Grant/Loan Project to Develop a Social Science Learning Laboratory and Laboratory Manuals

The proposed project is a combination small grant and loan. This project will have statewide impact on those teaching and taking social science classes at the community college level. This project addresses the Eligible Programs and Services in the area of Nontraditional Instruction, and the Board of Governors Basic Agenda Priority for Educational Quality.

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Irvine Valley College needs a learning laboratory and the associated lab manuals to help students learn the scientific basis of the Social Sciences. The aim of the Psychology and Sociology Departments at Irvine Valley College is to provide students, both majors and non-majors, with a strong basic foundation in these respective fields, and an understanding of how the scientific method is applied to problems and issues relevant to their everyday lives. For majors, an additional, but essential goal is to provide students with research skills and experiences necessary for success in upper-division social science courses. Student generated activities can be powerful, and realistic experience is an important element for student success (Kain, 1987). Rather than talking and reading about research in the social sciences, modern computer software and hardware make it possible for entry-level students to test their theories with real data, such as the General Social Survey, census data, election data, and so on. We agree with Knowles (1980) who argues that for effectively teaching adult learners we must shift from dependency to self-directed learning. Despite the fact that science is the defining feature of the social sciences, beginning students typically hear about social science rather than doing it. Like the required labs in physics, chemistry, and biology, social science students must be provided quality laboratory learning experiences.