known to the Grant Review Committee, the ICUT Foundation has not been active in fundraising in recent years but with this project, the ICUT Foundation is proposing to take a first step in this direction.

Specific Project Goal: Build ICUT member college knowledge and expertise in programs designed for first-generation, low-income, minority, and new American students; identify institutional capacity building needs; conduct a capacity building workshop; and allocate planning grants to build and/or enhance programs for at least seven ICUT institutions by the end of 2016.

Rationale: A primary purpose of ICUT is to protect and promote the general welfare of Texas independent colleges and universities in areas of special concern to the member institutions. One of these areas is to assure college access and success for students from minority, lower-income or other under-served populations. Of all the states in CIC's State Fund Member network, this area of concern is perhaps the most pressing here in Texas. The cornerstone state financial aid program designed for students who demonstrate financial need and choose to attend an independent college or university is the Texas Tuition Equalization Grant Program (TEG).

According to the most recent data available:

- 62 percent of all TEG recipients also received a Pell Grant;
- 72 percent come from a family with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$5,000 or less; and,
- Over 58 percent of TEG recipients are minority.

The reality of these statistics can be seen in the diversity of the 38 institutions within ICUT: 5 are Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU), 10 are designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), and an additional 12 are "emerging" HSI's.

One the greatest challenges in higher education today relates to improving retention and completion by minority, low-income, and first generation college students who lack parent and/or sibling mentoring about college success. ICUT member institutions have an opportunity to learn from one another in the highest need area of our institutions and the state: programs relating to transition, retention, and completion. We know from research and best practice that classroom instruction is not enough. Peer and near-peer advising programs increase completion outcomes, as does connecting minority, first generation college students to alumni who can serve as mentors and role models for college completion and success. If our member institutions can realize greater success in this area, it benefits each institution statistically, economically, and socially.

Our member institutions know that knowledge transfer is not only an academic exercise, but an experiential one. Well-run peer institution programs have a superb ground game – they are dynamic and assistive. Many ICUT member institutions have already developed innovative and successful peer mentoring programs focused on retention and completion primarily for minority, first generation students. The ICUT Foundation intends to utilize these requested funds to harness the most effective retention and student success strategies of our institutions and share these best practices with other ICUT institutions. Our intention is both succinct and clear: that the work from this proposal results in

something more constructive than a PDF white paper on a shelf or cloud, but a healthy dissemination and adoption of best practices across ICUT campuses in Texas.

Operational Plan and Timeline: If ICUT is awarded the First Opportunity Grant Program grant of \$25,000, it would trigger the following activities:

Project Task A: Secure Matching Funds (completed by March 31, 2015)

Targeting Texas-based foundations with a deep interest in college transitions, retention, and completion, ICUT is confident that a one-to-one match can be secured by the end of the first quarter, 2015.

Task 1: Statewide ICUT Needs Sensing and Analysis (completed in Spring 2015)

Upon securing matching funds, ICUT and consultants will design a needs assessment protocol, launch institutional outreach, and compile the analysis.

Task 2: Statewide Workshop & Collaboration Conference (Summer 2015)

Based on the findings of the needs sensing, establish agendas and speakers for a statewide conference for ICUT institutions and national experts to share best practices.

Task 3: Capacity Building Strategy Development & Custom Mapping (early summer 2015)

Each participating ICUT institution would be assigned a capacity building coach who would help map a progressive set of steps to build or improve their transition and retention programs through near-peer programs. From these detailed and personalized consultations, a road map for micro grants would reveal itself. Maps would include outcome measures by institutions.

Task 4: ICUT Institution Capacity Building Micro Grants (immediately following Task 3)

Administer/facilitate ICUT institution funding of their strategic grants to advance their custom maps. ICUT may also consult/assist with networking with potential funders to underwrite a long-term best practice program.

Task 5: Evaluation, Outcome Reporting & Recommendations (Winter 2015-early Spring 2016)

ICUT will collect and report quantitative and qualitative measures of the overall project as well as individual participating campuses. Campuses should have a reliable set of data relating to their target student set and the CAC/ICUT project.

Outcomes

- Statewide inventory of 39 ICUT members and their practice and needs in the transition and completion area. The living document will not only inform the collective work, but assist with individual institutions strategic responses.
- A minimum of 7 ICUT member institutions will participate in a workshop and collaboration conference to discuss best practices on strategies to provide peer mentoring and career counseling for transition and retention of under-represented, first generation students.

- A greater than 5% percentage increase in transition and retention progress indicators on participating campuses.
- Engaged campus leaders will have a greater understanding of best practices as measured by a post-engagement program survey.