

# ORSP Newsletter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS

JULY 2009

## Native American Institute holds grant workshop

On June 16<sup>th</sup> Dr. Cedric Woods, interim director of the Institute for Native American Studies, held a grants seminar aimed at informing members of Native American tribes in the region of their options regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—which includes \$2.8 billion for assisting both federally recognized and unrecognized tribes improve healthcare, housing, and other vital areas within their communities.

As Woods explains: “This is obviously the beginnings of this process, but now they have some understanding of what they need to do.”

Three different presentations discussed topics such as grant writing, advocacy, and government relations; all with the goal of helping tribal members determine their best course of action when pursuing additional funding, which can often be a confusing mass of bureaucratic paperwork that few have the time to sift through or the knowledge to make sense of. Such information, while technically available to the public, can often be elusive: “If you don’t know it’s there, it’s pretty hard to find,” explains Woods.

Over thirty members from fifteen different tribes in Massachusetts and its neighboring states attended.

“This is the first type of workshop of this kind in this region that I am aware of,” notes Woods.

The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many grateful for the information on grant writing as well as the sense of communal effort and spirit that was evident during the seminar.

“This seminar was definitely something that needed to happen. How frequently it will occur in the future will be *(continued on page 2)*

## Using UMass Boston students as research subjects

The problem with student participation in research conducted at the University is the possibility that their agreement to participate will not be perceived as having been freely given. Students may volunteer to participate out of a belief that doing so will place them in good favor with faculty (e.g., that participating will result in receiving better grades, recommendations, employment, or the like), or that failure to participate will negatively affect their relationship with the investigator or faculty generally (i.e., by seeming “uncooperative,” not part of the scientific community).



A way to protect against coercion is to require that faculty-investigators advertise for subjects generally (e.g., through notices posted in the school or department) rather than recruit individual students directly. Requiring participation in research for course credit (or extra credit) is also controversial, though common in the social and behavioral sciences. As with any research involving a potentially vulnerable subject population, IRBs must pay special attention to the potential for coercion or undue influence and consider ways in which the possibility of exploitation can be reduced or eliminated.

Federal regulations require that the investigator seek consent only under circumstances that minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence. Reasonable levels of extra credit or rewards may be offered for participating in research. If extra credit or rewards are offered for participation, students must be provided with and informed of non-research alternatives involving comparable time and effort to obtain the extra credit in order for the possibility of undue influence to be minimized. However, if participation in research is a course requirement, students must be informed of non-research alternatives involving comparable time and effort to fulfill those requirements in order for the possibility of undue influence to be minimized. Moreover, students must not be penalized for refusing to participate in research.

In some instances the use of a “student subject pool” is used to identify students who might be willing to participate in research, even *(continued on page 3)*



## Fiske Center researchers awarded federal stimulus funds

Drs. John Steinberg and Heather Trigg, both of the Fiske Center for Archaeological Research, and their colleague Douglas Bolender, University at Buffalo, are the recipients of the first American Restoration and Reinvestment Act funds awarded to UMass Boston in the form of a \$95,000 National Science Foundation grant.



**Steinberg**

They will use pollen samples to assess the parameters of environmental change around Viking Age farmsteads in Skagafjörður, Iceland. This work, if successful, will be a prelude to a larger project where the sampling strategy and analysis methods developed during the 2009 season would be applied across a whole range of socio-economic contexts and through the profound changes of Viking Age Iceland.

The PI's seek to develop pollen sampling protocols and analysis strategies for investigating local environmental variation during the Viking Age in Iceland. The pollen record can provide a wealth of information about past regional and local environments and how they have changed. Data collected in this experimental season will assess these parameters in preparation for a much larger future micro-environmental reconstruction project that would incorporate these methods into a regional study of settlement sequence and variation in farmstead production strategies.

To establish sampling protocols and analytic strategies the team will investigate two farmsteads in the same region: Reynistaður and Medalheimur. Reynistadur was one of the first farms settled in the region and was politically and economically prominent during the Viking Age and medieval periods. In contrast, Medalheimur was, in all likelihood, a poor sharecropper farm. The Skagafjörður Archaeological Settlement Survey (SASS) has extensively investigated both farmsteads as part of three previous grants from NSF.

The explicit comparison of the environmental history of successful large farmsteads against small, poor and sometimes unsuccessful farmsteads will allow the research team to answer basic questions about the intersecting roles of landscape change, farm production, and political economy in the early history of Iceland. From that data, the PI's and their colleagues hope to begin to understand the role of the fragile arctic environment in the social evolution of Viking Age chiefdoms to medieval manorial states. (*Source: NSF website*)



**Trigg**

## Native American Institute holds grant workshop...continued from page 1

determined by interest level," says Woods.

