

RESEARCH COUNCIL TASKFORCE

CREATIVE ACTIVITY REPORT **June 2005**



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

"The creative individual has the capacity to free himself from the web of social pressures in which the rest of us are caught. He is capable of questioning the assumptions that the rest of us accept."

*John William Gardner (b. 1912)
President, Carnegie Foundation*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 01, 2005, the newly-established Research Council (RC) of the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) met for the first time to initiate a strategic dialogue with representative faculty and key stakeholders aimed at enhancing research, scholarship, and creative activity in this institution. Recognizing the need to fully underscore the importance of sustaining and enhancing creative activity in a comprehensive university, the RC unanimously endorsed the establishment of a Creative Activity Task Force (CATF). The principal objective of this Task Force was to develop an expansive report focused on the role of creative activity in higher education; the state of creativity at MTSU; and recommendations to nurture and foster continued creativity in the learning environment, instruction, and scholarship. Summarized below are key observations/recommendations of this Task Force:

1. The Role of Creativity in Society, the Economy, and Higher Education:

- An institution of higher education that highlights the importance of a student-centered environment, and actively seeks partnerships (both inside and outside the institution) must place additional emphasis on creativity and the creative endeavors of its students and faculty. A university engaged in such an endeavor contributes to its immediate constituents and to society at large by fostering creativity and creative projects.

2. Current State of Creativity on MTSU Campus:

- A convenient sample taken indicated that over 300 creative projects were completed in the traditionally recognized creative and artistic disciplines in academic year 2004-2005. Many of these creative projects were recognized by international, national, and regional awards.
- The National Survey of Student Engagement 2004 (NSSE) pilot study and the MTSU Enrolled Student Survey 2004 (ESS) indicated that MTSU students rated their cultural, creative, and artistic exposure and knowledge to be good or excellent.
- MTSU Fact Book and Student Profile data indicated that the creative and artistic disciplines had a majority of student credit hours, graduates, and student majors, however, funding and visibility of creative projects needs further consideration.

3. Recommended Plan for Raising Visibility and Support of Creativity on MTSU Campus:

- Address and educate sources of funding and support through a vision to foster awareness and appreciation of creativity. This would include changing the term “Creative Activity” to “Creative Projects”, proposing a new definition for creative projects involving revision and modifications of the policies, procedures, and guideline of the Faculty Research and Creative Activity Committee (FRCAC), Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Committee URSCA, Non-instructional Assignment (NIA) Committee, Graduate Council (GC), and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

- Isolate and overcome obstacles faced by faculty in workload, mentoring credit, contact hours, class scheduling, and class resources.
- Develop existing and new programs for students to enhance student awareness and knowledge of creativity by increasing their exposure to experiential learning and internship programs.
- Continue to raise awareness and abundance of creativity on campus for both students and faculty by developing and publishing archived data of creativity, faculty and student participation in Scholars' Week, on-campus publicity, instituting a cultural arts requirement for students, and showcasing the Creative Achievement Award recipient.

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I: The Role of Creativity in Society, the Economy, and Higher Education

In the broadest context, creativity is often seen as the catalyst for development in an information society. Among the four trends associated with transformation in the 21st Century, prominent is the change *"from uniformity and obedience of the mass-era to the uniqueness and creativity of a knowledge economy and society."* (Michalski, Miller and Stevens, 2000).

Creative endeavors are often entrepreneurial in approach, building new capital and enterprise. Management futurists and others argue that creativity is key to the modern concepts of work. *"The fact that modern entrepreneurs regard their business as their art rather than their property prompts enormous adherence to the missions of the companies among their employees and serves as yet another confirmation that creativity is the main source of development for the modern corporation."* (Inozemtsev, 1999)

"Artists are generally entrepreneurs, contributing to the economy in the same way as any other small business operator"
(Farrell C, Business Week Online 2003)

From a strictly "bottom line" point of view, *"Artists are significant and vastly underestimated contributors and generators of local economic growth. The more creative types working in a regional economy, the better is its outlook for improved earnings, productivity, and competitiveness. Arts communities help attract skilled workers and provide special talents for business. Artists are generally entrepreneurs, contributing to the economy in the same way as any other small business operator."* (Farrell, 2003) Other individuals such as Towse, *Creativity, Incentive, and Reward* (2001) also studied the economic impact of creative arts and entertainment industries on regional and national economies with similar outcomes.

