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BGSU Division of Research and Economic Development awards economic development grants

BOWLING GREEN, O.— Bowling Green State University’s Division of Research and Economic Development has awarded two innovative projects developed by University faculty a total of $100,000 in “seed money.”

Four finalists were chosen from a total of 10 proposals submitted by nearly all of BGSU’s colleges in response to a call for economic development projects. The finalists presented their idea to a panel including members of the Division of Research and Economic Development and Tom Blaha, director of the Wood County Economic Development Commission.

“We hope by linking the intellectual and human assets of Bowling Green State University with the needs of regional businesses and organizations the University can become a more active participant in advancing the economy of Ohio,” explained Dr. Michael Ogawa, vice president for research and economic development.

The proposal submitted by Drs. Timothy Pogacar, an associate professor and chair of the Department of German, Russian and East Asian Languages; Irina Stakhanova, an associate professor of Russian; and Amy Robinson, an associate professor of romance and classical studies, was awarded money to create The Language Services Group (LSG). LSG will employ undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty, to offer interpreting services, culture training and short –and long-term language courses to area businesses.

LSG is projected to create new jobs and bring additional work to Bowling Green from around the country, and potentially, the world.

“This partnership between the University and the broader community has great potential to create a significant economic impact as community members gain the ability to move themselves and/or their products or services across linguistic and cultural boundaries,” said Robinson. “Moreover, it has tremendous potential to enrich the regional culture by promoting communication and understanding among the diverse groups that make up northwest Ohio.”

Businesses of all sizes often need consulting or other professional services to grow. The
second winning proposal aims to provide that service. Dr. William Balzer, dean of BGSU Firelands, and Kelly Cusack, assistant director in the Office of Education Outreach at BGSU Firelands, submitted a proposal for support for the Regional Incubator for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship (RISE).

Leveraging a partnership with the Erie County Economic Development Corporation, the incubator will develop a framework to provide any business, or potential business, with the resources and tools needed to achieve commercial success. This includes offering the research and consulting services of faculty at the Firelands and Bowling Green campuses and professional training experts. Students will be invited to participate through internships, co-ops and class-related projects to support these efforts.

“We are very pleased that the RISE grant proposal has been approved for funding,” said Balzer. “The RISE partnership is a critical asset to the economic growth and development of this area and the grant funding will allow us to build on our initial successes. Within the first two months of operation, RISE has already provided counseling to four start-up companies and four existing businesses, ranging from manufacturing to retail sales.”

Ogawa says his office will continue to work with the other two finalists in a consulting capacity. Those finalists were MetaDASH Design/Production Studio submitted by Heather Elliott-Famularo, an associate professor of digital arts, and Lori Young, an associate professor of graphic design, and Agile Software Factory submitted by Dr. Joseph Chao, an associate professor of computer science.

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