

**DEAN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
STUDENT VENTURE GRANT APPLICATION**

Please read all instructions and regulations on the reverse side of this sheet prior to the completion of this form. The original plus 7 copies of your proposal are due in the Dean's Office on the 2nd Friday of the Block by 1:00 p.m.

DATE SUBMITTED OCTOBER 12, 2006

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS SR WORNER BOX \_\_\_\_\_ EXT. \_\_\_\_\_

ID # \_\_\_\_\_ HOMETOWN (Not Address) DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS \_\_\_\_\_ WORNER BOX \_\_\_\_\_ EXT. \_\_\_\_\_

ID # \_\_\_\_\_ HOMETOWN (Not Address) \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT TITLE CURRENT ISSUES ON URANIUM MINING ON THE NAVAJO RESERVATION: AN ETHNOGEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INTENDED USE OF FUNDS**

I INTEND TO USE VENTURE GRANT FUNDING TO SUPPORT A FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT ON A NEW URANIUM MINING PROCESS NEAR THE NAVAJO RESERVATION IN CROWN POINT, NM, AND ITS POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND BENEFITS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. FUNDING WILL PROVIDE MEANS FOR A WEEK OF ARCHIVAL AND INTERVIEWING RESEARCH IN THE FOUR CORNERS AREA.

PROPOSED DATE/BLOCK OF USE BLOCK 3, WEEK 2 2006

NAME OF FACULTY SPONSOR JEFF NOBLETT

HAVE YOU BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF A PREVIOUS VENTURE GRANT Yes  No

IF SO, WHAT AMOUNT? \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_ REPORT SUBMITTED? \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT OF VENTURE FUNDS NOW REQUESTED 789.00

ARE YOU SEEKING OTHER FUNDING FOR THIS PROPOSAL? Yes  No

IF YES, WHAT IS THE SOURCE? \_\_\_\_\_

If this proposal is approved, I understand that it is my responsibility to notify the Dean's Office immediately if I do not pursue my project as proposed to the Dean's Advisory Committee. I further understand that all funds are to be used according to the proposal as submitted and approved by the Dean's Advisory Committee. Any changes to an approved project must be submitted to the Chair of the Committee for approval. **Please note: the IRS requires that we report Venture Funds as taxable income.**

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 10.12.2006

\*\*\*\*\*DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ ACTION TAKEN \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

BLOCKS TO BE USED \_\_\_\_\_ REPORT SUBMITTED \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

**COLORADO COLLEGE VENTURE GRANT APPLICATION**  
**Current Issues on Uranium Mining on the Navajo Reservation:**  
**an Ethnogeological Perspective**

**Proposal Description**

The purpose of this project is to examine the historical and current conflicts – geological, cultural, and sociological – surrounding Uranium mining in and around the Navajo Reservation in northern New Mexico. Resource extraction in and around Native American lands has had a convoluted and often exploitive history. Uranium mining among the Navajo people is just one chapter in that history. After decades of legal battles, many Navajo families are still fighting for their rights after the Uranium boom of the early and mid-twentieth century left thousands of miners dead or disabled, and their families harmed environmentally, culturally and financially as well. On the other hand, the mining industry brought commerce and employment to many destitute rural areas.

This project is designed to be the capstone project for my independent minor in ethnogeology. Loosely put, ethnogeology is the study of the interactions between humans and their environments, and the understanding that different communities are susceptible to different types, and levels, of environmental hazards. For this reason, environmental justice is a fundamental component of this study: almost inevitably, we find that communities that are socially disadvantaged as a result of ongoing racial inequalities and social stratification bear a disproportionate burden of environmental risks. Environmental racism has been a recurrent theme in the modern history of Native Americans across the country; the Navajo Nation's history is just one such example.

My intent for this research project is to examine the most current chapter in Uranium mining around the Navajo reservation. While the boom days of Uranium mining are largely over, a new process by Hydro Resources, Inc. (a subsidiary of a Texas-based Uranium mining corporation) has sparked controversy and conflict both within and outside the Navajo Nation. HRI is utilizing what they call a "safe" Uranium mining process that involves leaching Uranium components from their host rock using a water-based solution. The immense water usage necessary for this process would draw from an already diminished aquifer – and a spiritually sacred water source for the Navajo and Hopi alike. Several organizations have sprung up in Navajo communities, opposing the mining proposal on both grassroots and litigious levels. I intend to examine this issue by researching multiple viewpoints of the current situation – from representatives of the mining company, local academic geologists, and from the activist groups. Additionally, the analysis put into this project will draw from a multidisciplinary perspective. My ethnogeology minor contains elements of geology, sociology, anthropology, and environmental science, and the examination of this conflict will draw from all the aforementioned disciplines.

