EXPERIENCED PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHARES GRANT-WRITING STRATEGIES FOR NSF-ATE PROPOSALS

Greg Kepner, the principal investigator of several Advanced Technological Education grants, gave an overview of the National Science Foundation program that awards grants to help two-year colleges develop innovative technician education programs during the CCPI-STEM's Southeast Regional Spring Meeting.

"Those funds add up over time," Kepner said, referring to the potential for community colleges to use multiple ATE grants to develop advanced technology programs that address regional workforce needs. Kepner is the principal investigator of NavigATE, an ATE project based at Hillsborough Community College, and co-principal of the Micro Nano Technology Education Center at Pasadena City College. He served as the principal investigator of the Midwest Photonics Education Center at Indian Hills Community College from 2014 to 2015.

Kepner advised community college educators to begin work on ATE grant proposals six months before the program's early October deadline. He said the small scale projects track, which provides up to $475,000 in funding, "is a great place to get started."

He suggested that colleges and faculty who have never had an ATE grant apply to Mentor-Connect or MentorUp for help developing their proposals.

Kepner has served as a Mentor-Connect mentor and offered these tips for writing a competitive ATE grant proposal:

- Study the program solicitation NSF 24-584 and the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG).

- Work with industry partners and a grant writer to develop the proposal narrative that explains what you want to do and why.

- Provide details about who will be involved and what they will do to improve an existing technician education program or develop a new degree or certificate program.

- Explain the project's intellectual merit, which is its potential to advance the knowledge base of the field, and its broader impact, which is its potential to benefit society.

"You need to be able to tell the story," Kepner said of the narrative portion of the application where educators must explain their ideas, why they are needed, and how they will assess the outcomes of their innovations.

During his explanation of NSF's merit review process Kepner pointed out that "the project summary is the most important part because it's the most-read document."

View Kepner's presentation here: https://bit.ly/3RuJlou