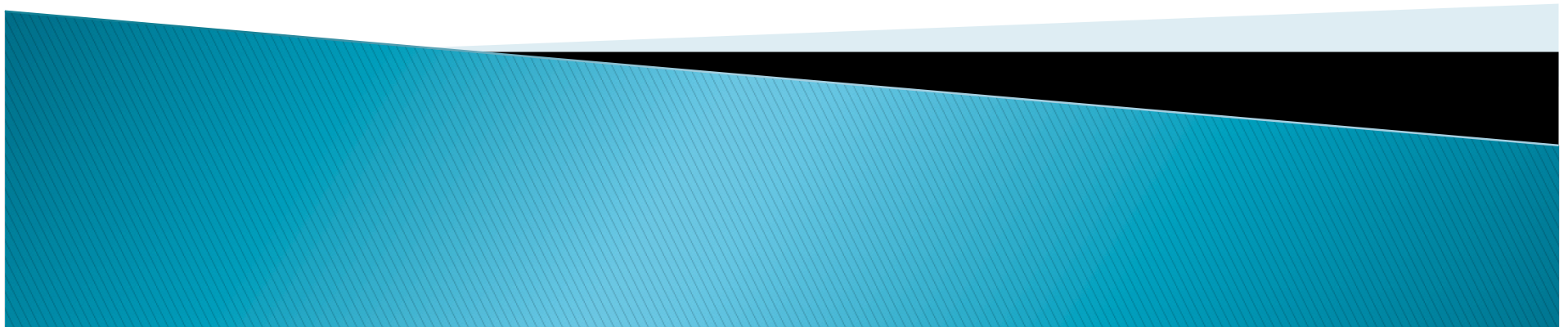


# Ten Tips to Developing a Winning Proposal

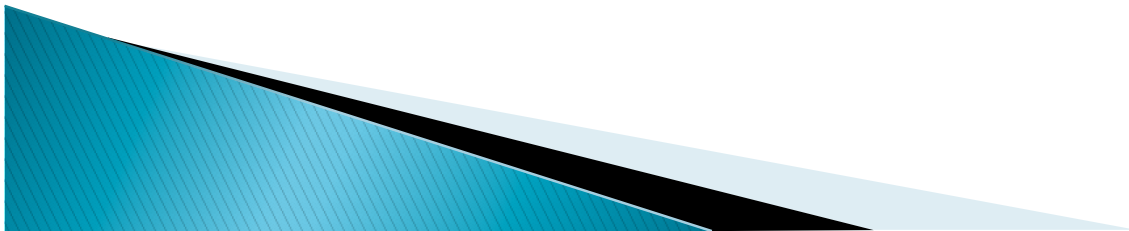
*October 14, 2009*

*Robert De Martino, Director, Office of Grants and Research Services  
Maribel Roman, Assistant Director, Office of Grants and Research Services*



# Faculty barriers to writing proposals

- ▶ Time
- ▶ High teaching load
- ▶ Lack of release time
- ▶ Lack of adequate clerical support

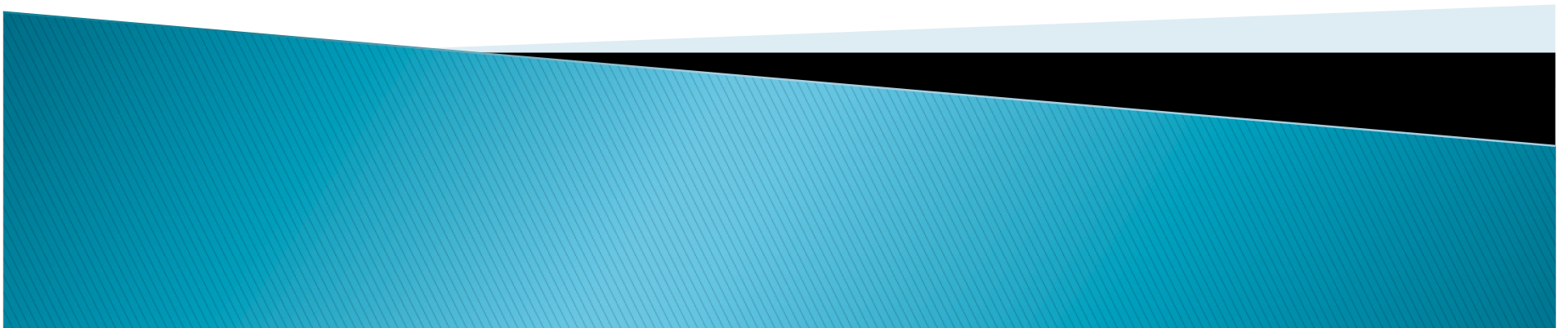


# Faculty barriers... continued

- ▶ Lack of grantsmanship experience
- ▶ Insufficient preliminary data
- ▶ Writer's Block (Robert Boice, *Professors as Writers*)

