

October 22, 2015

Dear Undergraduate Research Committee Members,

I am writing in support of Andrew Powell, Reno Jamison, and Xinyang (Shane) Xuan's request for funding to attend the upcoming conference of the Southern Political Science Association (SPSA), which will take place in San Juan, Puerto Rico in early January.

The SPSA conference is a particularly good venue for undergraduate research presentations. It is the only professional conference that I know of in political science that has a section of panels dedicated to undergraduate research. In organizing these panels, special effort is made to both encourage students' interaction with peers at other schools who are engaged in similar research projects provide them with constructive feedback from faculty who have both subject area expertise and experience mentoring undergraduate research. As such, while there are opportunities for students to present their work at some other political science conferences, the SPSA is uniquely supportive of undergraduate research.

The paper Andrew and Reno will present, "Mobilizing the Electorate: Evidence from the 2014 Senatorial Candidate Twitter Feeds," is the product of more thanis the

Proposal for Undergraduate Research Committee Funding to attend the 2016 Conference of the Southern Political Science Association, San Juan Puerto Rico, January 7-9, 2016

Reno Jamison '17
Andrew Powell '17
Xinyang (Shane) Xuan '17

We are the following funds:	Total	Per person
Flights (roundtrip IND-SJU)	\$1875.00	\$625.00 (estimated)

Reno Jamison and Andrew Powell, Conference Paper Title and Abstract:

"Mobilizing the Electorate: Evidence from the 2014 Senatorial Candidate Twitter Feeds"

Over the last couple of years, we have begun to see social media including Twitter used in ways once never thought possible including in political campaigns. In the 2014 election 70% of Senate candidates had some form of an official Twitter presence, but how did they use it? This project examines how the 76 Senate candidates on Twitter used it in 2014. This was done by analyzing over 8,000 tweets from these 76 candidates in the month leading up to the midterm election. Each tweet was individually coded, and was subcategorized as an attack, issue, mobilization, or multipurpose tweet. These tweets were all then sorted and analyzed using a number of categories including the state, party, and incumbency or status of the tweeter, as well as the race's competitiveness, President Obama's percentage of the vote in that state in 2012, and the number of favorites/retweets it received. The results so far show that, overall, candidates tweeted more in competitive races, and that party affiliation was a strong indicator of what kind of tweet was used. More specifically we are interested in how and which candidates were able to mobilize voters through Twitter. We are further interested to both quantitatively and qualitatively determine how candidates mobilized supporters. This research is still ongoing, and tweets coded as promoting mobilization are being analyzed further.

Andrew Powell, Personal Statement:

I am a junior studying Political Science and Chemistry with hopes of one day attending medical school. One may then ask why I am so interested in political science and taking an independent study research project in the discipline rather than doing something more generally regarded as scientific such as examining the impact of a particular enzyme on protein function. In my opinion, that is the beauty of a liberal arts education. I took PSC 111 in the spring of my freshman year, and enjoyed it so much that I ended up taking PSC 310 which was a special topics course on the 2014 Congressional elections. Part of that class was collecting and analyzing data from every single Senate candidate in the month leading up to the election, and I was fortunate enough to be able to present our initial findings at the celebration of graduate research last January. There were quite a few members of the faculty and alumni that attended my presentation and they asked some really good questions regarding how candidates mobilized the electorate, but I simply could not answer them because we did not have the time during the class to go very far in depth regarding mobilization. So when Dr. Gelbman approached me and a few others about delving into the data set further I was really excited to get to the bottom of some of those questions, and more specifically the ones involving mobilization.

This independent study has challenged me as a student, and forced me to use some of the skills I have learned in genetics or chemistry lab work and then apply it to my project. Creating a way to systematically analyze and code tweets, and then going through the set to actually perform the analysis has been a really cool experience, and I cannot wait to finish coding and get into examining the data. I feel like the only thing we are missing is the peer review aspect of our work, and that is where I think the SPSA conference in Puerto Rico fits in well. It will give us

