

**Report to the Louisiana Board of Regents**

**Review of Proposals Submitted for Funding Consideration to the**

**Research Commercialization and Educational Enhancement Program**

**(RC/EEP)**

**Subject-Area Review:**  
**MUSIC AND FILM TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS**

**May 30, 2007**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Music and Film Technology and Business Review Panel met by teleconference to review applications for the Research Commercialization and Educational Enhancement Program (RC/EEP). The Panel reviewed the proposals based on the criteria outlined in the request for proposals.

The Panel, after completing its review, ranked the two (2) submitted proposals as follows:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Proposal #</b>	<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Lead Institution</b>
1	001RCEEP-07	Kevin McLin	Dillard University
2	008RCEEP-07	John Snyder	Loyola University New Orleans

<b>Proposal Number</b>	<b>001RCEEP-07</b>
<b>Proposal Title</b>	<b>Multi-Media Intercollegiate, Interdisciplinary Technological Research</b>
<b>Submitting Institution/PI</b>	<b>Dillard University/Kevin McLin</b>
<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>\$2,619,978</b>

**Key Science, Technology and/or Educational Opportunities (30%)**

- To what extent and how will proposed activities provide achievable plans for capitalizing on opportunities available in research and technology development, research commercialization, and educational enhancement?
- To what extent and how will project activities and focuses relate to research areas identified on page 5 of the RFP and/or to broader STEM educational enhancement opportunities?

Comments:

The film industry consistently seeks technological innovations through research, so there is a strong potential for research commercialization in this deep-pocketed industry. However, this proposal does not provide adequate detail showing how this will be accomplished through the prospective project. Funds are to be used exclusively for purchase of state-of-the-art equipment, yet no details are provided to explain how equipment will be protected, maintained, and upgraded regularly. This is critical for the proposed center to remain competitive with existing film centers in other academic institutions and attract private-sector interest.

**Human Capital Resources (25%)**

- To what extent and how will the proposed activities help to immediately retain, attract, and/or develop key science, technology, and educational personnel, especially faculty, students and research staff?

Comments:

The key to attracting new faculty, students, and research staff lies in establishing strong connections with major players in the film industry, such as the Sundance Institute or Paramount Studios. This is missing from the proposal. Without such an alliance to provide funding, encouragement, expertise, and the bright light of industry visibility, this project will be severely limited in its impact. Additionally, it is unclear whether viable film-related businesses, such as post-production houses and special effects studios, already exist in New Orleans. This infrastructure is critical for providing internships and future employment for the program's students, and for keeping film work from being sent to existing businesses in Los Angeles. It is unclear, moreover, that the participating faculty members have the expertise necessary to implement the project successfully, even as designed.

**Project Impact and Strategic Implications (30%)**

- To what extent and how will the proposed activities have impacts consistent with the goals and objectives of the RC/EEP and the RFP beyond the research and/or educational programs involved directly in project work?

- Has a reasonable timeline been proposed for activities to achieve a discernable impact on science, technology, workforce development, educational enhancement, and other issues related to the RC/EEP's mission?
- To what extent and how will the proposed activities have broad, sustainable strategic impacts as contrasted with more focused, discrete and short-term impacts?

Comments:

This proposal does not provide adequate detail to convince the panel that the purchase of \$2.6 million worth of equipment will enable the partnering institutions to make significant headway toward establishing a nationally recognized film center in New Orleans. There appears to be great potential for such a center to be developed, but not as described in this proposal. Before such a large monetary investment is made there must be strong existing ties to key players in the film industry who believe in this concept and will work to make it a reality. Without significant investment from existing major players in the film industry, this proposal will be unable to have broad, sustainable strategic impacts.

No timeline was included in this proposal.

**Leveraging of Resources (15%)**

- To what extent and how will RC/EEP support be leveraged with other resources?
- As applicable, to what extent and how will resources of partnering departments, units, and/or institutions be combined effectively to support and sustain project activities?

Comments:

There seems to be strong potential for leveraging an investment in film equipment but it is not realized in this proposal. A New Orleans film research and educational program for independent films would likely appeal to industry professionals who want a place to work that is relaxed and friendly, less expensive than Los Angeles, supplied with well-trained, eager students and young professionals, and supportive of a thriving film-related business sector. This could be a reality with the energetic support of well-known individuals and/or film studios, but any mention of this potential for leveraging of resources is completely missing from the proposal.

**BASES OF RATING**

This proposal appears to have been put together in haste with attention only to the technological investment requested. Without the necessary industry partnerships in place (or at least well into the discussion phase), it is highly unlikely that an RC/EEP investment will produce the project's desired outcomes. There is potential here but this proposal does not inspire confidence that the institutions involved can achieve its goals.