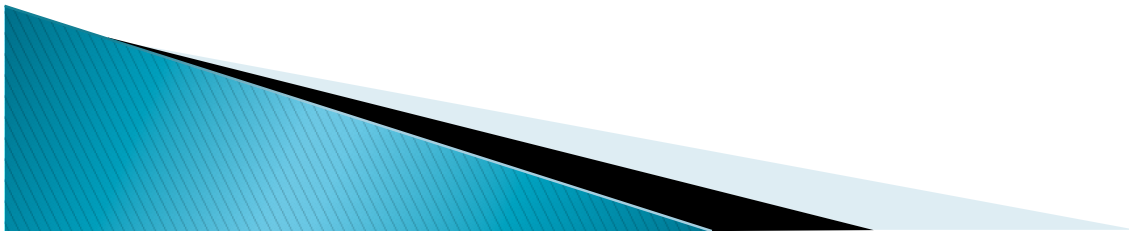


# Top Ten Tips for Success



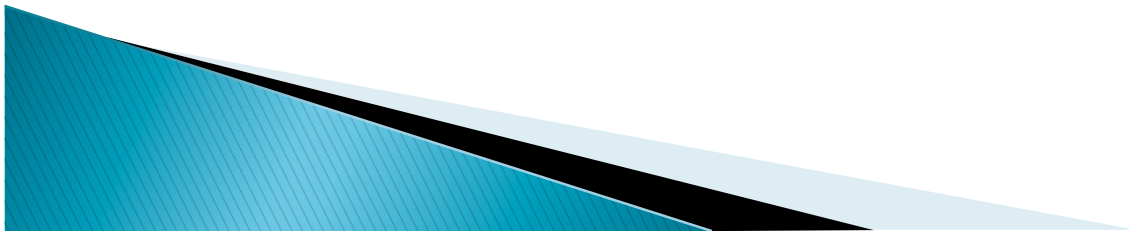
# 10. Needing Money Isn't Enough

- Why should sponsor fund your proposal?
- Are you ready to develop a proposal?
- Time to develop and refine project
- To write a proposal, first need a project
- Preliminary results?
- Conduct literature review (who else in field?)
- What makes you an expert, why Seton Hall, etc.?



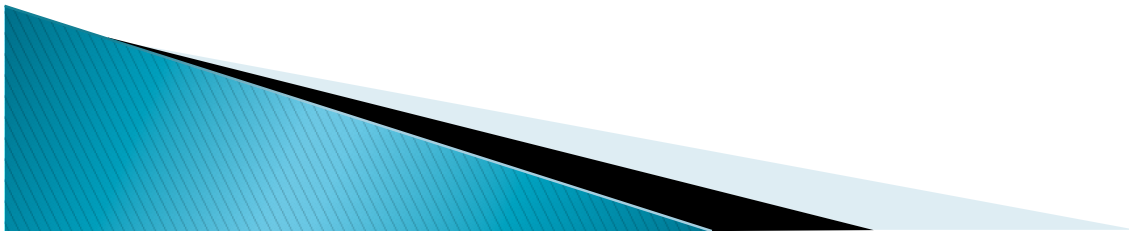
## 9. Match Funding Opportunities to Your Research or Project

- ▶ COS; Grants.gov; Agency alerts
- ▶ Print directories, commercial newsletters
- ▶ Literature/Professional meetings
- ▶ Online award databases, e.g., NIH, NSF award abstracts
- ▶ Copies of successful proposals
- ▶ OGRS emails
- ▶ Talk to Colleagues/Chair/Dean/Unit Head
- ▶ Collaborative, interdisciplinary, multi-institutional proposals



# 8. Guidelines. Guidelines. Guidelines.

- ▶ Read guidelines (not just announcements) fo
- ▶ Re-read the RFP – thoroughly, patiently, slowly
- ▶ Points for each section
- ▶ Note specifications: length, format, binding,
- ▶ Copies, etc.
- ▶ Mark it up, highlight requirements and important dates, underline action verbs – *must, shall, will, ought*
- ▶ Outline or visually represent the logic of the idea
- ▶ Budget details



