

NARRATIVE

The fields below are expandable, but must **NOT exceed 2 pages**. This form must be completed using a word processing program (12 point font, single-spaced, 1" margins).

Project Director: 

Objectives

1. To collect survey data on how citizens in Indonesia perceive income inequality plus other economic factors and how they intend to vote in the upcoming April 2019 Indonesian presidential election.
2. To produce a research paper which (a) tests whether income inequality affects citizens' support for the incumbent president in Indonesia, and (b) investigates what factors might explain variations in the relationship between income inequality and the incumbent's electoral support (if such a relationship exists).
3. To provide two undergraduate students at SSU the opportunity to gain hands-on interdisciplinary (economics and political science) research experience.
4. Beyond the one-year timeline for this proposed project, I intend to use the data and analysis completed herein as a basis to seek external funding to convert these results into two manuscripts for submission to academic journals.

Significance

How do voters hold their governments accountable for the performance of the economy? Empirical evidence of the important *economic voting hypothesis* shows that voters do tend to reward incumbents electorally who preside over strong economies, while punishing those who don't (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013). But what exactly does "economic performance" mean — performance in what areas? Unemployment, economic growth, and inflation have been previously studied as areas that voters might consider, but we know much less about whether voters attribute blame to incumbent politicians for rising income inequality. There is some evidence that income inequality has hurt the ballot-box performance of left-wing parties in advanced economies (Bouvet and King, 2016); however, no similar studies have been conducted of whether such patterns exist in developing countries. It seems especially appropriate to ask such questions about developing countries because, as younger democracies, such countries tend to have relatively low-informed voters and a lack of programmatic parties devoted to issues such as income equality. Instead, political parties are "personalistic" rather than partisan or programmatic. Under such circumstances, how strong is the relationship between income inequality and dependent variables such as incumbent vote share? What socio-political factors might explain variations in this relationship?

The present proposed project seeks answers to the above questions using the case of Indonesia, which like many countries has seen a noteworthy growth in income inequality over the past two decades. By studying if and how voters in this developing and democratizing country hold their government leaders accountable for rising income inequality, this project will provide insights on an under-explored dimension in which governments must be sensitive to voter concerns. In particular, in collaboration with local research partners, I will collect and analyze original survey data ahead of Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, in which the

incumbent president is running for a second term. Doing so will contribute to the broader literature by generating micro-level data relevant to the economic voting hypothesis. While the primary methodology used will be quantitative analysis, this paper will also employ qualitative methods (interviews with experts in Indonesia) to supplement its work.

A successful outcome of the proposed project will strengthen my professional develop-ment in the following ways. First, it will increase my research output (and thus, research profile) within my chosen field of political economy in developing countries. Second, by analyzing individual-level survey data from Indonesia, I hope to pick up new statistical skills and be exposed to additional methods of analysis that are at my discipline's cutting edge. The use of micro-level country studies has become increasingly common in economics and political science, as it allows researchers to investigate a richer set of hypotheses than possible with macro-only data. Altogether, therefore, one of the key values-added for this project will be to help me as an SSU professor remain current in my academic discipline.

In addition, two SSU undergraduate students will have the opportunity through this project to practice the skills they have learned in their economics courses, to improve their data management abilities, and to be exposed to the production of a professional research paper. This experience will positively impact their careers, especially if they have academic aspirations. Finally, one of the longer-term objectives of this project is to generate papers published in academic journals and to support application for external grants, so this project will also widen SSU's visibility and enhance our profile as a center for learning and research.

Results from previous RSCA funding

- I have not received any past RSCA funding.

Plan of Work

1. **March 2018:** Apply for IRB approval
2. **May/June 2018:** Conduct literature review, formulate questions for the survey
3. **July/August 2018:** Travel to Indonesia to coordinate logistics of the survey with CSIS (local partners), interview experts and gain feedback on the survey questions, interview the campaign staff from major political parties
4. **October 2018:** First round of survey to be administered by CSIS
5. **November 2018–February 2019:** Data processing and analysis on first-round results
6. **March 2019:** Second round of survey to be administered by CSIS
7. **April 2019:** Continue data analysis, prepare poster for SSU Faculty Research Symposium
8. **May 2019:** Final research paper due and submit application for external funding

Student Involvement

This research will recruit two undergraduate students who have successfully completed a course in econometrics and have working knowledge of relevant statistical software (Stata). The students will assist this project in three ways: (1) processing, cleaning-up, and preparing data for analysis; (2) supporting the execution of data analysis such as identifying patterns and stylized facts from the data; and (3) supporting the analysis and write-up of the project by conducting literature reviews and summarizing relevant articles.