

LATEST NEWS

Bauer Management & Leadership Assistant Professor Awarded National Science Foundation Grant

Published on April 5, 2019

Grant to Fund Study Examining How Organizations Engage mid-level Management

A collaborative research project co-led by Kristin Cullen-Lester, assistant professor of Management & Leadership at the C. T. Bauer College of Business, and Dorothy Carter, assistant professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia, has been awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant.

The researchers are partnering with Bauer's [Gutierrez Energy Management Institute](#) and the Center for Creative Leadership in a three-year study which will examine how organizations engage mid-level management teams to advance their business strategy.

“Researchers have begun to recognize that it’s not just the CEO or the top team who are responsible for setting and achieving an organization’s strategy,” Cullen-Lester said. “Many individuals, including those in the middle levels of the organization, play a critical role in strategy development and execution. In fact, a firm’s strategic effectiveness depends on the networked patterns of communication and influence among people in both upper as well as middle levels of management.”

She added: “Unfortunately, our early findings show that these networks often do not naturally form in optimal ways. For example, information does not flow easily up the hierarchy and top leaders may discount middle managers’ attempts to exert influence.”

“Not surprisingly, organizational silos and subgroup priorities can derail the organization’s overall goals and objectives. This can lead to strategic leadership problems.”

Cullen-Lester’s research will measure, analyze, and visualize internal networks of participating organizations, and each organization will receive a tailored report on how the network at the top levels of the organization is functioning, as well as one hour of consultation and debriefing.

The connection with GEMI, in the midst of a transformational time for the energy industry, has the potential to aid organizations as they reconfigure traditional management modes to meet shifting demands.

“As they address the challenges of the future, it is very important for energy companies to understand how their leadership networks operate today,” GEMI Director Greg Bean said. “We believe Dr. Cullen-Lester’s leading-edge research will provide unique insights to energy companies of all sizes.”

NSF grants are considered the ‘gold standard’ for funding support in academia because these grants are awarded based on the highest standards for both intellectual merit and broad societal impacts.

Click [here](#) to find more information about participating in this study.

By Julie Bonnin