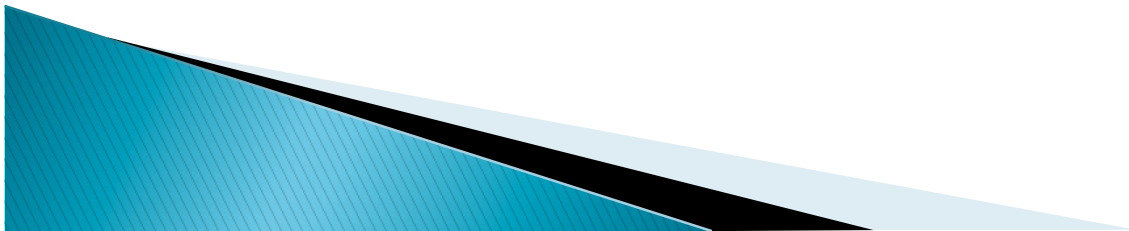
## 7. Proposal Should be “in Sync” with Sponsor

- ▶ Help sponsors accomplish *their* mission
- ▶ Understated ways to tell sponsor you share values
  - Pick up keywords and themes from guidelines, annual reports, publications (“global impact,” “economic development,” etc.)
- ▶ Hold up mirror to sponsor
- ▶ One size does not fit all
- ▶ Tailor proposal to sponsor’s needs



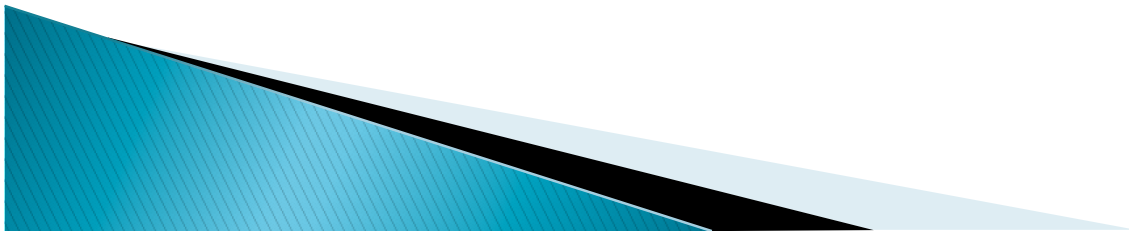
## 6. Organize the Application: Use Headings

- ▶ Write strong major, positive headings
- ▶ Do same for subheadings-use **boldface type** or underlines
- ▶ Use bullets-avoid densely packed page
- ▶ Try headings at top of new page
- ▶ Present a detailed table of contents
- ▶ Help for those who skim through proposals recognize your genius



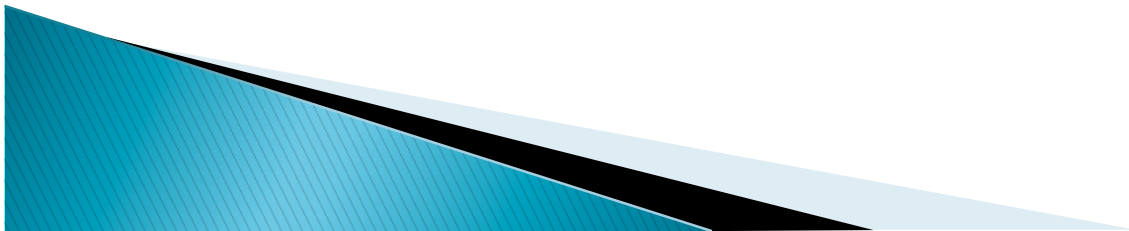
## 5. Ask Colleagues and Those Outside Discipline to Review Proposal

- ▶ Ask for brutal honesty
- ▶ Avoids inconsistencies and red flags
- ▶ Ask them specific questions:
  - **How successful was my attempt to concisely describe problem?**
  - **How can I make my solutions more distinctive or practical?**
  - **What did I leave out?**



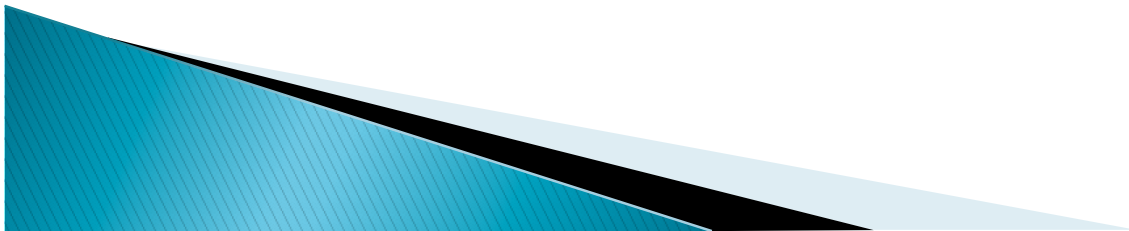
## 4. Take Time and Revise

- ▶ Work quickly on first draft
- ▶ Fearlessly revise
- ▶ Note where narrative bogs down
- ▶ Set aside and return, notice problems (faulty logic, lack of back-up facts, overemphasized, etc.)
- ▶ Remove excess verbiage, generalizations
- ▶ Head-off potential problems/pitfalls