One key role of institutions of higher education is to encourage creativity and entrepreneurship. *"Entrepreneurial universities foster interaction and networking. They embed entrepreneurship in academic culture in order to achieve economic returns from the knowledge generated through research projects, empowered teams of teachers, students and business people, face-to-face and electronic relationships and networked enterprises emerging from their spin-off activity."* (Formica, 2002).

In addition, the university's support for creativity, which Areolla (2004) describes as *"discovery/creation,"* needs to be more broad-based. He notes, *"The activities associated with discovery, or creativity, may be messy and appear initially inconclusive. Some faculty may engage in research or creative endeavors that are time consuming, and although they may eventually result in a definitive product, or finding, demonstrate both knowledge of the field, high levels of skill, and innovation in strategy and thinking.... Discovery/creation requires a more local, collegial, qualitative assessment of the ongoing research and discovery activities of the faculty member."* (Areolla, 2004; pg.2)

Articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* urge the making of creativity a campus priority, starting with its measure and assessment. (Tepper, 2004); (Davidson and Goldberg, 2004). Tepper describes five factors as important underpinnings for fostering creativity in higher education:

- Collaboration
- Cross-cultural exchange
- Interdisciplinary exchange
- Time and resources
- Tolerance of failure.

Stressing the relationship between humanities and creativity, Davidson and Goldberg (2004) wrote that *"Although artists and humanists often compete for the same restricted funds, by insisting on the interconnections among our endeavors--and by acknowledging that those trained in expressive cultural forms may be better communicators of certain messages than humanists--we can shape intellectual projects that widen the scope, audience, and importance of our intertwined endeavors."* (Davidson and Goldberg, 2004; para. 20)

"[F]aculty members and administrators at a number of universities are beginning to realize that the arts attract talented students in every discipline and create a more stimulating place to work and study"
(Tepper S, *the Chronicle of Higher Education* 2004)

An institution of higher education that highlights the importance of a student-centered environment, and actively seeks partnerships (both inside and outside the institution) must place additional emphasis on creativity and the creative endeavors of its students and faculty. Students become better problem solvers and collaborators. Faculty members share the passion of their creative works with their students and colleagues. Few things are more exciting than creating or discovering something new. A university engaged in such an endeavor contributes to its immediate constituents and to society at large by fostering creativity and creative projects.

II: Current State of Creative Activity on MTSU Campus

The current state of creativity at MTSU was measured by a convenient sample of faculty and student activities, examples of high profile projects and accomplishments, and available student, faculty, and university data.

1. An inventory of creative projects was developed by the CATF in May 2005. This inventory was developed using a convenient sample drawn from the traditionally recognized creative and artistic disciplines in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Mass Communications during academic year 2004-2005. The highlighted results indicated:
 - Over 300 creative projects were completed by faculty and students from eight disciplines.
 - Over 35 student and faculty music recitals were presented.
 - Over 50 music concerts and performances were performed by orchestras, ensembles, and bands.
 - Over 33 student-produced theatre productions were mounted.
 - Over 12 faculty members performed in live theatrical productions.
 - Over 50 faculty creative writing projects were completed.
 - Six full-length theatre productions were presented by faculty and students.
 - Six dance concerts were presented by faculty, students, and visiting artists.
 - Over five faculty musical recordings were completed.
 - Over 11 multi-media creative projects were completed by students.
 - Five films and videos were produced by faculty members.
 - The Todd Gallery hosted six art exhibitions of work of over 20 artists in Spring 2005.
 - Two senior student art exhibitions of studio and graphic art works were held.
 - Over 12 university, regional, and national awards were given to faculty and students for their creative achievements.