My personal views on holistic conservation, as well as grounding in environmental justice reinforce this intent: a clear, thoughtful and productive academic understanding of any environmental and cultural conflict requires serious research into multiple perspectives, from multiple standpoints. The research, culminating paper, and presentation on this work will encompass this intent to the best of my abilities. Ideally, this work would be a jumping-off point for life-long work in the realm of environmental justice.

I plan to conduct this research project during Block 3 of this year, during my Independent Study in Ethnogeology (GY 307) class. The first week of this course will be spent on research at Colorado College, focusing particularly on the geologic characteristics of Uranium, the Uranium mining processes, the relationship of the Navajo Nation to resource extraction, and the complex history of these interactions. Essentially, this week is an extensive and thorough geological and historical examination. Each day consists of focused research; this includes reading and note-taking in anticipation of tying all threads together at the end of the course. Each day will culminate in a 1-2 page response to the research itself – this may be a critical response to a particular piece of research, a theoretical overview, or a response to a particular theme and its relevance to the over-arching project. In addition, I'll be writing a page response to the research itself – what got done today? What gaps still need to be filled? Is there an avenue of research not yet on the syllabus that merits exploration?

The following week I intend to travel to Northern New Mexico to conduct personal interviews with spokespeople on several sides of the Crownpoint Uranium issue. This research week will consist of a day doing archival research available from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, then two days in Crownpoint touring the Uranium mine sites and speaking with representatives of Hydro Resources, Inc., DineCARE, and the Dine Bidziil Coalition. These proposed interviews and my research methods have already received approval from the Colorado College Institutional Review Board, in accordance with Navajo research regulations. ✓

During this week in New Mexico, I hope to not only get a sense of the current issues and concerns regarding this process, but also to see these processes firsthand, and the legacy Uranium mining has left on the Navajo landscape. The final component of this research trip is a day in Shiprock, NM utilizing geology resources from the Dine center, both archival and, hopefully, academics on staff. Understanding the geologic processes involved in Uranium mining are particularly crucial in this region, because of the legal ramifications: a company can mine on private land that borders the reservation, but surface processes can result in contamination from this private land spreading to adjacent territory. Much of the Crownpoint area is divided into 160-acre plots forming a checkerboard pattern – in some cases, alternating Navajo and private land. For this reason, the environmental ramifications of resource extraction in this area are particularly significant.

It is this week of field research that I am requesting support from Venture Grants for. This capstone course/independent studies could be done using the library and

websites as a solid study of the issues. However, I am proposing to go beyond the classroom study to visit the site of the controversy and to interview people from both sides of the argument, calling upon research methodology I have learned in the Anthropology major, to bring this course to life and to make it a meaningful research experience.

The third week of this block will be spent finalizing the research project. This includes compiling transcriptions, reflecting on the research, and finding a coherent way to tie all the elements of this project together in a thorough, thoughtful, and academically significant paper. Additionally, and in accordance with Venture Grant requirements, I will be developing the public presentation of this work. Ideally, I would like to give a talk on campus, possibly in the venues of geology or environmental science department forums, or the Native American Student Union. This presentation would include an introduction to the concept of environmental justice and the Navajo Nation, the research I conducted, conclusions, and a slide show. This presentation would be relevant because my project utilizes an approach drawing from several academic disciplines and perspectives, an approach I feel is unique and relevant. Also, as more underclassmen have begun asking me about my project and how I went about formalizing it academically through Colorado College, I'd also like to emphasize in this presentation my academic process, and how CC has supported my ambitions in ethnogeology through both personal and academic venues.

### **Detailed Timeline and Budget**

#### **Timeline**

Day 1: Drive from Colorado Springs to Albuquerque (380 miles). Afternoon at University of New Mexico Southwest Center – archival research on Uranium mining interviews. Night in Albuquerque Travelodge Midtown.

Day 2: Drive from Albuquerque to Crownpoint (133 miles). Tour with HRI representative on local mines and the in situ leach mining process. Drive to Grants (55 miles) for overnight camping.

Day 3: Drive from Grants to Crownpoint (55 miles). Meeting with DineCARE and Dine Bidziil Coalition representatives in morning and afternoon. Mine site photography. Drive to Gallup (56 miles) for lodging at Econolodge.

Day 4: Drive from Gallup to Shiprock (94 miles). Geology research at Dine Center, talk to staff in Uranium studies. Drive to Farmington (28 miles) for lodging at acquaintance's house. Additional mileage for travel within destinations (42 miles).

Day 5: Return to Colorado Springs (357 miles).

**Budget**

Total mileage: 1200miles at .445 per mile: \$534.00

Lodging: \$45 hotel in Albuquerque + 10 camping in Grants + \$45 hotel in Gallup:  
\$100.00

Food: \$15/day for 5 days: \$75.00

Donation to DineCARE and Bidziil Coalition: \$80.00

Total Requested Budget: \$789.00