

# THE FUND FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

## “STRENGTHENING THE CORE OF A LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY”

### COVER PAGE

Project title: Strengthening Diversity in a World of Success

Date: March 14, 2016

Please list the names and department affiliations of all applicants.

Micaela Soucy | English Major | Communications and International Studies Minors

Brittany O’Leary | Strategic Communications Major | Professional Writing Minor

Total amount of funding requested: \$5,500 (maximum \$7,000)

Are the grant monies to be used primarily for speakers or performers?  Yes  No

Has a similar proposal been previously funded by Fund For Excellence?  Yes  No

Which of the following best describes your grant request (check one)?

Enhance the quality of current programs or areas of study.

Support faculty research and development including mentoring students

Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary workshops, study groups, and courses.

An event to deepen understanding of historical or contemporary issues, events or milestones

Academic outreach to the community.

I/We request funding for (the total funding awarded will not exceed \$7,000)

one year

two years

## Project Narrative

### 1. Description.

#### a. Description of the proposed project/event.

TED Talks are globally recognized conferences that occur annually and explore broad ideas from a diverse perspective, which can be attended in person or online. They revolve around the ideas of technology, entertainment and design, but also expand into other topics such as business, health, politics and science. TEDxElonUniversity: Strengthening Diversity in a World of Success will be an independently organized TED event comprised of two sessions encompassing diversity in the workplace. (Elon has previously held a TEDx event titled “Innovation into Practice,” which focused on science and technology so we know there is interest in this type of event). On a campus where many believe that diversity is lacking, the Elon community would benefit from attending a TED Talk that directly addresses diversity, or the lack thereof, on campus, and diversity within the workplace. The conference will inspire the community to think of diversity beyond race; it will show how much gender, religious, sexual and socioeconomic diversity actually exists on campus. In a society where white males dominate many professional fields, many people tend to believe that it is more difficult for minorities to succeed in the workplace. Whether this is true or not, the speakers will challenge the stereotype and share how they gained success in different aspects of their lives. Rather than focusing on the challenges faced by these individuals, we want to focus on how they have risen above the challenges the world has thrown at them and challenge the idea that minority groups are weak and need help.

For this specific conference, there will be one headliner that opens the discussion for the remaining faculty, staff and students giving presentations. The headliner chosen for this event is Verna Myers, founder of The Verna Myers Consulting Group (VMCG), a woman dedicated to eliminating cultural biases in the workplace and the world. She has given a TED Talk before, titled “How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them,” and is expected to give, if not the same, then a similar speech. The other speakers will be selected from members of Elon’s campus who are interested in sharing their stories of diversity/privilege and success.

To select the faculty, staff and students to speak at the conference, there will be an application process. The process will consist of an application with an outline of their presentation, a persuasive essay about why their story should be heard, and an interview to make sure the person is comfortable with public speaking. A committee organizing this event will review the applications, due August 31, and hold the interviews. Phi Beta Kappa will then approve the committee’s selections.

The event will be held on Saturday, October 15, 2016 with session one from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and session two from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in McCrary Theatre. Students are only allowed to attend one session, as Myers will give the same presentation at each session. There will be a short lunch break for Myers between the two sessions.

**b. Specific goals of the proposed project / event.**

The hope for this event is to help students understand how diversity affects Elon’s campus. Through the stories that they hear, we want people to walk away with a better understanding of each other. We also want people to be inspired by their peers and mentors. These stories will also provide students with people they wouldn’t necessarily know otherwise

that they can possibly relate to. By having campus voices speak at the conference, we hope to inspire others to share their stories, even if in less public spaces. We want people to know that whether they are or aren't minorities, they have the tools to succeed. Once they find people they can relate to, they might strive for more success.