2. MTSU faculty and students have been recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally for their efforts. Notable examples of excellence in creative projects and accomplishments were:
 - “The Schoolhouse Sessions 2” DVD by Dr. Mary Nichols and Mr. Dan Pfeifer, the award-winning DVD of "Community Music of West Tennessee" was presented at MTSU Scholars Day.
 - Tom Thayer’s animation and puppet work was shown at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts - *The Fragile Species: New Art Nashville*.
 - Theatre faculty and students mounted the Off-Broadway theatre production and world premiere of “Sus Manos” with New York’s Flying Fig Theatre Company.
 - Theatre students placed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in playwriting and directing.

- "Jack Daniels Silver Cornet Band Christmas Concert" produced by Dr. Dennis O'Neal was broadcast over PBS, and chosen to be given as subscription premiums at several PBS stations across the country.
 - The nationally recognized Recording Industry program produced their 16th annual CD recording of student and faculty projects.
 - MTSU students were honored at the 17th Annual Southeast Regional Emmy Awards. Matthew Pessoni, Scott Pessoni, Jason Bailey, and Rachel Pickel won the student production award for their piece called *Investigative Explorer*.
 - Dr. Gaylord Brewer edited Poems & Plays, a nationally recognized literary annual.
 - The MTSU Public History Program received a Tennessee Association of Museums award for its collaborative project with the Smith County Heritage Museum entitled "Turning Point: The Modernization of Smith County, 1880-1930."
 - The MTSU Public History Program, in partnership with The Land Trust for Tennessee and the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA), completed eight oral history interviews with Tennessee landowners.
 - Dr. Renee Lewis of the English Department developed and hosted "The Gallery", a virtual gallery of student creative projects created in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Expository Writing, Research & Argumentative Writing, Experience of Literature, and Major Themes in American Literature courses.
 - Dr. Claudia Barnett's full-length play *Feather* won the Brick Playhouse Award and staged a reading in Philadelphia.
 - The Honors College sponsored the Visiting Artists Seminar. This program offers students the opportunity to work intensively with successful, professional artists such as Deb Margolin, a founding member of the Split Britches playwright and Rinne Groff, nationally recognized playwright and performer.
 - Dr. Virginia Donnell was awarded the Founder's Award for Outstanding Educator in Theatrical Design and Technology from the Southeastern United States Institute for Theatre Technology.
 - The College of Liberal Arts hosted the London ACTER visiting artists program.
 - Ms. Beverly Keel of Recording Industry contributed her numerous articles to Rolling Stone and People Magazine including articles on Willie Nelson and Shania Twain.
 - The Honors College sponsored the Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression. This publication highlighted student creative works, and was produced through student and faculty efforts.
3. MTSU faculty members and students host a variety of experiences and programs for K-12 students as outreach in the creative and artistic disciplines. These programs were attended by in state and out-of-state students. These included but were not exclusive to the following:
- Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts
 - On-Stage Discovery Camp
 - 6th U.S. Congressional District High School Art Competition and Exhibition

- Southern Girls Rock and Roll Camp
 - Contest of Champions Marching Bands
 - MTSU Band Camp
4. The state of creativity was also measured by the use of assessment data collected from students over the academic year. This data included the National Survey of Student Engagement 2004 (NSSE) pilot study and the MTSU Enrolled Student Survey 2004 (ESS).
- The 2004 ESS findings indicated that 53% of students rated their cultural experience at MTSU as good or excellent.
 - The 2004 ESS findings indicated that 65% of students rated the impact of the general education program at MTSU as good or excellent in their understanding and appreciation of the arts while 73% of students rated their understanding and application of scientific principles and methods as good or excellent.
 - The 2004 NSSE findings indicated that during the school year, MTSU first year students' reported attendance at art exhibits, galleries, plays, dance or other performances averaged 2.01 on a four-point interval scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often). The national NSSE average for this item was 2.12.
 - The 2004 NSSE findings indicated that during the school year, MTSU senior year students' reported attendance at art exhibits, gallery, play, dance or other theatre performances averaged 1.81 on a four-point interval scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often). The national NSSE average for this item was 2.03.
5. Student enrollment, faculty profile, and university profile information provided an overall picture of the participation in and support for creativity in the traditionally creative and artistic fields (College of Liberal Arts and College of Mass Communications). This data was gathered from MTSU Student Profiles – Fall 2004 and MTSU Fact Book – 2004. The following summary indicated:
- 39 percent of student credit hours at MTSU were in creative and artistic disciplines Fall 2004.
 - 29 percent of undergraduate students were majoring in creative and artistic fields at MTSU Fall 2004.
 - 41 percent of all faculty members are teaching and practicing in creative and artistic fields at MTSU 2004-2005.
 - 31 percent of the degrees conferred were in creative and artistic fields at MTSU 2003-2004.
 - Less than 15 percent of the Educational & General (E&G; General academic instruction) unrestricted expenditures were from the creative and artistic disciplines of Liberal Arts and Mass Communications for fiscal year 2005. General academic instruction constituted 53 percent of the total E&G expenditures.
 - Less than two percent of the total E&G expenditures supported research.

