Funding Incentive Seed Grant Program at the University of Utah

ASEE ERC Meeting – March 7, 2017

- Campus-wide program administered through Vice President for Research Office

- Intent is to support only **new** areas of research for a principal investigator.
  - Applicant must demonstrate proposed project represents a _new research direction in an area likely to generate extramural funding_.

- Funds _cannot_ be used for
  - Research that overlaps with existing research or is already supported by other grants.
  - Gap funding to bridge support between grants.

- Two rounds of Seed Grant awards per year (applications due Feb. 15 and Aug. 20)
  - Awards are up to $35,000 for one year only
  - 50-100 applications are received each round
  - Open to all disciplines across campus
  - Typically 18-20 awards are made per round
  - Often budget requests are reduced slightly to accommodate more awards

http://research.utah.edu/grants/seed.php

- Tenure track faculty with an appointment that is at least 0.75 FTE.

- Auxiliary faculty
  - Research faculty of at least 0.75 FTE with a minimum of a two-year residency at the University of Utah.
  - Clinical faculty with a combined appointment at the University of Utah and/or the VA Hospital of at least 0.75 FTE.

- Upon receipt of an award, PI is not eligible to apply again for three years.

http://research.utah.edu/grants/seed.php

Application Review

- Seed Grant Award Committee
  - 16 senior faculty - representation from across campus
    - Also (ex-officio) VP for Research and one Assoc. VP for Research
  - Committee Co-chairs – one from School of Medicine, one from Engineering/Science (Assoc. Dean for Research)
  - Evaluates all proposal scores (from reviewers) and determines award recipients
    - Provides some of the proposal reviews

Review Process

- Reviewers
  - Each proposal is reviewed by 4 faculty
    - Applicant submits 4 names as possible reviewers
    - No more than 2 from PI home department
    - 2 selected from other departments on campus
  - Reviewers provide scores based on published criteria
- Seed Grant Committee co-chairs vet/select reviewers
- *Primary challenge is identifying sufficient qualified (willing) reviewers*
  - Use Seed Grant Award Committee members to fill in gaps

Some Statistics

College	Yr 1 - Spring Award	Submit	Yr 1 - Fall Award	Submit	Yr 2 - Spring Award	Submit	Yr 2 - Fall Award	Submit	Yr 3 - Spring Award	Submit	Yr 3 - Fall Award	Submit	Yr 4 - Spring Award	Submit	Yr 4 - Fall Award	Submit
Architecture													0	2		
Business															1	1
Engineering	6	13	5	8	4	8	1	9	3	17	4	15	3	15	4	14
Health			0	2	0	2	1	1	2	2	0	3	1	3	1	4
Humanities	0	1							0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2
Medicine	7	31	12	29	8	27	7	27	9	31	11	31	8	42	9	34
Mines Earth Sci	2	2	0	2	0	1	2	3	0	1	1	3	1	4	2	5
Nursing	1	1									0	1	0	1		
Pharmacy	2	8	1	3	1	4	2	5	1	3	0	4	0	2	0	6
Science	5	9	2	6	5	10	4	7	4	6	2	8	3	16	2	10
Soc Behavior Sci	2	5	0	1	1	3	2	2	1	2			1	2	0	1
Soc Work													0	1	0	1
Education	0	4	0	1							0	1	1	1		
Fine Arts / Law	0	4									0	2				
Museum	0	2														
Totals	25	80	20	52	19	55	19	54	20	64	18	69	18	90	19	78
Funding %	31%		38%		35%		35%		31%		26%		20%		24%	
Avg Funding Amt	$23K		$28K		$32K		$31K		$28K		$28K		$31K		$29K	

Faculty Rank of Awardees

	Yr 1 - Spring	Yr 1 - Fall	Yr 2 - Spring	Yr 2 - Fall	Yr 3 - Spring	Yr 3 - Fall	Yr 4 - Spring	Yr 4 - Fall
Research Track	1	0	1	3	1	0	1	2
Assist. Prof.	12	8	5	3	9	7	8	7
Assoc. Prof.	3	3	7	6	5	6	2	5
Prof.	9	9	6	7	5	5	7	5

Summary Comments

- Intramural Seed Grant Program
  - Helps young faculty to launch new research areas
  - Helps mid-career & more senior faculty to re-start their research in new direction
- Focus on concepts that can lead to new extramural funding
  - Provides impetus for investment of university funds
- Major challenges
  - Review process – relying on the good will of a large number of university faculty
  - (Potentially) Identifying a source for seed grant funds

Additional Material

Specific Evaluation Criteria

- Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:
  - If the proposed research is completed, does the proposal have a high chance at leveraging extramural support?
  - Are the significance and merit of the research clearly documented?
  - Does the PI provide information necessary to determine if this is a new direction and that the research does not overlap with existing funded projects?
  - Have potential barriers or technical difficulties been identified?
  - Does the PI (and collaborators) have the experience necessary to carry out the project?
  - Are the goals, objectives and expected results stated clearly and are they reasonable, given the funds and time provided?
  - Are the methods outlined and do they reflect the goals and objectives stated in the proposal?
  - Have extramural opportunities been identified and are they reasonable?