

A STATEMENT OF SERVICES THE INDEPENDENT COLLEGES OFFICE

The Independent Colleges Office (ICO) provides services directed toward assisting member institutions to be competitive in the search for grants from federal agencies for faculty and curriculum development, and institutional renewal. The ICO recognizes the value of peer institutions working collectively to develop and maintain critical Washington contacts and connections in the arena of proposal development and grants administration.

Mission

The primary mission of The Independent Colleges Office is to work in partnership with member institutions as they press their legitimate claim for access to federal funds and for equity in the distribution of those funds. This legitimate claim is made by means of:

- a steady stream of competitive and targeted proposals to federal agencies from ICO member institutions
- the ongoing active participation by the ICO and member institutions, individually and collectively, in formal and informal discussions as federal policies, priorities and programs relating to higher education are shaped and reshaped.

This legitimate claim is based on:

- the documented historic contribution of this group of select liberal arts colleges to serve the national interest
- the continuing commitment of these institutions to serve the national interest in a manner consistent with their identity and mission
- a clear understanding of the challenges facing our society today.

To fulfill this responsibility, the ICO:

- keeps in contact with member colleges about their current programs and needs, and about their strategic planning to sustain strong programs
- secures, through personal, ongoing contact, the most current information about federal grant programs and provides this information to ICO campuses by means of electronic alerts, paper memos, phone calls, and the annual ICO Liaison Meeting held in Washington
- keeps up-to-date on issues that could affect ICO institutions, by attending Congressional Hearings, meetings of the advisory boards of federal funding agencies, participating in regular meetings of the Washington higher educational community, reviewing regular print and electronic materials
- assists member institutions in making their case, by documenting their individual and collective contribution to the national interest, and ensuring that this information is known and available for use by Congressional staffers and by staff at the various Federal agencies which are potential sources of grant support for ICO institutions
- serves as intelligence broker between ICO campuses and individuals, agencies, and associations based in Washington.

Services

To all ICO members, in addition to legislative representation, the ICO provides:

- an invitation for two institutional representatives to attend the annual ICO Liaison Meeting, generally held in early fall (a small fee is charged to cover costs for food and arrangements)
- periodic memos (electronic and paper) with alerts about current and proposed programs and deadlines, emerging priorities, etc.
- advice on contacts with Federal agency staffers in regard to proposal development and review
- arrangements for senior officers of the college to have appointments with appropriate staffers of federal agencies and on Capitol Hill
- answers to specific questions about individual proposals
- responses to 'special need' situations for proposal guidelines and application forms
- monthly ICO Community Conference Calls, an opportunity for ICO colleagues to join in an hour-long conversation with an agency staffer about a program with an upcoming deadline
- an on-campus proposal writing workshop, designed to fit the needs of a particular college in a timely manner (a fee is charged for workshops).

Background

The Independent Colleges Office (ICO), located in Washington DC, serves a select group of private liberal arts colleges in the area of federal grant support. The ICO had its beginning in the mid-1960's, when a Washington office was established for the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. From the first, the strong leadership of Ida Wallace made the ICO and its predecessor organizations an effective presence in Washington. Today the ICO represents the interests of members of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and a number of peer institutions from all parts of the country in their relations with federal agency staff and in the development of legislative programs that have current or potential impact on liberal arts colleges of the highest quality.

In the arena of legislative 'intelligence gathering,' the ICO monitors Congress and federal granting agencies to ensure that the type of institution represented by ICO members is not legislated or regulated out of the competition for Federal grant programs. In this process, as appropriate, the ICO alerts legislative and agency staffers about pertinent activities and future needs of ICO members and their peer institutions. The ICO relates to the campuses it serves through a designated liaison, most often either the senior academic officer or the development officer with responsibility for institutional relationships with federal granting agencies.

ICO Director

The current Director of the Independent Colleges Office is Jeanne L. Narum, who came to this position with experience as Director of Government and Foundation Relations at St. Olaf College, Director of Development at Dickinson College, and Vice President for Development and College Relations at Augsburg College. Narum is also the Director of Project Kaleidoscope, and ICO member institutions have had the opportunity to take the lead in this nation-wide effort to transform undergraduate science, mathematics, engineering, and technology education.