

CFA's Final Recommendation on the SOSA Charge

TO: Steering
FROM: CFA
RE: SOSA Charge
DATE: April 14, 2022

Background:

In Fall 2018, the SOSA Council and CFA was charged with assessing the purpose of SOSA and the SOSA program document (2012) to “ensure that the RFP articulates the goals of the program and that the evaluation practices and procedures support those goals”. CFA, with members of the SOSA Council, solicited input from the faculty and librarians (Fall 2020) and obtained data on award distribution from Academic Affairs. Faculty and librarians expressed concerns over evaluating work outside of a faculty member/librarian’s area of expertise and the transparency of the review process. SOSA chairs/committee members also shared that differentiating proposals using the current rubric was challenging, due to the broad range of scholarly and creative work done at TCNJ and the fact that most proposals are very well-written. Data on the distribution of awards suggested that while the success rate for SOSA among academic ranks and between applicants by gender has become equivalent, success rates differed among Schools.

In the Spring of 2021, CFA shared a preliminary recommendation with the TCNJ community and presented it in open testimony. This recommendation suggested a threshold for scholarly output, based on approved Disciplinary Standards, and faculty/librarians that met the threshold would be entered into a lottery to receive a SOSA award. The plan was intended to reduce the burden on applicants and SOSA Council members and take advantage of already existing review processes (e.g. tenure/promotion, 5-year review). Based on responses collected during oral testimony and in written feedback, CFA could see that while many faculty/librarians did support the preliminary proposal, the majority did not. There were questions on the logistics of the revised system, how the threshold level would be determined, and concerns about the shift away from a more traditional, competitive proposal review format. Given that Academic Affairs also communicated its reservations about the proposal, CFA, along with representatives from the SOSA Council, revisited the original charge and faculty/librarian feedback to develop a new recommendation.

The revised recommendation was presented in open testimony to the Faculty Senate (March 2022) and a Qualtrics survey was distributed to all faculty (open for comment for 32 days, March 2 – April 3, 2022). The recommended structure retains the competitive nature of the SOSA award process, but is explicitly designed to enhance transparency and equity in award distribution. Quantitative feedback suggested that the majority of faculty were in favor of the revised proposal. Concerns were expressed on if faculty could effectively convey their scholarly history without a CV, alignment of proposed objectives and realized outcomes (especially for longer term projects), and the possibility of subjectivity in the review process. CFA and SOSA council representatives carefully revised the recommendation to address these concerns. Clarity was added in how

applicants could include relevant aspects of their scholarly or creative history within the narrative; the alignment between proposed and realized outcomes was loosened, taking into consideration the fact that scholarly or creative programs often shift over the course of an award and allowing applicants to include in-progress products; and the language in questions and the rubric was adjusted to ensure that applicants are judged on whether they make a convincing argument within their specific field or interdisciplinary focus. The final recommendation also provides additional rationale for removal of the CV. A description of major changes to the current SOSA system, details on implementation, the questions to be asked, and a detailed rubric are all provided below.

Charge

In keeping with the timeline outlined below, Steering charges the SOSA Council with review of the [SOSA RFP](#). In doing this review, SOSA should examine the [2012 SOSA Concept Document](#), consider the purpose of SOSA, and review faculty input (e.g., the attached memo) to ensure that the the RFP articulates the goals of the program and that the evaluation practices and procedures support those goals. SOSA should make a preliminary recommendation to CFA. CFA should conduct a Tier III review of SOSA Council's preliminary recommendation.

Testimony Tier: Faculty: Tier III

The issue requires a high degree of testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups. Testimony should be solicited in the form of both written and oral feedback, as well as approval by the appropriate representative bodies.

Final Recommendation:

Major Structural Changes:

Change 1: Remove the CV as a requirement.

Justification: This plan shifts the emphasis from the scholar to the proposed project. Removal of the CV addresses two specific issues: 1) The CV is difficult to judge fairly across disciplines, since the frequency and format of scholarly products vary among departments. Likewise, comparing a CV from a faculty member with many years of experience to a CV from a newly hired faculty member is a challenge to reviewers. If the CV is removed, this reduces the burden on reviewers and forces applicants to focus on their recent scholarly outcomes. 2) Removal of the CV eliminates the effects of "scholarly stature" from the funding equation. At least to some extent, this reduces the systemic advantages that some scholars have based on race, ethnicity,

gender, ability/disability status, educational opportunities, and other factors beyond their immediate control. This change also helps to “level the playing field” for new faculty and faculty who are looking to re-engage in scholarly work.

Change 2: Simplify questions, and model these after questions asked by multidisciplinary funding agencies (e.g. Fulbright). Emphasize outcomes of past SOSA awards to ensure accountability of recipients.

Justification: The previous iteration of SOSA was viewed by many to be overly complicated and the rubric was unclear. The revised questions were designed to be intuitive. A streamlined set of questions will simplify formatting of the application, and make it easier for reviewers to find the text corresponding to each question. The revised questions focus on the impact of the work on the applicant’s *own* scholarly/creative field and to the applicant’s *own* scholarly/creative program, rather than overall importance of the work, which may favor certain disciplines. A focused rubric was developed, which directly links the questions asked to points awarded, and responses to each question are weighted equally. Applicants are also scored on outcomes of previous SOSA awards, to ensure that if faculty are awarded SOSA, that they have actually used it to enhance their scholarly or creative work.

