APPLICATION CHECKLIST & BUDGET FORM
Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant

Deadline Monday, February 11th

Please complete this checklist and attach it as the cover page of your grant application, whether you submit electronically or via hard copy.

Faculty Information

Name: Katherine Knutson
Dept: Political Science
Email: Knutson@gustavus.edu
Rank: Associate Professor

Checklist

X Description of previous projects (and outcomes) funded by RSC grants
X Complete project description, including separate statements of:

1. Purpose. What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues? How does your work fit into other endeavors being done in this field?

2. Feasibility. What qualifications do you bring to this project? What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project? What is the time period, i.e. summer, summer and academic year, academic year only? Is the work’s scope commensurate with the time period of the project?

3. Project Design. This should include a specific description of the project design and activities, including location, staff, schedules or itineraries, and desired outcomes.

X RSC Budget Proposal Form

X If successful, my proposal can be used as an example to assist future faculty applications. This decision will not in any way influence the evaluation of my application. Check box to give permission.

Submission instructions

Electronic — Submit a single document containing the entire application to rsc-proposals@gustavus.edu.

Paper — Submit one (1) copy of completed application to the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning (Beck Hall, Room 103).
Previously Supported Work:
I received a RSC grant in the summer of 2007 to conduct interviews of national religious interest group leaders in Washington, D.C. I used these interviews, along with other collected data, to co-author a paper (with Mikka McCracken ‘09) that was presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in April 2009. We submitted a revised version of the conference paper to the peer-reviewed *Journal of Communication and Religion*, which published the article, “Sharing the Faith: The Building of Successful Media Strategies by Liberal and Conservative Religious Advocacy Groups,” in the November 2011 issue.

Project Description:
I am applying for funds to support research on the effects of the contentious debate over the proposed marriage amendment to the Minnesota constitution on a religious advocacy group called the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition. The JRLC is an advocacy group representing Catholics (through the Minnesota Catholic Conference), mainline Protestants (through the Minnesota Council of Churches), Jews (through the Jewish Community Relations Council), and Muslims (through the Islamic Center of Minnesota). The JRLC advocates on issues agreed to by all four of the sponsoring members and is active in a wide array of Minnesota policy debates ranging from health care to gambling to tax policy. I recently completed a book manuscript focused on the role of religious coalitions in the policy process that used the JRLC as the primary case study (Routledge Press, forthcoming). As I argued in the book, the group represents a particularly successful effort to bridge key differences—bringing together individuals with significant theological differences to work towards common goals. As such, it serves as a model for how pluralistic democratic systems might function within the midst of serious and fundamental differences.

Since completing the book manuscript, a major public debate in Minnesota changed the political environment in which the JRLC operates. Tensions emerged within this group during the recent debate over whether a clause defining marriage as between one man and one woman ought to be added to the Minnesota constitution. The Minnesota Catholic Conference was one of the primary supporters of the amendment, spending considerable financial and social resources on the measure. In contrast, the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Relations Council voted unanimously to oppose the measure. The Minnesota Council of Churches led a series of “conversations” regarding the proposal, but in the end, did not take a formal position on the amendment. The Islamic Center also retained an official position of neutrality.

This project will chronicle the decisions made by each of the four religious bodies and will focus on how representatives of each group worked to resolve the tensions resulting from the campaign. In previous research I have argued that one of the strengths of this model of political advocacy (interfaith coalitions) is that it facilitates the development of networks of social capital, which help the group respond to challenging situations that arise. The issue of same-sex marriage, and the major role religious groups played in the Minnesota debate, certainly meet the criteria of a “challenging situation.” The purpose of
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This research is to find out if, in fact, the interfaith networks created by the JRLC were strong enough to weather this debate. If so, this research seeks to identify the factors that make deliberation and cooperation possible in the face of significant differences.

During the summer of 2013, I will travel to Minneapolis and St. Paul to interview representatives from the JRLC. My goal is to interview several JRLC Board members representing each religious tradition. By the end of the summer, I will complete a conference paper to present at a political science conference during the 2013-2014 academic year. Revisions from the paper will be used to complete a manuscript to submit to peer-reviewed journals in the field of religion and politics.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to answer the question: *how can groups with fundamentally different political beliefs resolve conflict?* I hope to provide an answer to this question through an in-depth case study of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition in the wake of the controversial Minnesota marriage amendment debate. This project is timely because it examines a very recent political phenomenon and it is important because it gets at the heart of the problem facing contemporary politicians: an inability to work productively with those with whom you vigorously disagree. The potential lessons learned from this case study have both theoretical and practical value.

As Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk argue, the “almost bewildering multiplicity of religions, denominations, theologies, and organizational styles” are part of a long trend of religious pluralism in America.\(^1\) Tensions between different religious groups are nothing new, and examples of efforts to bridge religious differences in America through interfaith dialogue exist throughout American history.\(^2\) Engaging in interfaith dialogue is important because it helps build social capital. There are many ways of conceptualizing social capital, but the primary meaning as it relates in this case involves the norms of trust and reciprocity that develop because of regular interactions with a diverse group of people. Putnam distinguishes this form involving relationships between heterogeneous groups of people as “bridging” social capital and suggests that bridging social capital is especially critical in maintaining a healthy democracy.\(^3\) As Bretherton notes, “…politics properly understood is the process through which people maintain community and recognize and conciliate conflict with others in pursuit of shared goods.”\(^4\) Conflict conciliation requires relationships between participants.

Interfaith advocacy groups represent a unique opportunity for the building of social capital within local, state, and national communities. Interfaith groups help develop...

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\(^2\) The term “interfaith” came into use in the early 1900s, though before that time, people involved in developing connections between those of different faiths used terms like “inter-religious” or “tri-faith” to describe the work that we now call interfaith. Lance J. Sussman, “‘Toward Better Understanding’: The Rise of the Interfaith Movement in America and the Role of Rabbi Isaac Landman,” *American Jewish Archives*, accessed August 11, 2011, http://americanjewisharchives.org/journal/PDF/1982_34_01_00_sussman.pdf.


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bridging social capital by bringing individuals and institutions from different faith traditions together for regular interaction and action on common issues. The individual relationships developed through these groups facilitate creative problem solving and provide an avenue for addressing challenging issues. Interfaith dialogue is critical in American society because, in an increasingly pluralistic society, it helps to bridge differences that might otherwise have significant social or political impacts. For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 anti-Muslim violence increased significantly. Between 2001 and 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice investigated over eight hundred incidents of violence against people believed to be Muslim or of Arab descent. According to Liyakatali Takim, this experience helped American Muslims realize the importance of developing interfaith relationships. Takim argues that since 2001, “both Muslims and Christians in America have realized that it is better to speak with, rather than about, the other.”

The JRLC provides a venue for these conversations “with” rather than “about.” For over forty years, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders in Minnesota have had a place where they can learn from one another, develop friendships, and discuss controversial topics. Since 1995, this conversation has also included leaders from the Muslim community. With an organizational structure in which all four groups have equal status, board meetings often become lessons in religious tradition and theology. Former JRLC staff member Rachel Hezfeldt-Kamprath says that at almost every board meeting, someone will have to pause to explain some element of their religious tradition to the group.

While interfaith dialogue is an important goal, it is particularly beneficial when faith-rooted problems or challenges emerge within local communities. Because JRLC Executive Board members have well developed relationships with leaders in other faith communities, they are able to respond especially quickly and with sensitivity when complex and controversial issues arise. JRLC Executive Director Brian Rusche points out that board members carry these relationships into the community to create “religiously-based civic infrastructure that serves the whole community.” These relationships have helped the four sponsoring groups to respond quickly with prayer services or statements of concern in cases such as attacks on Muslim students in Saint Cloud area schools and local school board decisions to begin the school year on dates that are holidays for non-Christian religious groups. The ability for quick mobilization is itself a victory but the interfaith relationships also result in coalition members being able to address many of the important issues that arise in a way that reflects a broad array of perspectives and that is sensitive to differences in religious traditions and beliefs.

