

February 7, 2013

Dr. David Pilgrim, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion  
Ferris State University Diversity and Inclusion Office  
1201 S. State St., CSS 312  
Big Rapids, MI 49307

Re: Ferris State University Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini Grant

Dear Dr. Pilgrim and Granting Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini Grant Program. The enclosed application outlines a plan and budgetary needs for “Nowruz – Persian/Iranian New Year Festival”. The Nowruz team has successfully obtained a \$1,000.00 grant from Center for Global Studies and Engagement (CGSE) but is requesting funding from FSU Diversity and Inclusion Office in the amount of \$1,500.00 that will cover the budgetary shortfall in the attached proposal.

Nowruz festival is a 1-day event that will be celebrated on the 20th of March with visitors from all walks of life for the first time on a Ferris State University campus. Nowruz is a strong and unbreakable chain that connects several countries with diverse cultures, languages, and religions in different parts of the world that all once constituted the civilization of Greater Persia.

With this grant we will set the traditional Nowruz table, introduce this international event and its history to the attendees, elaborate on the Nowruz message of peace and friendship, invite a speaker(s) to present about Persian/Iranian culture, have some Persian music, serve a Persian dinner, and evaluate the learning outcome of the event with a creative pre and post survey method.

We believe that the outcome of this event is consistent with the mission and interests of the Diversity and Inclusion Office and hope that you will find it in your budget to support this event. Thank you for your consideration of our request. Should you have any questions in the interim, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Sara Ansari  
Research Project Analyst  
Extended and International Operation  
231-591-2711  
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## Ferris State University Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Application

### I. Identification

Name of Primary Applicant: Sara Ansari  
 Members of Team: Danielle Voorhies  
 Elizabeth Matthews  
 Ehsan Setork  
 RSO Collaboration: Future Scholars Ubuntu  
 Extended Departmental Support: Center for Global Studies and Engagement (CGSE)  
 Ferris State's Hospitality Program

Department: Extended and International Operation  
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### II. Event Title

Nowruz - Persian/Iranian New Year Festival

### III. Specific core value, strategic initiative, or goal related to diversity that the event will address.

**Core Values:** Cultural Diversity, Collaboration, Excellence, and Learning

**Strategic Objectives:** SO1- Foster better understanding of Iranian culture

SO2- Project a positive image of Iranian community

SO3- Ensure unity and friendship among community members and students

### IV. Abstract

Nowruz - Persian/Iranian New Year Festival is a 1-day festival that will be celebrated on the 20th of March with visitors from all walks of life. This will be the first time it is celebrated on a Ferris State University campus.

Nowruz is a strong and unbreakable chain that connects several countries with diverse cultures, languages, and religions in different parts of the world that all once constituted the civilization of Greater Persia. All the Iranians in this great land, the Persian-speaking minorities in the U.S., Canada, and Europe; the people of Tajikistan and Afghanistan; and groups of people in Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Armenia, Albania, and Iraq celebrate Nowruz annually and consider it to be one of their main national festivals.

At this event, one beautiful and eye-catching Haft-Sin table will be displayed in the IRC connector. One or two Persian student(s) or community member(s) will explain the meaning and the symbolism of each item on the Haft-Sin table during the program. There will be an introduction about Nowruz, its history, and an explanation of the Haft-Sin Table by Sara Ansari in one of the rooms in IRC followed by a presentation about Persian culture and its connection with nature by Dr. Shahram

Parastesh, Iranian Scholar at Ferris. In the evening, Persian food will be served to all attendees to give them a taste of the Middle East as well take part in a Nowruz custom.

## **V. Event Narrative**

Nowruz is an ancient Persian festival that has been celebrated for 2,500 years, when the mighty and powerful dynasty of Achaemenids ruled Great Persia, expanding its dominance all over the Mesopotamia and Far East.

Nowruz is the name for the celebrations that observe the New Year for many Persian and Central Asian communities. The exact beginning of the New Year occurs when the season changes from winter to spring on the vernal equinox, which usually happens on the 20th or 21st of March each year.