Implementation:

- Faculty/Librarians who have received SOSA within the last 5 years (including faculty/librarians who have received SOSA within their first 3 years at TCNJ) would answer all 5 questions below; those who have not received SOSA within the last 5 years would answer the first 4 questions only.
- Applicants must answer the questions in order, and each question must be labeled explicitly (i.e. “*Question 1*”, “*Question 2*”, etc.). Applicants are limited to 3, single-spaced pages for questions 1 through 4 (12 pt. Times New Roman font with 1 in. margins). Applicants who received SOSA in the past 5 years are granted an additional page to answer question 5.
- Each question will be scored on a scale of 1–5 (very weak to outstanding), with all questions weighted equally. A detailed scoring rubric is included below.
- The final score will be determined as the *average of points* for questions 1–5 for faculty who have received SOSA within the last 5 years, and of questions 1–4 for those who have not.
- Given the changes in scoring approach, equal weighting of the questions, and removal of the CV, points will not be awarded separately for pre-tenure faculty/librarians or faculty/librarians re-engaging in scholarship or creative activities. This does not affect SOSA awarded to new faculty within their first three years at TCNJ.
- To ensure transparency in scoring, applicants will be provided a z-score for each of the 5 questions (or 4 questions for faculty/librarians who have not received SOSA in the past 5 years).

Questions:

1. Describe the specific goal(s) of the proposed scholarly or creative work, the question(s) you are trying to answer, and/or the gap(s) in knowledge you are trying to address. Within your response, please explain the rationale for your work and why achieving this goal, answering this question, and/or filling this gap in knowledge would be impactful within your scholarly field.
2. How would achieving the proposed scholarly/creative goal, answering the scholarly question, and/or filling the gap in knowledge advance your scholarly or creative program? While specific examples will vary by discipline, the description should focus solely on how the scholarly or creative work fits into and extends a cohesive research agenda. You may choose to reference related work you have already completed or contextualize how the proposed work is part of a longer-term project.
3. How will you go about achieving the proposed scholarly/creative goal, answering the scholarly question, and/or filling the gap in knowledge? Technical details specific to your scholarly discipline should be kept to a minimum, since your proposal must be understood by reviewers from other disciplines, but you should make it clear that a well-structured plan, appropriate for the two-year duration of the award, is in place. Do this by listing related actions you may have already taken (e.g., securing research sites, developing methodologies and protocols, contacting publishers, as appropriate to your field) and showing that you have thought through the specific steps involved in completing and disseminating your work.
Faculty and librarians applying for monetary grants need not provide a detailed budget justification in the proposal, but should show the basic purpose of the monetary award.
4. What are the expected tangible scholarly or creative outcomes of the proposed work? Place these expected outcomes within the context of the disciplinary standards for your department to assist the reviewers in understanding the value of these outcomes in your field. This may be especially helpful if your proposed outcomes are subsets of a longer-term project. If your tangible scholarly or creative outcomes span multiple disciplines, refer to each applicable set of disciplinary standards. To provide specificity, you are encouraged to:
 - a. identify the audience(s) for your work,
 - b. provide estimates of the quantity of written products or the progress of long-term project (e.g., word counts in fields where this is applicable, number of book chapters completed, the total number of published articles, reports, conference presentations, etc.), or
 - c. name specific venues for dissemination, highlighting those used previously and whether they are local, national, or international.

5. For SOSA awards within the past 5 years, list the specific outcomes proposed and provide evidence documenting the extent to which these outcomes have been met. For products still in progress or under review, identify their stage in the writing or review process (e.g., completed draft, initial submission, revised and resubmitted, accepted pending minor revisions). If outcomes have not been met or your scholarly or creative goals have changed, explain why they have not been met and what has been accomplished in their place. {Applicants who have received SOSA within the past 5 years only.}

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR SOSA APPLICATIONS

Applicant's Name _____

Items completed in accordance with SOSA RFP:

Signed Cover Page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No 	SOSA Final Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • NA 	Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • NA 	Appropriate format? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
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Proposal Assessment

Scores range from Very Weak (1) to Outstanding (5)

<p>1. Convincing Rationale Applicant presents a logical and focused rationale for the project that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context/background for the proposed activities that is accessible to non-experts • Specific goals or objectives for the proposed activities • Unanswered questions or gaps in knowledge within the applicant's field • Clear connections between the proposed activities and the questions or gaps • A reasonable estimation of impact within the field 	1	2	3	4	5
<p>2. Advancement of Scholarly or Creative Agenda The applicant presents a strong case that the proposed activities will further their scholarly agenda or creative program by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of current and/or prior work in language accessible to persons outside the applicant's field • A clear description of the applicant's long-term goals and intended impact of the overall scholarly/creative program • An explanation of how the proposed activities fit within and extend the applicant's scholarly/creative agenda 	1	2	3	4	5
<p>3. Detailed Plan The applicant's plan indicates that the project is substantive and can be reasonably completed within the timeframe of the SOSA award by outlining in accessible language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any actions taken prior to SOSA to ensure the applicant will be prepared to begin the project upon receipt of the award • A clear description of workflow that will ensure 	1	2	3	4	5

<p>completion of the proposed work within the two-year duration of the award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines and/or descriptions that clearly indicate the project will require substantial time and/or resources • The timing of monetary awards (for those requesting monetary grants) 					
<p>4. Expected Tangible Scholarly Outcomes The applicant lists substantive scholarly or creative outcomes as appropriate for the award period <u>and the discipline.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed outcomes are tangible and specific • The value of the proposed outcomes is supported by language from relevant disciplinary standards 	1	2	3	4	5
<p>5. Prior SOSA Outcomes Met (if applicable) The applicant provides evidence that the goals and outcomes of prior SOSA awards from the past 5 years have been achieved. Evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison showing alignment between proposed and realized outcomes • justification for any outcomes not met that includes (a) substantive progress toward the original goals, or (b) if an applicant's scholarly or creative direction has shifted, substitute goals and outcomes that are reasonably equivalent to those originally proposed 	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

SOSA received within the last 5 years
Average of Q1–5: _____

No SOSA within the last 5 years SOSA
Average of Q1–4: _____