Faculty Research Challenge Grant Program
Office of the Vice President for Research, Norman Campus

1. Description

As part of Aspire 2020 (http://aspire2020.ou.edu/), the Norman Campus Vice President for Research announces a new internal seed-funding program: Faculty Research Challenge Grants Program (hereafter CGP). The word “Challenge” reflects three important aspects of the program. First, CGP challenges faculty to think boldly and for the long-term, outside the boundaries of traditional programs and disciplines and well beyond the next performance, publication or experiment. Second, CGP challenges the University to invest thoughtfully and strategically in outstanding endeavors, providing collaborative environments that support and reward scholarship, particularly involving multiple disciplines. And finally, CGP is intended to assist faculty in identifying and addressing intellectually stimulating and challenging problems and opportunities. Collectively, these elements prescribe a program intended not to support incremental extensions of existing work, but rather activities that require an investment of institutional seed-funding for the purpose of building strategic foundations to advance individual and collaborative faculty scholarship.

CGP not only sets high expectations but also provides resources at a level needed to meet them. Further, CGP affords maximum flexibility in the strategic application of funds, goes well beyond existing internal funding programs, and requires explicit accountability for outcomes and impacts. Importantly, CGP represents a process by which both faculty and the University administration will work together to ensure success of the projects chosen for funding – not only during the period of resource expenditure, but in the years to follow.

Two separate CG competitions are planned, one for funding in FY 2012 (1 July 2011 – 30 June 2012), and one for funding in FY 2013 (1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013), after which a critical assessment will be conducted to evaluate possible continuation pending the availability of support. All funding will be provided at the time of the award and is expected to be used within two years.

2. Eligibility

The CGP competition is open to all regular faculty (as defined in the Faculty Handbook Section 3.1.1) on the Norman Campus (including Norman Campus programs at OU-Tulsa). Research faculty are eligible to serve as co-PIs if the proposal is led by a regular faculty member. Because CGP is distinct from programs operated by the Research Council, faculty are eligible to receive funding from CGP even if they currently receive funding from the Research Council.

3. Award Amounts

The first CGP competition will support the following programs pending availability of funds and the receipt of meritorious proposals. Adjustments may be made in subsequent years based upon lessons learned as the program evolves:

- Up to 2 projects at a maximum of $100,000 per project for all disciplines
- Up to 4 projects at a maximum of $50,000 per project for all disciplines
- Up to 6 projects at a maximum of $25,000 per project for all disciplines
- Up to 10 projects at a maximum of $10,000 per project for all disciplines, with five awards at this level set aside for non-physical science and engineering disciplines.
Although no stipulations are imposed regarding the nature of work proposed or the disciplines involved, proposals involving multiple disciplines, departments, colleges or OU campuses are strongly encouraged. Additionally, faculty from non-physical science and engineering fields are especially encouraged to apply for the larger funding amounts. CGP funds cannot be used to support individuals at other institutions.

4. Submission Process

To maximize assistance provided to faculty in the development of proposals that provide a pathway to achieving long-term research program objectives, a multi-step submission process will be used as follows:

By 15 February 2011 A REQUIRED notice of intent must be submitted to the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment (crpde@ou.edu) to determine necessary reviewer resources, establish the list of faculty to whom further CGP communication will be directed, and to assist in making Information Sessions (see below) more specific to the needs of those proposing to the CGP. This notice of intent must include the name and academic program of the principal investigator, the title of the proposal, a list of co-principal investigators and their programmatic affiliations, a brief (limited to 300 words) description of the project, and the anticipated use(s) for the requested funds.

15 Feb – 1 Mar 2011 Information Sessions will be offered by the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment to communicate additional information about the proposal guidelines and review criteria, and to address questions from prospective submitters. Dates for the Information Sessions will be announced in January.

21 Mar – 14 May 2011 During this period, faculty work with the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment to develop their proposals.

15 May 2011 Proposals must be submitted in PDF format by 5 pm to Ms. Cindy Clark of the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment (crpde@ou.edu). No LaTeX or Postscript files will be accepted.

15 May – 8 June 2011 Internal and external peer reviews will be conducted.

15 June 2011 Decisions are announced.

1 July 2011 Funding is awarded from the Office of the Vice President for Research.

5. Proposal Preparation Guidelines

- All proposals submitted to the CGP must be developed in collaboration with the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment (see above).

- Proposals are limited to 5 pages (1” margins, no less than 10 point font), including figures/tables, but not including references, detailed budget, or supporting documentation.

