

Name of Principle Investigator: Christian Wilkens & Thomas Giblin

Project Title: Rural Schools Virtual Project [RSVP]: Expanding Access to Advanced & Elective Online Coursework

1. Please consider the original timeline and deliverable targets. How is your project progressing compared with the original estimates?

On target; we are set up to deliver the online instruction pilot this semester - and will actually involve more participants than expected. We'd anticipated 2 Brockport graduate students as TAs for online courses, and we've been able to expand to a current level of 7 (registered) and may yield 8-10 by the time we start the course on 1/27.

2. How is spending progressing when compared with the original budget estimates?

Spending has been a challenge. The money didn't go through the SUNY Research Foundation, which is less restrictive and a bit less paperwork than other mechanisms. Going through payroll here to do things like student stipends has involved a steep learning curve for me. For example, of the 7 students currently on the project, they are under 3 different payroll protocols and hence, 3 different sets of paperwork. While for another grant project I run through the RF, stipends can be as simple as an invoice and a W-9.

3. Please provide feedback regarding your experience with the project execution. In particular, any issues or roadblocks you've encountered that may have been unexpected.

I wonder if there is a way to push the funding through the SUNY Research Foundation - and to remove the 'no overhead' aspect of the grant. Brockport's RF has been entirely willing to participate here, but it doesn't seem fair to ask them to administer funding without compensation. And as a PI who is not strong on administration, I adore working with the RF.

4. What are your positive observations or pleasant surprises about your team's interaction or project process that might would be helpful to other PI's?

Everyone on the project has been immediately responsive to questions or concerns. I had to revise my original budget, and the whole process took just a day - who has ever heard of such speed on a state-level grant project?! It's been awesome. The flexibility here has been massive, and the support from SUNY central as solid as I could have hoped.

5. Please describe any challenges you've encountered working with your project team that you've found solutions for that might be helpful to other PIs.

I'd say: Early communication within your college about how to spend the money is key. That's been the hardest thing for me to get my head around - it's a lot of paperwork and a lot of learning for me. I've got it now, but I wish I'd started that immediately (Summer 2013) rather than a bit down the road (Fall).