

March 19, 2005

To whomever can make a difference in the world

Dear legislator, concerned citizen, HHS staff, etc:

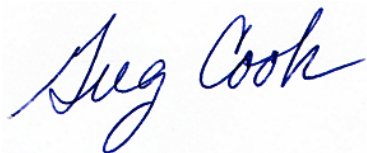
As a scientist and educator in North Dakota with federal research grants, I want to bring to your attention an issue that has me very concerned. I have just come to learn that the federal government is moving toward an electronic grant submission system for research proposals to the Health and Human Services agencies (and perhaps other agencies). This system prohibits anyone who does not use the Microsoft Windows operating system from applying for federal research dollars. I am referring to the requirement of the grants.gov website to use proprietary forms software that will only run under Windows to submit a grant application. First, I think it is completely ridiculous to move to a system that does not have cross-platform access. The National Science Foundation has had electronic grant submissions in place using web-based forms and PDF-formated files for the last five years, and it has been performing at an excellent level. Second, this requires everyone who applies for a federal grant to purchase Microsoft Windows, and that is simply a ringing endorsement for the Microsoft corporation.

I realize that decisions have already been made concerning the use of proprietary forms software from PureEdge for HHS. This software is not available for Apple Macintosh or linux computer systems. I believe this will have a negative impact on the number of grant submissions from North Dakota and the rest of the country. Indeed, the company who provides the software *claims* to offer Macintosh support, but says only that Mac users should purchase Microsoft Windows and run it on a Mac using a PC emulator. Contrary to their misleading official statement (see link below), Virtual PC is not standard with most versions of Microsoft Office for the Macintosh and it is quite costly to purchase the Professional version with Virtual PC and Windows XP. VPC/Wins XP is not included with the standard edition of Office for Mac (\$399), Academic student/teacher version (\$199), or our university Site-License version (\$45), which is the version of choice for academic researchers in North Dakota for obvious reasons.

Regardless of what the websites say, the PureEdge company and grants.gov do *not* offer mac support. This is discrimination against those who use alternative operating systems. The federal government should not endorse one computer operating environment to be used for anyone funded by federal agencies. All this does is provide a significant guaranteed market for the Microsoft corporation to install their operating system on all computers, not just PC's. Ideally, I would like to see HHS/grants.gov develop an electronic grant submission system that does not rely on a single operating system. This should not be difficult, and many companies and agencies routinely use web-based forms and PDF documents. However, I recognize that it is probably too late to change course in this the move to the PureEdge software. If so, I would urge you to explore ways in which the Federal Government, who is a major client for PureEdge, can convince this company to provide legitimate Macintosh, and perhaps linux/unix, versions of their software.

Thank you for your time and your kind attention,

Yours sincerely,



Gregory R. Cook  
Associate Professor

link: "Macintosh Support" document from PureEdge  
[http://grants.gov/GrantsGov\\_UST\\_Grantee/!SSL/!WebHelp/MacSupportforPureEdge.pdf](http://grants.gov/GrantsGov_UST_Grantee/!SSL/!WebHelp/MacSupportforPureEdge.pdf)