When Practice Fuels Research:
The Impact of the Larsen Grant for Research in Career Development
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Leading the Way by Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice

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Abstract

The Larsen Grant for Research in Career Development at the University of Illinois is celebrating its 15th anniversary. We present our findings of 1) How was the Larsen Grant initiated; and 2) What are the major impacts that this practitioner-driven research fund has had on awardees’ research and career, career development literature, career development professionals, and the relationship between The Career Center (TCC) and academic departments across the campus. We also invite attendees to share their experiences and discuss ideas for blending career development research and practice.

What is Robert P. Larsen Grant for Research in Career Development?

Launched in 2002, this grant program was developed to encourage diverse voices in career development research from graduate students across the Illinois campus. Over the past 15 years, 36 grants have been awarded to individuals or groups to support early research projects, master’s theses, and doctoral dissertations that explored career development and vocational topics.

How was the Larsen Grant Initiated?

- Robert P. Larsen: The first career counselor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. One of the national pioneers who advocated to move from a “placement” orientation to a “career development” orientation. When he retired, he left a gift to Career Services at the Illinois campus
- During 2001-2002 academic year, transitioned to research grant for graduate students and staff (No staff applied and, over time, the grant became solely identified as an opportunity for graduate students)

What Have Been the Impacts of Larsen Grant?

1. Impacts on Grant Awardees
   - Impact on Research Training
     - Simulation of a whole grant process (application, IRB, data collection/analysis, write-up & presentation)
     - Training on graduate students’ presentation skills
     - Springboard to jump into the ocean of research
   - Impact on Awardees’ Career
     - Larsen as a success experience
     - Larsen as a direct foundation for future career
     - Larsen as beginning of a cohesive research story for awardees in faculty job market

2. Impacts on Career Development Field
   - Subsequent publications from awardees
     - 11 career-related dissertations
     - 12 Journal articles in peer-reviewed journal; Total # of citations: 332
     - 4 Conference proceedings
Diversity of Research Topics/Methods

3. Impacts on Career Professionals
   - Encourage staff to join assessment and research initiatives within TCC
   - An incentive for some TCC staff to consider pursuing Ph.D.

4. Impacts on the Relationship between TCC and Academic Departments
   Diversity of Disciplinary Area of Awardees

Please Share Your Experiences and Ideas for Blending Career Development Research and Practice
1. What value do you see in blending research and practice in day to day interactions?
2. Where do you experience opportunities for dialog between research and practice in your daily work?
3. How might you expand opportunities to bring research into practice spaces and vice versa?

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