<b>Proposal Number</b>	<b>008RCEEP-07</b>
<b>Proposal Title</b>	<b>New Orleans Music, Entertainment and Educational Consortium</b>
<b>Submitting Institution/PI</b>	<b>Loyola New Orleans/John Snyder</b>
<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>\$7,498,990</b>

**Key Science, Technology and/or Educational Opportunities (30%)**

- To what extent and how will proposed activities provide achievable plans for capitalizing on opportunities available in research and technology development, research commercialization, and educational enhancement?
- To what extent and how will project activities and focuses relate to research areas identified on page 5 of the RFP and/or to broader STEM educational enhancement opportunities?

Comments:

The proposal includes very little research and technology development. Certainly there is technological acquisition, but the proposal does not discuss research goals in conjunction with the technology to be acquired. Thus, no research commercialization potential is apparent except in the area of film, though this is not directly discussed. The panel applauds the goals of enhanced communication and focused, non-redundant goals in curricular development, but it is questionable whether the proposed Center as described could accomplish those goals.

There is nothing innovative in the technological aspects of this proposal. Online education, guest speakers, and videos of master classes are all common in academia.

**Human Capital Resources (25%)**

- To what extent and how will the proposed activities help to immediately retain, attract, and/or develop key science, technology, and educational personnel, especially faculty, students and research staff?

Comments:

The proposal is ambitious in identifying new faculty and related personnel needed to create the Center. The applicants make a grave error in allocating a higher salary for a non-academic Center director than those provided for faculty. This casts doubts on the PI's understanding of the culture and politics of academia. In addition, the faculty salaries are not sufficient to attract 'star' researchers, who expect labs, well-paid research assistants, travel funds to relocate to New Orleans, and other incentives.

Tier I, II, and III guest speaker schedules as presented translate to 2.1 guests per week for each of the four institutions over two 14-week semesters. This level of activity is impossible to support and integrate into existing curricula.

**Project Impact and Strategic Implications (30%)**

- To what extent and how will the proposed activities have impacts consistent with the goals and objectives of the RC/EEP and the RFP beyond the research and/or educational programs involved directly in project work?

- Has a reasonable timeline been proposed for activities to achieve a discernable impact on science, technology, workforce development, educational enhancement, and other issues related to the RC/EEP's mission?
- To what extent and how will the proposed activities have broad, sustainable strategic impacts as contrasted with more focused, discrete and short-term impacts?

Comments:

The proposed activities would likely have some positive impact on the local community in public schools and, if guest speaker events are open to the public, for local musicians and the general public as well. Graduating students may remain in the region and start businesses in music or film.

The plan for sustainability described on p. 17 of the proposal is unrealistic. In order to sustain the \$1,348,725 needed for personnel after Year Three, all four institutions must add 35 new, paying students each year, provided that tuition averages \$10,000/year. Such a magnitude of growth would have a severe impact on student/faculty ratio, classroom space, supporting services, dormitories, and other related academic services and would be unsustainable for both the program and the institution.

Moreover, there are no statistical data to prove that online courses produce a strong revenue stream for academic institutions. For example, MIT is close to realizing its goal of putting all its courses online without charge to the user. Berklee College of Music's highly recognizable brand and popular online music business courses present a formidable challenge to Loyola New Orleans in seeking to compete in this marketplace.

The assumption that additional resources from foundations, private donors, and federal programs will be forthcoming is naïve and optimistic at best, and is imprudent to cite these as a cornerstone of this project's sustainability.

The timeline provided is reasonable for what the project sets out to accomplish, but those goals are not aligned with the science, technology, workforce development, educational enhancement, and other issues related to the RC/EEP's mission.

This proposal is unlikely to have broad, sustainable strategic impacts.

**Leveraging of Resources (15%)**

- To what extent and how will RC/EEP support be leveraged with other resources?
- As applicable, to what extent and how will resources of partnering departments, units, and/or institutions be combined effectively to support and sustain project activities?

Comments:

Partnering institutions will provide total in-kind support at 43.5% of RC/EEP monies, if the project is funded at the level requested. Partnering institutions will provide support with faculty and staff, classrooms, and renovations of existing buildings. It is unclear how the State's Office of Entertainment Industry Development will provide support. The Louisiana Institute of Film Technology's partnering contributions are not included in the percentage noted above, as their relationship is not quantitatively defined in the proposal.

## **BASES OF RATING**

This proposal fails to demonstrate understanding of and compliance with the stated funding goals of RC/EEP. The concept of institutional cooperation is laudable, but that goal does not require creation of an external Center with non-faculty leadership and bloated administrative costs. Arguments presented for financial sustainability after Year Three are dangerously weak and unrealistic. The proposal lacks significant research goals and there is almost no research commercialization potential. The institutions involved could benefit from strengthened programs for their enrolled students, but it is not clear how that would spill over into significant workforce development for New Orleans and beyond.