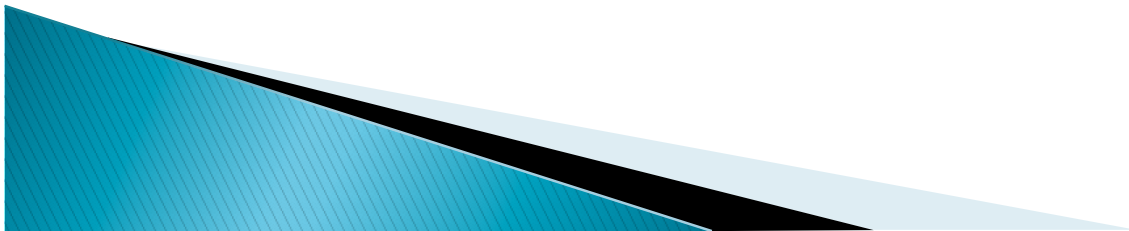
### 3. Write Concisely, Without Jargon, Use Backup Facts

- ▶ Use short sentences
- ▶ Avoid \$5 words; 50 cent ones will do
- ▶ Define acronyms or technical terms the first time
- ▶ Avoid negatives (slow down readers)
- ▶ Position yourself as “a leader among many”
- ▶ Write like *USA Today* or *Scientific American*
- ▶ Anecdotes, citations: support statements
- ▶ Use charts and graphs



## 2. Contact the Program Officer

- ▶ Send e-mail with questions; request follow-up phone call
- ▶ Clarify any questions from the RFP and website
- ▶ Will program officer review draft?
- ▶ Percentage of applications funded?
- ▶ What types of reviewers?
- ▶ Offer to be a reviewer
- ▶ Is your project competitive?



# 1. Final Review: Consistency Counts

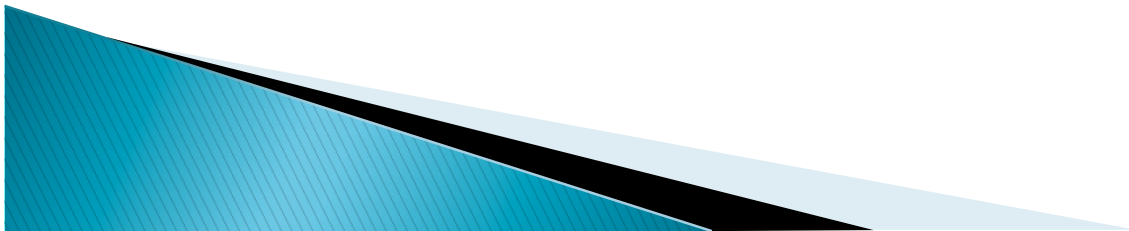
Before you send off the proposal---

- ▶ Does the budget add up?
- ▶ Are narrative, budget, and budget narrative internally consistent—and with each other?
- ▶ Typos can kill!
- ▶ Are all names and titles spelled correctly?
- ▶ Are phone numbers, addresses right?
- ▶ Have you left out anything (even pages!)?
- ▶ Proofread (read out loud)
- ▶ Have someone with design skills format proposal
- ▶ *Take nothing for granted—a final review*



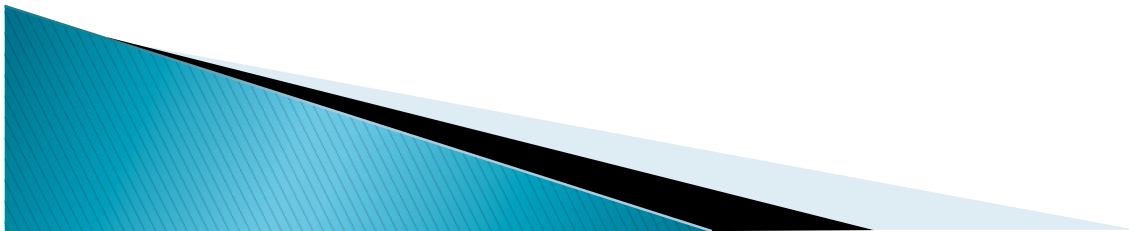
# Common Complaints: as stated by Reviewers

- ▶ Wrong sponsor or ineligible project
- ▶ Did not follow guidelines
- ▶ Project description and budget inconsistent
- ▶ Proposal lacks literature references; reviewers think applicant does not know the literature
- ▶ No recognition of potential problems or pitfalls



# If Awarded...

- ▶ Project initiation briefing
- ▶ Account set-up
- ▶ Deliverables



# If Not Awarded

- ▶ Declined proposal process
- ▶ Revise and resubmit, contacting program officer for input (and reviewers' comments)
- ▶ Revised proposals more likely to be funded





Questions

