Understanding the Causes and Consequences of the Impostor Phenomenon

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Jeffrey Bednar, Management

The MEG grant I was awarded was used to fund the work of several undergraduate and graduate students as we sought to present academic research and generate academic research articles for publication in various journals. This included research we have been conducting related to the “Impostor Syndrome”, where some high-achieving individuals fail to internalize their accomplishments and experience feelings of perceived fraudulence (Clance & Imes, 1978).

I believe we met the goals and objectives we hoped for when we applied for this MEG Grant. From this MEG Grant, I was able to help cover the travel expenses for four students to attend various national and regional academic conferences to present research and develop their professional networks:

Derek Simmons- Attended the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Atlanta Georgia to help me present a conference paper entitled “Searching for Meaning in Conditions of Poverty and Informality.”

Joseph Moore- Attended the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Atlanta Georgia to help me present a conference paper entitled “When Group Membership Doesn’t Benefit: An Investigation of Impostorism.”

Jacob Brown- Attended the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Western Academy of Management in Salt Lake City Utah Georgia to help me present a conference paper entitled “Organizational Ghosts: The Present Functions of Individuals from the Remembered Past.” Also attended the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Chicago, IL to help me present a conference paper entitled “Organizational Ghosts: The Preservation and Function of Organizational Legacies.”

Braydon Shanklin- Attended the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Chicago, IL to present work he was doing and develop his professional network as he prepared to apply to PhD programs.

This MEG grant also enabled me to provide funding for a number of undergraduate and graduate research assistants who were able to engage with me on various research projects:

Gabrielle Cunningham- assisted with research related to prospection, future selves, and professional identity work. Resulted in a conference paper and presentation at the 2018 May Meaning Meeting. We submitted this work to an “A” journal in my field, but it was rejected. We are currently revising the manuscript to resubmit to another “A” journal. Gabby is now a PhD student at Oxford University.

Derek Simmons- assisted with research related to the “Impostor Syndrome” as well as research related to meaning and identity work among those in poverty. Resulted in a conference paper and presentation listed above. Derek decided not to pursue a PhD but was accepted to pursue a masters of healthcare administration at Cornell University.

Joseph Moore- assisted with research related to the “Impostor Syndrome”. Ultimately resulted in the conference paper and presentation listed above, as well as a journal submission currently under second
round review at the Journal of Vocational Behavior. Joseph has been a valuable co-author on this project. Joseph is currently applying to a number of top doctoral programs in social psychology.

Jacob Brown- assisted with research related to “Organizational Ghosts”. Ultimately resulted in the conference paper and presentation listed above, as well as a journal submission currently under second round review at Organization Studies. Joseph has been a valuable co-author on this project. Jacob was accepted to pursue a PhD in Organizational Behavior at Boston College, where he is a first-year doctoral student.

Christian Clayton- assisted with research related to “turnover narratives” that is still in process, and moving towards the data collection stage. Christian decided not to pursue a PhD, but his research training helped him obtain a job at Ernst & Young doing advisory services.

Kyle Sopp- assisted with research related to professional identity work that is still in process, and moving towards resubmission to an “A” journal in our field. Kyle is currently a doctoral student studying accounting at Florida State University.

Christopher Law- assisted with research related to professional identity work that is still in process, and moving towards resubmission to an “A” journal in our field. Christopher is currently a doctoral student studying strategy and entrepreneurship at the University of North Carolina.

In each case, I was able to create meaningful mentorship opportunities and provide these students with hands on experience with the research process. For those that ultimately decided not to pursue doctoral degrees, these experiences helped them gain valuable skills while learning that the research process was not necessarily what they wanted to do for their career. For those that decided to pursue PhDs, their engagement in mentored research was a significant distinguisher when they applied to various programs. I believe the money spent on wages and travel to conferences greatly enhanced each student’s professional network and enabled them to make significant career decisions with greater confidence. Furthermore, I was able to develop meaningful relationships with each student, and within the context of the gospel, provide faith building and testimony strengthening experiences. Overall, I believe this MEG Grant was a major success, and money well spent on mentored student research.

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