FWI Funding Statement

Name: Sandeep Raha/Janice Penney-Gibbs
Faculty/Area: Health Sciences/Dept of Pediatrics
Project title: McMaster Children and Youth University: Shaping our Future

Please summarize how the FWI funds have been spent:
A summary by broad category is sufficient, line by line accounting of individual expenditures is not required unless specifically requested. Alternatively, please provide a copy of your FAS for the accounts that have been used for the FWI funds.

Salaries and benefits: $3158.16 (MacWork Student Coordinator)
Equipment: $458.55 (Consumables associated with execution of educational workshops)
Event Costs: $1041.03 (equipment rental, promotion and food associated with the event)
Other (please specify):

Balance remaining:
Please indicate how the balance will be spent and when you anticipate that the funds will be exhausted.

Please submit separately a maximum 2-page summary of the results of the project with particular attention to the following details:
1. How has the project fostered collaboration and interdisciplinarity?
   a. Have other projects been initiated as a result of this project?
   b. If it was recommended in your award letter that you connect with particular individuals/groups, have you done so and what was the result?
   c. Have you worked with others who have or have not been funded through the current RFP?
2. How has the project exposed students to new or emerging research?
3. How has the project offered students an experience beyond traditional borders?
4. How has the project challenged the confines of existing programming and advanced new paradigms of research or education?
5. How will the outcomes of the project be sustained or expanded?
6. Please outline any barriers or challenges that may have prevented you from achieving some of your project goals.

The financial and project reports can be submitted to fwi@mcmaster.ca.
**Project Summary: McMaster Children and Youth University: Shaping our Future**

The McMaster Children’s and Youth University (MCYU) would like to thank the office of the President and the FWI committee for this seed funding which has contributed to the stabilization of our lecture program and the initiation of our community outreach program (MCYU in the City).

**How has the project fostered collaboration and interdisciplinarity?**

The MCYU project is uniquely interdisciplinary in that it engages faculty members, undergraduates and graduate students from all six McMaster Faculties. Our lecture program exposes the community to university professors allowing them to connect their research with youth and their families. In addition, our volunteers who assist in managing the logistics of the lecture delivery are also from various disciplines from within the McMaster Campus.

The bulk of the FWI funding was used to develop the MCYU outreach program. We realized that the residents of a number of communities, especially those identified by the Hamilton Spectators Code Red project, were not able to overcome barriers they faced in order to make the journey to campus. Using the FWI funding we developed a program to jointly mentor graduate and undergraduate students from all six faculties, in research communication, community engagement and enquiry based education. One of the most important features of this program is to encourage students from various faculties to understand how different disciplines may view and tackle common societal issues based on their academic training. The challenge we pose to these McMaster students is to identify how their unique skill sets can complement each other, and to demonstrate to youth in the community how these issues can be then addressed. Using this challenge, the students incorporated a component in their workshops that demonstrated, to youth, the multidisciplinary nature of career development.

**Have other projects been initiated as a result of this project?**

Yes. The most valuable project will be the development of a vibrant research program linked to MCYU. This project has attracted the attention of Ms. Julia Evanovitch; currently a MIIETL employee who began volunteering with our program in a leadership capacity over the last 6 months. This project has sparked her enthusiasm to pursue a PhD, through the School of Geography and Earth Sciences, with a focus of evaluating the impact of MCYU in the priority neighbourhoods in Hamilton. In addition to this project, Dr. Raha (MCYU director) and Dr. Marshall Brier (Member of the MCYU faculty advisory group) will also be preparing a scholarly paper describing the educational ethos of a program such as MCYU.

In addition to potential research projects, our outreach program has fostered collaborations with the Pathways to Education program as well as the Hamilton Boys and Girls; just to mention two. We are discussing the targeted delivery of workshops that integrate hands-on educational workshops and career guidance for youth ranging in age from 8-14 years old with these two groups. This will result in the more experiential learning opportunities for McMaster students.

**If it was recommended in your award letter that you connect with particular individuals/groups, have you done so and what was the result?**

No specific recommendations were provided in our award letter.

**Have you worked with others who have or have not been funded through the current RFP?**

This funding initiated an important relationship with MIIETL in order to effectively develop instruction strategies to teach McMaster students enquiry based learning and community engagement. As a result of this connection, MIIETL has devoted significant in-kind resources to our program and this has resulted in growth and improved the quality of the mentorship program. Approximately 25 McMaster students have been mentored in the theoretical aspects of community engagement and gained experiential training in mentoring youth in at-risk communities. Furthermore, MCYU has also fostered a relationship with the McMaster Chapter of Let’s Talk Science as well as initiating
collaborations with the McMaster Discovery Program in order to provide educational opportunities for the parents of the children who may attend our program.

How has the project exposed students to new or emerging research?

This program teaches research communication. This skill set is critical in facilitating interview and presentation skills for students at all levels. Furthermore, it teaches students how to effectively utilize their academic skills to research societal issues such as stress management (which was one of our outreach workshops), consolidate the information and construct effective hands-on workshops to empower youth by teaching them how they have it in their power to discover the answers to such issues and deal with them in the context of their own lives. Our McMaster facilitators must research the topic to be covered in the workshop or contact experts on campus to develop a sound basis for the content. This allows for exposure to new topical research and development of a very different perspective; why would the research matter to youth!

How has the project offered students an experience beyond traditional borders?

The MCYU program offers students unique opportunities beyond traditional academic and geographical boundaries. The primary objective of the MCYU program is to provide opportunities for collaborations (not necessarily graduate students teaching undergraduates) between graduate and undergraduate. This experience necessitates that students learn to appreciate how background of students in other undergraduate and graduate programs offer different perspectives on a societal issue being addressed by the workshop. These multidisciplinary collaborations bring together students who would not normally work with each other in a traditional academic setting, but must do so in everyday workplace environment. In addition, MCYU also offers the opportunity for these students to become proficient at enquiry based mentorship, a skill set that requires them to think more deeply and analyze critically the material that they wish to teach to youth. Current research has shown that this type of experience improves the ability of students to develop strong research hypothesis.

How has the project challenged the confines of existing programming and advanced new paradigms of research or education?

We have found that students find enquiry-based education very challenging. Most applied science programs do not teach this effectively. This is particularly fascinating because research is all enquiry based. Our program helps to more concretely demonstrate the utility of enquiry based learning by asking the students to construct an enquiry based, hands-on workshop. Furthermore, the engagement of youth can be an important exercise in “selling” information; a skill set that is valuable in preparing proposals and grants in a number of employment sectors.

How will the outcomes of the project be sustained or expanded?

Funding is always a challenge, however with enthusiasm and hard work of our volunteer staff MCYU will aim increase its network of collaborations within the city of Hamilton. MCYU has received support from the office of the Provost and this will allow for hiring of part time staff to stabilize the administrative infrastructure. Based on our expanding network of connections in the community, we will be seeking funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation. We will also launch a crowd funding initiative in September to garner public support. With our increasing impact, we hope to raise sufficient funds to develop a self sustaining program based on public and corporate sponsorship as well as local and federal funding. Most importantly, we recently implemented a youth advisory board modelled after one in Children’s University of Vienna. This clearly demonstrated that there is HUGE support from both the youth and their parents for not only implementation of the program, but also for contributing to financial support of the program. We will begin to leverage this in 2015.