- Creative activity was not included as a line item in the E & G expenditures.

III: Recommended Plan for Raising Visibility and Support of Creativity on MTSU Campus

A: Address and Educate Sources of Funding/Support:

The major sources of funding and support on campus must share our vision for creative productivity. To this end, we have written, and will distribute copies to each of these sources, of a new definition of creative projects, designed to foster awareness and appreciation. We also recommend several specific changes:

1. Definition of Creative Projects

The recommendations in this paper come out of a specific concern with how creative projects are recognized and rewarded in the context of FRCAC. Our recommendations, however, are also meant to promote creativity in the larger context of the university community. We recommend a standardized definition of creative projects that would be recognized by the entire university community especially with regard to the awarding of grants, fellowships, tenure, promotion, and recognition.

To begin with, we would like to see a change in terminology. Specifically, we would like discontinue use of the term “creative activity” and substitute “creative projects.” The Task Force believes that scholarly work includes both traditional research projects and what we have in the past referred to as creative activity. Both kinds of projects make original contributions to the body of knowledge in any given discipline. Changing “activity” to “projects” may sound like an exercise in semantics, but it elevates creative projects to the same level as that of research.

We recommend the following definition for Creative Projects:

Creative projects include the creation, production, exhibition, performance, or publication of works by one or more individuals demonstrating originality in design or execution. Creative projects eligible for funding (or for consideration as part of tenure and promotion) should include a clear articulation of the scholarly process, a definable product, and a mechanism for outside review and/or dissemination.

The product of creative projects may be disseminated to academic, consumer, government or other such agency through original artwork, live performances, exhibits, consumer and other print media, academic journals, books, photographs, film, reports, video recordings, audio recordings, graphic designs, digital imaging, or other technologies.

Typically, the significance accorded the creative project depends on the audience and recognition it achieves—local, regional, national, or international.

2. Faculty Research and Creative Activity Committee (FRCAC):

The FRCAC is the most important resource for creative faculty on campus, and we are cognizant and appreciative of all they've done to encourage creative projects in the past. However, we have noticed some flaws with the current proposal review, funding, and post-award accountability in the FRCAC system. As such, we offer the following recommendations:

- a) One concern, tangentially related to the issue of creative projects, is that research in the social sciences and liberal arts may not be best understood by committee members from the physical sciences—and vice versa. Our first recommendation is thus to broaden the membership of the FRCAC (to make it larger and more diverse) and divide it into two subcommittees: one for the physical sciences and one for the social sciences/liberal arts. Each subcommittee would consider both research and creative applications, as research and creative projects are equally important in the physical sciences and the social sciences/liberal arts. Committee membership would be determined jointly by the Graduate Dean and the Faculty Senate (each of whom would recommend half the members).
- b) In accordance with our new definition, we recommend changing the term “Creative Activity” to “Creative Projects,” and therefore changing the name FRCAC to Faculty Research and Creative Projects Committee (FRCPC).
- c) Revise the definitions of creative projects (as outlined above) and research (see appendix I).
- d) Update the language of the website/application so that social science/liberal arts applicants are able to respond to terms relevant to their fields. These suggestions are included in appendix I.
- e) Applicants should be able to request specific faculty reviewers to assess their proposals.
- f) Make the website more user-friendly. Several faculty members have noted the difficulty of navigating the current website. See appendix II for a detailed outline of our plan to update the website.

3. Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Committee (URSCA):

We recommend broadening the membership of the URSCA committee so that faculty members from the liberal arts and social sciences, particularly those who participate in creative arts and scholarship, are equally represented along with faculty members in the sciences. We would like to foster an appreciation of the creative arts among committee members so that students' creative projects are more highly valued. In accordance with our new definition of Creative Projects, we recommend changing the title of this committee to Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Projects (URSCP).

4. Non-instructional Assignment (NIA) Committee

This committee must appreciate the importance and validity of creative projects. We recommend that at least one member of the committee be someone who is a recognized “scholar” in this particular area.

5. Graduate Council

The requirements for graduate faculty membership must clearly include recognition for creative projects. These, however, must specifically relate to the faculty member’s field and/or his or her potential to direct graduate student projects.

6. Sponsored Programs

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs describes itself as an “academic service that provides faculty and staff with opportunities for research and/or public service.” We would like to see them expand their mission to include providing opportunities for creative projects. We recommend that they provide an annual workshop for creative faculty and/or establish a mentoring program to guide creative faculty to resources.

7. The Administration

The Chair of our committee is scheduled to speak at the July 1, 2005 Deans’ Retreat organized by the Vice Provost for Research and Sponsored Programs and the Dean, College of Graduate Studies. We hope all the deans will join our mission to change the culture of our campus with regard to creative projects, and that they will continue to disseminate information that will foster progress and creativity. If the university embraces creative projects at every level, then our classroom instruction is sure to improve.

B. Isolate and Overcome Obstacles Faced by Faculty:

1. Faculty workload for creative projects

Our concern is that creative projects are not counted equitably in the workload formula. For instance, directing a large-cast production of a play might entail more work (and more contact with students) than teaching a single course, yet those two items would be counted equally in the workload. Several committees on campus (including the Faculty Senate and a subcommittee of the Research Council) are currently meeting to discuss workload issues. We will inform them of our concerns. The administration also needs to be cognizant of such inequities.

2. Faculty workload for effective mentoring

Faculty mentoring students currently do so as an overload. Creative projects tend to be enormous, and faculty need to keep them manageable and on-target. The mentoring of creative projects requires huge time commitments in terms of planning and overseeing. When this mentoring is conducted as an overload, both faculty and students suffer. Faculty members need to see such work as integral to their charge, not as an afterthought. This issue requires attention at the workload level.

3. Credit versus contact hours in creative classes

Creative classes often include many more contact hours than other classes. This is especially true in Art, where three-credit studio classes meet six hours per week. This means that creative faculty and students are spending more hours in the classroom for less credit—an inequity that can lead to disgruntlement on all sides and poor performance.

4. Class weekly schedule

Creative faculty members generally agree that long class periods (the three-hour blocks) are more conducive to creative work than those of shorter duration. Due to scheduling regulations and conflicts, access to long class periods is limited. We recommend revisiting the current class schedule and adapting it so that more three-hour classes are scheduled and made available to our students.

5. Creative lab/classroom resources

Scheduling conflicts, especially with desirable facilities, is a recurring problem on campus. We need more space that is conducive to producing creative projects.

6. Creative projects ethics

Plagiarism is a frequent problem on many university campuses. In the creative arena, it poses a whole new set of challenges as students (and even faculty) are often unaware or unappreciative of ownership and copyright issues. We recommend that students be inundated with as many lectures and workshops as possible that address plagiarism. In particular, we would like every University Seminar 1010 class include a unit on plagiarism, with some attention to issues in creative projects.

C. Further Develop Existing and New Programs for Students:

1: An Experiential learning project

The Quality Enhancement Plan Committee is dedicated to developing programs in experiential learning. We recommend that they focus some attention on creative components and subject areas. We would like to see development in the areas of mentoring and general support. Workload issues need to be addressed. An infrastructure for experiential learning needs to be put in place.

2. Internship programs

Internship programs exist in several departments. While the internship program in Mass Communications is noteworthy and may serve as a model, other departments' programs (such as Music, Theatre, Art, and Writing) require promotion and support.