Now, more than ever, it is important and effective for tribes to work together to attain both federal recognition and government resources. Oftentimes fellow tribes can be the best and most helpful source of information—as seen during Earl Evans presentation on the basics of grantsmanship.

As a member of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe of North Carolina, Evans has first-hand knowledge of the difficulties many tribes face when dealing with the government. But he used his own tribe's success, which included negotiating a \$1,000,000 housing loan for government-recognized tribes within North Carolina, as a model from which to draw from. Participants found this information incredibly helpful as well as practical.

Woods anticipates that this spirit of community will carry over well beyond the seminar: "I hope it is the beginning of developing an ongoing relationship with tribal communities and collaborating with tribal partners."

## Congratulations to the recipients of the 2009 doctoral dissertation grants

Richard Antonak, vice provost for research, is pleased to announce to the university community the recipients of the 2009 Doctoral Dissertation Grants.

**Heike Boeltzig** (public policy and public affairs), "Technology Adoption and Transformation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Process: A Case Study of Counselors within State VR Agencies"

**Patricia Lee** (psychology), "Coping with Traumatic Brain Injury through an Asian American Lens: Interrelationships Among Asian Values, Coping Styles, and Psychosocial Outcomes"

**Michael Rollock** (psychology), "Couples' Joint Activity and Relationship Quality: Exploring the Comparative Effects of Joint Volunteer Work vs. Play"

**James Stark** (biology), "The Role of the SHY2 Gene in the Control of the Root System Architecture in Arabidopsis Thaliana"

**Hong Tao** (nursing), "Impact of Social Environmental Factors on Re-Hospitalization of Healthcare Elderly Patients"

**Catherine Thomann** (psychology), "Developing an Anti-Racist Stance: How White Youth Understand Structural Racism"

## Using UMass Boston students as research subjects ...continued from page 1

when the exact nature of the research to be conducted has not yet been determined. Extra credits or other rewards are often offered as an incentive to encourage participation. Students who sign up for such pools have not legally consented to participate in a research study since they have not been provided with sufficient information concerning the exact study in which they would participate. Thus, signing up to be in a subject pool is only a first and preliminary step by which individuals can indicate their willingness to be considered for research participation. The student must also provide informed consent, unless the consent requirement is waived by an IRB once he or she is being considered for a specific study. Furthermore, individuals in the pool must be free to decline participation in any available research projects without penalty.

Limit the use of extra credit points as a reward for participating; they should be used when the research is closely tied to the course subject matter and they should not raise a student's grade by a whole step (e.g., from a B to an A). Equal alternatives to receiving extra credit must be provided.

### Additional information to provide in your consent document(s) if your study involves students and extra credit

#### Compensation section

- Amount of extra credit given for completion of each study procedure and for completion of the entire study; and
- The impact this extra credit will have on students' grades.

#### Additional considerations

Another concern raised by the involvement of students as subjects is confidentiality. As with any research involving human subjects, the UMass Boston IRB is aware that research involving the collection of data on sensitive subjects such as mental health, sexual activity, or the use of illicit drugs or alcohol presents risks to subjects of which they should be made aware and from which they should be protected, to the greatest extent possible. The close environment of the University amplifies this problem. Investigators should also be cognizant of the following considerations.

- Some freshman college students are under the age of 18 and are thereby legally considered minors.
- Will study procedures be completed during class time? If so, students not included in the study may view this as unfair. Also, students may feel compelled to participate if it means missing out on regular classes.
- If a research project includes the need to access student records (e.g., SAT or GRE scores, or student GPA), a separate signed consent/permission form must be obtained from the student subject (and parent if involving minors) and submitted to the Registrar's office.
- Using a faculty member not on the research team to distribute and collect survey instruments if surveying students in a particular course or courses are part of the study design.

If there is a good scientific rationale for including students, investigators should:

- Make sure students are confident that their participation will not influence class standing, grades, or other benefits under the control of the researcher.
- Limit the use of extra credit points as a reward for participating; they should be used when the researcher is closely tied to the course subject matter and they should not raise a student's grade by a whole step (e.g., from a B to an A).
- Keep financial rewards commensurate with the risks of participation.
- If possible, avoid using class time to recruit subjects or complete study instruments.
- Inform students who might participate about the review process, the rationale for the study, the process of data collection, and investigator interests.

Please direct questions and/or requests for additional information to the UMass Boston research compliance manager, Deborah Elek, at 617.287.5478 or [deborah.elek@umb.edu](mailto:deborah.elek@umb.edu).



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Do you have items you would like to submit for possible inclusion in a future newsletter? Please contact Jim Mortenson at [james.mortenson@umb.edu](mailto:james.mortenson@umb.edu).

