

Author: rholland at nsf2
Date: 4/5/95 9:23 AM
Priority: Normal
To: csepweil@karl.acc.iit.edu at NOTE
Subject: SEE BELOW-Undeliverable mail: local delivery failure
----- Message Contents -----

Date: Wed, 05 Apr 1995 08:59:46 -0500 (EST)
From: rholland@nsf.gov
Subject: Resending Message Below. Hope it arrives.
To: csepweil@minna.acc.iit.edu

HI VIVIAN-I'M TRYING ONCE AGAIN. RACHELLE

From: rholland@nsf.gov
Subject: SGER Proposal

Hi, Vivian:

I'm sorry that we didn't have time to discuss this at the Mentoring meeting. Had I thought more about it, I should have arranged to have breakfast with you Sunday morning. Ah well, an opportunity missed!

I have concerns about the proposal as described. First, it does meet the SGER criteria of need for quick review and decision. The team seems qualified. I am concerned about the vague research plan, however. I gave the proposal to another program officer to look over, because of this, and he shares this uneasiness. Here are his concerns: "...the actual plan for the research is sketchy (given that it is double-spaced, the proposal is quite brief, even for a SGER) and the researchers give no hint as to the intellectual or theoretical foundations that will guide their work, other than to identify three models that might be used to structure the performance expectations of the software developer's profession with regard to the effort to prevent software defects or "bugs." They appear to plan to just observe and, perhaps occasionally, plunge into the dialogue of the Working Group on Reliability and Safety. Perhaps this is an adequate research design, but, as I noted, its sketchiness makes me uncomfortable."

I share these concerns. What is needed is more than a general statement that you intend to provide "a thick description" of what is going on in that working group of the Task Force on Software Engineering Ethics and Professional Practices. For instance, Why have you selected that group? Is this effort likely to tell us something important about professions in relationship to society? What theoretical interests (or relevant work in what literatures) drive that selection? How do those interests drive what you will be looking for in the conversations of that group? What categories of conversation do you expect to find; to what theoretical issues or issues of social importance do those relate? How will you structure your analysis? What important questions will your findings answer? How do you expect what you find to help you to structure or undertake the larger inquiry?

Another colleague has just given me a slide to use in presentations about what the division looks for in a research proposal; her outline might help here: review relevant literature, describe the problem (why is balancing technical, professional, and educational standards a problem?), offer a research solution, present the research plan, outline the analyses to be performed, discuss interpretations and implications. The proposal I have in hand seems to need clarification particularly about the dimensions of the problem and how your attack will lead to solutions to it, and the kinds of analyses and interpretations you intend to make. If these questions are clarified, the implications of the research would be much clearer.

Finally, given constraints on the EVS budget, I would need to ask you

to lower the budget for this effort by about half.

Let me know if you think it worth investing the effort to answer the questions I identify above, particularly given the budget problem. If you want to come ahead with an addendum responding to the questions and revising the budget, I shall be happy to consider the effort further.

Best regards,
Rachelle

--Boundary (ID /1OYW8wI2oT56QmvDg7eAA)--

--Boundary (ID WDenxN8q1V96H2mqA/0vrw)--