The festivities of Nowruz reflect the renewal of the Earth that occurs with the coming of spring. Activities that celebrate the arrival of Nowruz share many similarities with other spring festivals such as Easter celebrated by Christians, and the Egyptian holiday called Sham Al-Naseem, which dates back to the time of the Pharaohs.

**SO1 & SO3:** The Nowruz festival enables students to exchange their ideas about similarities of these festivities and learn more about other cultures and traditions.

People all over the world celebrate Nowruz, but it originated in the geographical area called Persia in the Middle East and Central Asia. The distinct culture based on the language, food, music and leisure activities that developed among the many people and ethnic groups who lived in this area is known as Persian. Nowruz became a popular celebration among the communities that grew from these Persian influenced cultural areas. While the physical region called Persia no longer exists, the traditions of Nowruz are strong among people in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Canada and the United States. Therefore, it is a holiday that is celebrated by people from diverse ethnic communities and religious backgrounds. However, Nowruz is special and is known as a spiritual New Year in the Persian community.

**SO3:** Nowruz festival would be a great opportunity to give a chance to students from a few of the above mentioned countries to share their traditions and specific ways of celebrating this event with Ferris State faculty, staff and students; as well as Big Rapids community members.

In Nowruz, Iranians living inside the country or those who are abroad would all try to reach a common goal: disseminate Iranians' message of peace for the world's citizens and introduce the true face of Iran's culture and civilization to the people around the globe.

In 2009, Nowruz was officially registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2010 the U.N.'s General Assembly recognized March 21 as the International Day of Nowruz and called on countries worldwide to draw on the holiday's rich history to promote peace and goodwill.

**SO1 & SO2:** Attendees will learn more about Iran and Iranians far beyond what they have learned through the media. They will have the opportunities to meet Iranians, to give a face, and a cultural tradition/holiday, to what they have heard on the media (most likely negative). This will foster

students to achieve a greater understanding and a positive view of Iran.

The most important activity in the celebration of Nowruz is making the haft-Sin table. Haft is the Persian word for the number seven and Sin is the Persian word for the letter S. Literally, the haft-Sin table means a “table of seven things that start with the letter S”. Creating the haft-Sin table is a family activity that begins by spreading a special family cloth on the table. Next the table is set with the seven S items. Here are some of the items and what they symbolize:

- Sumac (crushed spice of berries): For the sunrise and the spice of life
- Senjed (sweet dry fruit of the lotus tree): For love and affection
- Serkeh (vinegar): For patience and age
- Seeb (apples): For health and beauty
- Sir (garlic): For good health
- Samanu (wheat pudding): For fertility and the sweetness of life
- Sabzeh (sprouted wheat grass): For rebirth and renewal of nature

In addition to these S items, there are other symbolic items that go on the haft-Sin table depending on the tradition of each family. It is customary to place a mirror on the table to symbolize reflection on the past year and reflection of goodness. Candles are positioned on the two sides of the mirror to burn until they naturally extinguish to gloriously enlighten the table. Additionally, an orange in a bowl of water to symbolize the Earth, a bowl of real goldfish to symbolize new life, colored eggs to represent fertility (the footsteps of this tradition can be similarly traced in the rest of the world), coins for prosperity in the New Year, and special flowers called hyacinths to symbolize spring will all be placed on the table.

**SO1, SO2, & SO3:** The Haft-Sin table will be set for the guests in IRC in order to prompt numerous conversations about the ancient history of Iran and how Nowruz has and continues to be a time of peace, unity, and new beginnings by those who celebrate it in Iran and throughout the world.

This Festival will be the first Persian festival in the Big Rapids area which will help students and the community to learn about the Persian culture, understand and respect other cultures through education, and project an accurate and positive image of the Iranian community throughout the Big Rapids and Ferris State communities.

Due the low number of Persian students and community members, not many people are familiar with this festival nor any other Persian tradition. Therefore, this free event can be an opportunity for all students, faculty, and community members to attend, learn, and enjoy a holiday that is new to them.