Additionally, these established interfaith relationships can help interfaith advocacy groups to address issues where there is less agreement between the religious traditions. For the JRLC, one such issue involves civil rights for gays and lesbians. Despite the four sponsoring institutions expressing very different views on gay rights, the JRLC began discussing civil rights for the GLBT community in 1972, and the group issued a formal

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8 Brian Rusche, in discussion with the author, June 16, 2010.
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position in 1993 in a document titled “Human Rights with Regard to Sexual Orientation.” In this document, the JRLC affirms its support of human rights for all people and the need for government to protect the dignity of all people. As these examples suggest, one of the most significant benefits of interfaith advocacy groups may be the fact that their very existence can help to address many challenges stemming from increasing pluralism the United States faces in years to come.

The model of political participation developed by the JRLC offers hope in the contentious world of contemporary politics. Moments of political brinkmanship, such as the July 2011 government shutdown in Minnesota and the narrowly avoided federal government shutdown just a few months earlier, call into question the ability of the government to bring people with fundamentally different goals, values, and viewpoints together to achieve outcomes that benefit the common good. Religious coalitions like the JRLC not only demonstrate that it is possible to do this but they provide a model of how such efforts might be accomplished. However, the recent debate over the marriage amendment in Minnesota stretched this coalition and makes it important to assess the extent of the impact of sustained and significant political differences on such a coalition.

Feasibility:
I have already invested a significant amount of time researching the JRLC and have developed strong relationships with many of the group staff and Board members. This project is an extension of research I conducted in 2010-2011 and so I know that the work is feasible.

I expect to be able to conduct and transcribe up to four interviews per week. My goal is to interview at least three Board members from each of the four religious traditions and to interview the Executive Director of the JRLC. I plan to complete these interviews by the end of July 2013. I also hope to attend at least one JRLC Board meeting (to which I have already been invited) during the summer of 2013. Additionally, I will use library resources to conduct a content analysis of news coverage of the debate that includes mention of religious groups.

Project Design:
This project involves:

1. Travel to Minneapolis/St. Paul for interviews with group leaders and Board members. This will require mileage reimbursement and perhaps some food/beverage costs associated with conducting interviews (purchasing a cup of coffee for an interview subject, for example).

2. Collection of newspaper articles about the marriage amendment campaign and analysis of those articles. Our library databases allow for a search of the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and I will also need to find a way to access the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

3. Writing the roughly 30-page article, which I will then circulate among some of my colleagues and submit for conference presentation.

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**Budget:**

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stipend</td>
<td>$600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mileage Reimbursement ((150 miles round trip * .55 per mile)*13 trips))</td>
<td>$1072.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Beverages for Interviews ($10 per interview * 13)</td>
<td>$130</td>
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**Total:** $1802.50

Mileage estimates are based on the round trip mileage between St. Peter and the JRLC’s office in Minneapolis. Interviews will take place in locations selected by the interview subjects, but most are likely to be in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area.
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Directions:  
1. Enter your Name
2. Enter the Stipend Costs
3. Enter the Project Costs (both individual costs and Total Project Cost)
4. Enter Total Amount Requested (Total Project Cost + Stipend)

NAME Kate Knutson

STIPEND (Please check one box to indicate your distribution preference)
Note: The RSC grant will fund up to 1,500 towards Project Costs. If your project costs will exceed this amount, you may opt to apply a portion (or all) of your stipend to cover these additional costs. If this option is your preference, please select “Partial Amount”.

X Full Amount ($700- assistant professor; $600-associate professor; $500-full professor)

[ ] Partial Amount (apply a portion of the full amount to project costs)

Partial Amount: Please indicate the amount that you would like to apply towards project costs ($ __________) and the remaining stipend after this deduction ($ __________)

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<tr>
<th>PROJECT COSTS:</th>
<th>List each item individually with its cost. Attach additional sheets if necessary.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Equipment (e.g. transcription machine, camera, digital recorder— but not computer hardware)</td>
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<td>II. Materials (e.g. books, printing, software, lab supplies)</td>
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<td>III. Personnel (e.g. typist, transcriptionist, student assistant)</td>
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<td>IV. Travel (cannot include conference travel, see <a href="http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php">http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php</a> for allowable expenses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Mileage reimbursement</td>
<td>1072.50</td>
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<td>2. Food reimbursement</td>
<td>130.00</td>
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TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $1202.50

TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED (Total Project Costs + Stipend) $1802.50
(Note: The RSC grant will fund up to an amount equal to your Full Stipend + 1,500 for Project Costs)