

Faculty Research Grant Closing Report

Dr. Elizabeth A. Bennion, POLS, Summer 2003

The Faculty Research Grant allowed me to significantly advance my research program. Receiving the grant made it possible for me to spend the summer working on research rather than teaching. First, I used the time to complete a paper featuring the results of a Fall 2002 voter mobilization field experiment. Second, I used the time to prepare for phase two of my project, a Fall 2003 voter mobilization experiment.

Each experiment required randomly selecting local voters to be in the contact group or the control group. Those in the control group were contacted by members of our non-partisan mobilization team. During the Fall 2002 experiment, voters were contacted face-to-face with one of two messages. During the Fall 2003 experiment, voters were contacted either face-to-face or by telephone. In each case, the “condition” (message or contact mode) was randomly assigned.

At the end of the summer, I presented the paper to Dr. Donald P. Green, the A. Whitney Griswold Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. He shared the results of my work with the director of the University of Maryland’s Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Based on the quality of this work, I was invited to present my findings at a fully-funded meeting of researchers and political practitioners in Washington, D.C. (January 2004). In addition, Dr. Green cited my work in his newly published book entitled Get Out the Vote!: How to Increase Voter Turnout (Green and Gerber, 2004). This book seeks to bridge the divide between political scientists and political practitioners by offering sound (research-supported) advice to practitioners in straightforward, non-technical language. Most recently, Dr. Green has asked me to publish my paper as a chapter in an edited volume to be entitled The Science of Voter Mobilization. He is currently talking to publishers about this project.

After numerous requests, I recently obtained the election 2003 turnout data needed to complete the second phase of my project. This will allow me to compare the effectiveness of our mobilization efforts during a high profile, highly competitive election (2002) versus a low profile, less competitive election (2003). I am currently transforming the dataset from the voter registration office into a usable SPSS file. As soon as this coding is complete, I will be able to analyze the 2003 data and to complete a second paper. I plan to submit this article manuscript to the journal Political Behavior for peer review and publication.

In the end, the grant will likely result in a research presentation, a book chapter, and a journal article. I wish to thank the Research and Development Committee for making this important investment in my work.