To advertise this event, flyers will be distributed around the university. There will be four 3ft by 8ft banners standing in 4 different high-traffic locations on campus. Facebook invitations will be sent to all international students and all members of the Ferris State International Facebook page and as many other pages as possible. The campus calendar and university wide emailing will be utilized as well. Therefore, it is predicted that around 150 students and community members will attend this festival.

**Timeline:**

The Haft-Sin table will be displayed at 10AM when the pre-survey process starts. People will be drawn to the extravagant haft-Sin table and once they approach we will tell them about our event and

have them take a short 4-5 question quiz about Nowruz and the Iranian culture. The purpose of this quiz is to assess how much knowledge our community has about Nowruz and Iranian culture. By completed the quiz, they will be entered into a drawing for a prize donated to our planning committee by the Office of International Education. We will notify them that they must be present at the beginning of the event in order to claim their prize if they are selected. This will help motivate people to actually attend the event besides just handing out flyers and educating people in the hall about the event. By announcing the winner of the pre-event quiz prize at the beginning of the event, this will spark people's interest in completing the post-event quiz to win the prize to be announced at the conclusion of the event. These quizzes will help us to determine how effective our event was at educating our community.

At 3:00PM, the event will start by displaying the Haft-Sin table and presenting the items on table and their symbolic meanings. At 3:30PM, the first presentation (an introduction of Nowruz), will start and continue until 4PM. The second presentation will start after the 10-minute short film with famous Nowruz songs and pictures from Iran. The second presentation will continue for 30 minutes and will be followed by the dinner. During the dinner, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in the post-event quiz and survey.

After the event, the pre and post survey results will be analyzed in detail and the statistical analysis will be added to the post report along with beautiful pictures from the Haft-Sin table and event attendees.

## VI. Budget

<b>Nowruz Festival Budget (est. 150 attendees)</b>			
	<b>Requested Grant Funds</b>	<b>Funding from other sources</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>
<b>Gifts &amp; Prizes ( 3 Gifts for \$100 &amp; 2 Prizes for \$50) - 2 Prizes will be provided by Office of International for free</b>	<b>\$150</b>		
<b>HONORARIA</b>	<b>\$200</b>		
<b>TRAVEL (GR travel for purchasing Haft-Sin items)</b>	<b>\$70</b>		
<b>FOOD (est.150*\$10, include 1 restaurant staff)</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$1000</b>	
<b>PRINTING (Flyers, Small Posters, &amp; Surveys, 450 color prints)</b>	<b>\$45</b>		
<b>PROMOTION (For Banners: 4*\$25 Posters: 4*\$ 26)</b>	<b>\$207</b>		
<b>SUPPLIES (Items of Haft-Sin table)</b>	<b>\$328</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>

a. Anticipated expenses:

- Most items and decorations on the Haft-Sin table will be provided for free from Ferris State's Hospitality Program, but some of these items will be purchased either online or from special stores in Grand Rapids.
- There will be one round trip travel to Grand Rapids to buy supplies for the Haft-Sin table.
- A dinner for 150 people will be delivered by a Middle Eastern restaurant from Grand Rapids as part of the festival.
- Printing and promotional materials include: Banners 3ft by 8ft, Large posters 3ft by 4ft, Small posters 8in by 12in, Flyers 4in by 6in, and surveys 4in by 6in. The OIE will not charge us for machine use so this will cut the cost down significantly for printing small posters, flyers and surveys.
- Honoraria will be provided to the speaker(s)
- Gifts for Nowruz team members
- Two prizes for attendees to be purchased (4 prizes will be donated)

b. Funds anticipated from other sources: \$1000 will be received from the Center for Global Studies and Engagement. This grant will be used to cover part of the food expense.

c. Total amount requested from Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant: \$1500 is requested to cover expenses anticipated in the budget.

Applicant's Signature:



Sara Ansari

Submission Date: 02/07/2013