

Literature-Based Analysis of a Problem in Grant Writing

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ENGL 7070

Introduction

Today the college population in the United States composes of students from various backgrounds and races. This diversity is on a rise, and requests for minority scholarships are increasing. Some of the minority scholarships are categorized as follows: African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, women, and LGBTQ scholarships (minority scholarships). In this article, I will describe the aspects that a grant writer should focus on when requesting for scholarship grants for international students. Being an Asian pursuing master's in the United States, I am able to clearly identify and explain the factors that a minority scholarship grant request for international students should comprise of. When writing such a grant, it is imperative to be cognizant of this minority population in terms of their cultural and financial background. Comprehending these factors will broaden the perspective of a grant writer while constructing the need statement. In order to facilitate grant writers in preparing a fruitful need statement, I will explain the reasons why this population should be provided scholarships. I have no specificities related to whether the scholarships should be merit based or not; my attempt in this article is to present a strong argument to reinforce why international students should be funded. Through this argument, I will in turn provide guidelines on how a grant writer can make the proposal more convincing.

Reasons to provide scholarships to international students

Reason 1: International students as valuable assets to the United States

The most important facet a grant writer should highlight is how the international population continues to be beneficial to the United States. A vital reason to fund international students is that they constitute of an increasingly important source of diversity on college campuses. It is important to show the funders that the United States is benefitted by serving a population that does not belong from the United States. These students make valuable educational and economic contributions in institutions of English-speaking host countries (Andrade 131). Andrade states that in a world that gradually echoes the effects of globalization, the necessity for intercultural education and understanding is critical. This population not only adds to the needed revenues but also adds to intercultural learning and increased understanding of diversity and global issues. This provides the United States with opportunities for international business and trade connections, helping make

political allies and endorse foreign policy interests. A few international students may even stay in the country after graduation to fill positions for which few nationals are qualified (Andrade 133).

Further, diversity on college campuses is essential in order for college students to learn how to live and work effectively with others who differ from them (Zhao et al. 2009). Zhao et al. explain that attending a school enrolling substantial numbers of international students may be an advantage for American students in the marketplace, to the extent that the experience increases their cultural sensitivities and skills in working with people from different backgrounds.

International students not only add significantly to the local economy through direct expenditures, but also enrich the experiences of domestic students (Owens et al. 157). The authors state that beyond economics, international students help enrich American culture and serve as tremendous foreign policy assets. According to the former United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, international students help American citizens develop understanding and knowledge that enriches lives and increases international cooperation (qtd. in Owens et al. 162). As a result, for these benefits to continue for the country, suitable support should be provided to international students who make tough compromises when living in a different country.

Grant writers should emphasize on the fact that globalization and intercultural communications are necessary for the United States, and that these can be achieved if international students are retained or the inflow of internationals continues. For this inflow, it is necessary that appropriate support is provided to the international students. It would be easy to get a grant for a community that is American, but requesting a grant for a non-American community will need diligence and thought in planning and drafting the proposal. Moreover, given the current immigration laws in American government, support for internationals is on a decline. Unless the grant is being written to a foundation that supports internationals, the needs statement will not require as much crafting. However, if the funder's interest lies in education or supporting education but does not specifically list internationals under their target population, then the needs statement will have to be more persuasive.

Thus, it is necessary that while writing the grant request, the writer first explains how supporting an international population would in turn support the United States, and subsequently focus on other points mentioned below.

Reason 2: Financial burden on international students

Both domestic and international students face academic and social transition issues when they move out of their homes, but these issues vary on a huge scale. Domestic students have the experience of living in the country since birth, but international students make a move thousands of miles away from their home countries. Perhaps 80% of the world's international students come from developing countries, such as China and India, and virtually all of them study in the North (Altbach 12). Asia remains the largest sending region, accounting for 59% of total United States international enrollments (Chow and Marcus 13). For the seventh consecutive year, India remained the leading place of origin of international students in the United States, with 83,833 students. China remained in second place, with 67,723 students and the Republic of Korea in third place, with 62,392 students (Chow and Marcus 13).