- Successful proposals will describe, in a compelling manner, a research program or project that will benefit significantly and demonstrably from a seed-funding award. This description will
provide a self-contained account of the context in which the funding is being requested and the goals to be achieved; demonstrate the likelihood of a significant contribution to the field(s); and show strong potential to attract additional resources, and/or recognition, and/or external support to sustain the activity or develop it further. Applicants should demonstrate outstanding scholarly promise and ability to successfully undertake the project.

- Proposals must include the following information, clearly delineated in separate sections, within the allocated 5 pages:
  
  a. **Statement of Objectives/Goals.** Clearly and succinctly state the overall vision for your research program (not just the work being proposed), followed by the goals and objectives of the specific work being proposed relative to them. It is important that the project be a key component of a longer-term, bold vision for the research program(s) involved.
  
  b. **Project Description.** Provide a context for the work being proposed, i.e., by describing your research relative to activities conducted previously by you or others, as well as by others elsewhere today. Additionally, describe the methodology and provide other details of the work to be performed (e.g., procedures, productions, protocols, experiments, studies, observation, information and data collection, surveys, analyses) in a manner that will be useful for assessing overall likelihood for success and sustainability. **Be certain the proposal addresses all three dimensions of the CGP as described in the first paragraph of this solicitation.**
  
  c. **Timeline.** Provide a timeline for the project (major milestones or decision points), but place it within the broader trajectory of the research program(s) involved.
  
  d. **Funding Justification.** Provide a compelling case that justifies the requested funding. The support can be used for any legitimate purpose associated with the project if justified in the proposal. This includes but is not limited to travel, teaching release (subject to approval by the chair/director and/or dean), student stipends, data collection, tuition, equipment, summer salary and temporary staff support.
  
  e. **Expected Outcomes and Impacts.** As noted below, proposals will be judged based upon the potential of the project to substantially impact the research program(s) of the investigator(s). The goal of the CGP is not to enable the next publication or experiment, but to produce outcomes that have meaningful and sustained impact(s) on research programs.

- CGP funds will be distributed in a manner similar to SRI, namely, transferred to the college or department account of choice. No separate 1x5 account will be established. The following fringe benefit rates should be included in the budget request (note that these are FY11 rates and likely will change for FY12):
  
  - 36% Benefits eligible employees
  - 23.8% Limited academic (post docs, adjuncts, visiting, etc)
  - 3.2% Graduate Research Assistants
  - 1.1% Other students (undergraduates)

- A **current curriculum vitae** (not subject to page limitations) must be submitted for all investigators, including for each a list of internal funding received from OU during the past five years. The latter should include the name of the funding program, project title, amount awarded, and the start and end dates for the grant.
• If release time is being requested in the budget, approval from the department chair and/or dean is required and must be supplied in writing as supporting documentation in the proposal. This documentation does not count against the five page limit.

• If the project will involve human subjects, laboratory animals, rDNA and/or radioactive materials or biohazards, information must be provided (process, timeline, etc.) regarding plans to seek approval from appropriate University Committees for the project materials. The appropriate committees are: Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board; Laboratory Animals-Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and Radioactive Materials-Radiation Safety Committee and the Biosafety Committee. These approvals are not needed during proposal submission but must be in place at the time of award.

6. Cost Sharing

Departmental and/or college cost sharing is not required.

7. Selection Criteria

• Alignment of the project with longer-term research program plans of those involved
• Technical and/or creative merit of the activities proposed and the potential for impacting the field(s) of scholarship involved as well as the respective faculty research program(s)
• Capability of the investigators to meet the stated objectives
• Nature and value of existing or proposed linkages with other organizations both within and beyond OU
• Degree and value of interdisciplinary activities, if applicable
• Rationale for and necessity of funding for achieving the stated goals
• Potential for program growth, sustainability, and/or recognition

8. Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by an ad-hoc committee appointed by Vice President for Research. The review committee will be composed of senior faculty across multiple disciplines, possibly including reviewers from other institutions. All reviewers will be subject to a strict conflict of interest policy. The Vice President for Research will make the final determination of awardees based upon recommendations from the review committee.

9. Project Execution

Because the CGP is designed to assist faculty in developing their research programs, CRPDE, the Vice President for Research, and departmental and college leadership will work closely with grant recipients to help them achieve maximum benefit from the funding.

10. Reporting

All award recipients are required to report on the outcomes and impacts of their research, and detailed guidance will be provided subsequently. These reports will assist in evaluating the CGP to determine how it might be improved and whether it should be continued.