Through TEDxElonUniversity, we are hoping to uphold the values of the Phi Beta Kappa chapter at Elon. By fostering a conversation about how diversity is represented on this campus, we will allow the community to understand both how Elon is combatting the stigma that we are not diverse, but also inspiring the community to take action on their beliefs. Many of the speakers will be minorities who overcame their struggles and became successful. With their words of wisdom, we are hoping the audience will be inspired to explore this topic of diversity at Elon and in the workforce.

**c.** Description / estimation of the beneficiaries of the proposed project / event.

Students and faculty alike will benefit from this event. People will get the opportunity to have their voices heard and others will be able to see how their actions affect different people. A diverse selection of people from all walks of life, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, etc. will be able to teach others about the privilege and bias they deal with on a daily basis.

**d.** Explanation of how the goals of the project/event further the values of the liberal arts and sciences.

The TEDxElonUniversity event will attract both students and faculty because of the popularity and appeal of TED talks. The event will encompass a broad theme of diversity in the workplace but the event allows open interpretation. Each speaker is expected to deliver a unique perspective on diversity, allowing the event to touch upon a wide range of perspectives within

the workforce. A combination of professional and student speakers will provide a unique dynamic for the event that will allow the entire audience to connect with the topic being discussed. With speakers specializing in all different fields during different times in their lives, whether they are professors or students, the audience will be able to receive a well-rounded view of diversity in the workforce.

Elon prides itself on a liberal arts education with the intention of being educated on a variety of topics beyond just a student's major or minor. In similar fashion, TEDxElonUniversity applies to the liberal arts and sciences by allowing the audience to think critically about the true meaning of diversity of gender, sex, race and ethnicity in the workplace. Having a liberal arts and sciences background is essential for students to continue their development as global citizens. With the addition of the TEDxElonUniversity event, students and faculty alike will be able to further this education by learning about diversity in all aspects within the professional world.

**e.** Specific plan for evaluating the success of the project/event in achieving its goals.

A true testament to the success of the event will be the turnout by the Elon community. With proper marketing and advertising, this event will attract a diversified group of participants and audience members. Prior to the event, speakers will go through a screening process in order to select the most captivating and thought-provoking segments for the event. Leading up to the event and after, we will generate a conversation about diversity in the workplace and on Elon's campus. By properly marketing the event with posters around campus and a staff of faculty and students dedicated to the event, we are hoping to encourage people to attend. Prior to the event, an open blog via WordPress will be created for speakers and attendees to comment and provide

insight into diversity on Elon's campus and beyond the Elon community. By evaluating the number of bloggers and their potential interest in the subject and event itself, the TEDxElonUniversity staff working on the event will be able to gauge how much publicity the event is getting and also the response it generates. We will also send out a survey after the event and get feedback on speech topics, duration, and various components of the event.

f. Detailed project timeline.

March - May: contact TED and register the event, line up the headliner of the event

End of the academic year (mid may): finalize the event topic and theme

Summer: make promotional materials and finalize the headliner

August - end of September: begin application/screening process for speakers

September - October(event): advertising and promotion for the event; begin pre-event blog and conversation on diversity

**2. Budget\***. Please include

a. Detailed budget explaining how funds will be used.

Most, if not all, of the budget will go toward booking Verna Myers as a speaker. It will also be applied toward purchasing her airfare and setting her up in lodging while she is in Elon. Airfare from Baltimore/Washington International Airport (where she flies out of) to Raleigh-Durham International Airport is approximately \$250-\$300 round-trip, with her arriving in North Carolina on Friday, October 14 and departing on Sunday, October 16. A two night stay for a king suite at the Acorn Inn would cost approximately \$300 with breakfast included. We will provide Verna with lunch during the break between sessions, which will not exceed \$50. The rest of the \$4,500

will go to booking her for the event. In sum, \$1,000 will be used for flights and hospitality and \$4,500 will be used to compensate Verna for her time.

# TED<sub>x</sub>

## ElonUniversity

*Diversity in the World of Success*

12:00p.m.  
Saturday October 15<sup>th</sup>  
McCrary Theater