Here, the grant writer should gather statistical information on the number of students coming from different countries. With this statistical information, it can be confirmed that most students entering the United States for higher education come from India. India is a developing country and compared to the United States, India will need a lot of work to develop to the level of the United States. Grant writers should highlight the fact that most Indian or Asian students seek an educational loan in order to move to the United States for education and be able to afford tuition fees. The dollar rate is high compared to currencies in Asian countries such as India and Republic of Korea, and so being able to manage finances is a huge concern for such international students. Although the falling dollar may provide some relief, tuition costs in the United States continue to rise, ranging from an increase of 6.6% for public universities, to 4.2% for public two-year institutions (Chow and Markus 14). The authors further state that with the financial burden largely falling upon individuals and their families (62% of international students use personal/family funds to pay for their United States education), it remains to be seen whether these increases will affect students' decisions to study in the United States.

Such international students, after graduation, work for a couple years in the United States, before they return to their home countries, so that they are able to earn to pay back the education loan. Given the current job scenario for international students, it will be very difficult for these students to pay back the burdensome loan. Grant writers should use this thought in their need statement very carefully as they do not want to imply that internationals should be offered jobs instead of American citizens. However, it is still necessary to mention that in order to reduce the burden of student loan, internationals can be provided support via scholarships. In this section, I provided information particularly for Asian students, but the point to consider is that grant writers should provide to the funders information on the number of members in this minority population. Not all internationals are Asians, but they could be from countries that are less developed than the United States. This statistical information will bolster the argument why internationals should be funded.

Reason 3: Acculturative stress on international students

Between 2005 and 2007, the number of international students has increased by 10% in America (Hendrickson et al. 281). While that was a fact from 2007, given the point mentioned earlier from a 2015 study that India remained the leading place of origin of international students in the United States for the seventh consecutive year, it is implied that the influx of international students continues. Hendrickson et al. explain that these students have to take care of several things, such as relationships, friendships, financial stress, academics of course, racial discrimination, language proficiency etc., when living away from home. Yeh and Inose conducted a study to determine the level of acculturative stress in international students. They observed that European students were less stressed than Asian, African, and Latin/Central American students. This was because the Europeans students saw themselves as more fitting in the American society than the other students (Yeh and Inose 23).

A similar study was also conducted by Constantine and Okazaki and they observed that students from the African continent appeared to be faring worse with regard to their well-being as compared to students from Asia or Latin America. Specifically, African international students reported lower social self-efficacy and higher levels of acculturative stress and depression than other international students (237). A point to consider is that all of these stressors can affect the academic performance of the students. In worst cases, low academic performance also leads to deportation of these students. Grant writers should state the fact that these students are exposed to a very new and

different educational system in the United States, and they are expected to perform well to be able to live in the country. Thus, the pressure of keeping up with grades, managing tuition fees, and maintaining a social life can put these students into depression. Grant writers can emphasize this information about the acculturative stress that internationals go through by providing the number of non-native English speakers and non-white students. These numbers can be used to convince the funders how the country can be a better host to international students by helping reduce some stress in their lives by supporting their tuition fees.

Miscellaneous

If the scholarships are merit based, grant writers could provide information of the previous academic performance of these students while requesting the grant. Grant writers could collect statistical information on the academic success of the students and emphasize the fact that these students deserve to be funded. Along with a rationale for providing scholarships to the international students (irrespective of whether scholarships are merit based), funders would also like to know the outcome of their support. Thus, an evaluation plan for the scholarship program should be mentioned. The organization should decide the way they want to evaluate the success of the scholarship program. This could be possibly done by observing student performance over specific periods of time and inspecting their progress. Checking student performance regularly is one way to evaluate the success of the program; there could be several other ways to do so. However, it is vital that the proposal includes an evaluation plan.

Finally, grant writers can also consider describing how the grant will contribute to the future career plans of these students. Funders definitely want to launch careers for students who will show the capability to lead in their fields. Thus, if possible, grant writers should include information on the capability of these students to achieve their career goals.

Overview

Above, I provided several reasons why international students should receive scholarship funds. Grant writers should be cognizant of these details when requesting scholarship funds. I would also suggest that the organization or grant writers speak with international students personally to understand them better, because understanding the lifestyle of someone not from one's community would require research. In the one-on-one conversations with international students, I recommend

grant writers to ask them about their struggles living away from home. It is important for funders to discern the following vital facets pertaining to international students: they are a valuable asset to the United States; most international students come from undeveloped countries and go through acculturative stress; and the standard of living in the United States is high for such students and they struggle to make a living and pay tuition fees. Thus, grant writers should underscore that reducing the burden of tuition fees to some extent will certainly make the lives of international students better, and also help retain the international student population in order to promote diversity.

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