D. Raise Awareness and Abundance of Creativity on Campus

We have thought of several ways to increase awareness and appreciation of creative projects on our campus. We offer the following recommendations:

1. An annual index/inventory of creativity

We recommend that each year, chairs compile a list of creative service and projects completed within their departments. These lists would be reported to the Vice Provost for Research and Sponsored Programs, whose office would create a database listing the information. This list will be accessible as a link through the MTSU home page and on the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the College of Graduate Studies webpages.

2. Scholars' Week

Creative projects by both faculty and students should be highlighted as part of our annual Scholars' Week. Readings, performances, and exhibits of creative work should be encouraged and included in the schedule.

3. *Sidelines*' Arts Page

MTSU offers numerous opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to attend co-curricular cultural events, including plays, concerts, poetry and fiction readings, art and photography exhibits, and lectures. Many of these events are poorly attended because students are not aware of them. We would like *Sidelines* to dedicate a full page each week to a calendar of cultural events on campus.

4. Cultural events requirement

MTSU offers myriads of opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to attend co-curricular cultural events, including plays, concerts, poetry and fiction readings, art and photography exhibits, and lectures. Many of these events are poorly attended, in spite of their value, because they do not directly fulfill course requirements. Our students don't yet appreciate the value of such programs, nor will they if they never attend any. We propose that students be required to attend

two cultural events per year (eight total) in order to graduate. This number would not place undue stress on our students' busy schedules. Furthermore, students are likely to find at least two events during the course of the year that might interest them.

5. Showcase the winner of the Creative Achievement Award

We propose that the winner of the Creative Achievement Award be honored with a highly publicized event: a reading, performance, or exhibit. The University would showcase a respected and deserving faculty member, thus bringing recognition to the value of that person's accomplishments and to the nature of creative projects in general. Since creative projects are accessible to the general public, with adequate publicity and support, this could become a major annual event.

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APPENDIX I: DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH AND CREATIVE PROJECTS

I. Research Projects

The current FRCAC definition of research reads as follows:

Research may include, but is not limited to:

- scientific investigation and data acquisition
- empirical studies;
- analytical literature searches which result in substantial modification of existing explanations of events;
- development of book proposals;
- dissemination of the results of the research.

We recommend adding the following bulleted line:

- Analytical and historical studies of literature, other arts, and related fields.

2. We recommend the following definition for Creative Projects:

Creative projects include the creation, production, exhibition, performance, or publication of works by one or more individuals demonstrating originality in design or execution. Creative projects eligible for funding (or for consideration as part of tenure and promotion) should include a clear articulation of the scholarly process, a definable product, and a mechanism for outside review and/or dissemination.

The product of creative projects may be disseminated to academic, consumer, government or other such agency through original artwork, live performances, exhibits, consumer and other print media, academic journals, books, photographs, film, reports, video recordings, audio recordings, graphic designs, digital imaging, or other technologies.

Typically, the significance accorded the creative project depends on the audience and recognition it achieves—local, regional, national, or international

APPENDIX II: FRCAC WEB SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

The current website is rich with helpful information. The committee recommends several small changes that would make it more accessible to faculty who wish to pursue funding for their project.

- Two general modifications of the current design would be useful. First, for both research and creative projects, there should be two different proposal formats. The general structure of the application and the application form can be the same, but the proposal structure should differ. Under research projects there should be proposal guidelines for the physical sciences projects and there should be separate set of proposal guidelines for the social sciences/liberal arts projects—clearly labeled as such. Similarly, under creative projects, there should be a form for the social science/liberal arts projects and another for the physical sciences. Because in the same way that research differs across disciplines so might creative work. **[See attached sample webpages]**
- The second design change involves creating more links that allow faculty to navigate the site more effectively. For instance, if faculty members begin an application for a research project using the social science/liberal arts track, but discover that the proposal guidelines don't quite fit their proposed project, they should be able to click on a link and change tracks easily to find one more suitable to their project. This is a cosmetic change, but one that could yield substantial results.

Other recommended changes:

- The website should include links to a list of previously funded projects, both creative and research, to help faculty identify characteristics of successful proposals.
- Website changes should be made in consultation with faculty to improve accessibility.