

Research Futures Grants for Community-building and Ideation

The Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies announces funding to support members of the Lehigh faculty to engage in ideation, exploration, and planning substantial multi-faculty research ventures.

Through the Research Futures initiative, we seek to support development of research themes that draw the interest and productive involvement of significant numbers of faculty members, especially across departments, colleges, and disciplinary families. Identifying and exploring areas of shared interest and great potential, especially across traditional disciplinary and departmental boundaries, requires creation of intellectual spaces in which the necessary exploration, and often the necessary facility for collaborating across disciplines, can take place.

Our intent with this call is to empower groups of Lehigh faculty to create those spaces, and to undertake both exploration of possibilities and development of plans for acting upon them. This call is open to all of the faculty, including those who have historically worked to bring colleagues together and those newly interested in doing so. We are decidedly open as well to partnership with centers and institutes that are organized for related purposes.

Applicants are expected to be thoughtful, and encouraged to be creative, in how they plan to convene colleagues and explore their topics. Our hope is that groups devise and test ways of communicating across disciplines to identify truly shared interests and pose overarching research questions that motivate all involved. Groups will be expected to share successful approaches with others.

Use of funds

Funds can be used for activities such as

- Workshops, retreats, seminars, and other forms of convening people to develop ideas,
- Meetings and consultations with outside experts, and
- Travel for conferences, site visits, and consultations.

These are examples and should not constrain thinking. All costs must be well-justified and all expenditures prudent in light of the group's goals and approach to pursuing them.

Program goals and review criteria

This program can support any stage of the process of identifying research themes and organizing to develop and grow research programs. Groups may undertake the imaginative work of identifying themes and overarching research questions of high potential, the strategic work of determining how a thematic area might best be pursued, and the very practical work of determining tangible steps to be taken in building a research program. Efforts may lead to applications to other Lehigh investment programs, or to applications for extramural support. At

any stage, efforts to expand the group's reach - for example, in terms of disciplines represented - can be supported.

We are especially, though not exclusively, interested in supporting community-building and ideation across disciplines. There are particular opportunities, and particular challenges, when this involves transcending differences in conceptual frameworks, disciplinary language, methodologies, epistemologies, etc. Those seeking to support audacious interdisciplinarity or to cultivate so-called *convergence* research will often begin with a theme or overarching research question that provides initial common ground. We are interested in supporting experiments in working more daringly and productively across disciplines, whether or not the effort is thematically driven.

This program is grounded in the Research Futures vision for the quality, character, and stature of Lehigh research: Outstanding scholarship as the foundation for everything we do; drawing colleagues together around areas of collective strength; healthy public engagement that grounds us in human concerns and is a source of insight; and our intent that our research programs are the foundation for a student experience of extraordinary lifelong value.

Applications will be considered with the following in mind:

- Purpose. Does the group have a clear purpose in mind, consistent with the program goals described above?
- Process. Does the group clearly describe how it expects to proceed? Does the group have a sound basis for its plan? A grounding in approaches used in one discipline that might be applied more broadly, in efforts that have been successful elsewhere, or in literature on interdisciplinary and team-based research is encouraged but not required. Groups are encouraged to be inventive and experimental.
- Commitment and community-building. Who has committed to the effort so far? Is there a clear sense of enthusiasm or momentum? If plans involve efforts to draw others' interests, is there a clear basis for the effort to draw their attention and continued interest? Are those already involved fully open to the ideas of those they hope to attract?
- Institutional learning. Beyond the group's immediate purpose and goals, might we, as a University, learn from the group's experience?
- Budget. Is the budget appropriate per the group's plans? Are planned expenditures prudent and well justified?

How to apply

Please prepare a proposal up to three pages in length, describing your specific goals and how you intend to pursue them. There is no prescribed format of narrative structure. Use the format and structure you believe to be most effective in communicating the opportunity you see, and supporting review based on the program goals and criteria described above.

Submit your proposal through our [online portal](#). The faculty member serving as PI should submit the proposal. The PI will be responsible for communications, the budget, and all reports.

The online system will prompt for the following:

- A descriptive title, suitable for publication on our public web site.
- Name, position, and department of each participating faculty member. The applicant will serve as PI and will be responsible for communications, the budget, and all reports. The PI must be a member of the faculty.
- Abstract: 250-word abstract suitable for a sophisticated lay audience, and suitable for publication on our public web site. The abstract should describe the program's broad significance and the manner in which the team plans to advance work in the field.
- Budget: In tabular form, provide an initial budget showing amounts by category, e.g., personnel including employee benefits, supplies & materials, travel, etc.. Do not include indirect costs in the budget. If the total direct costs exceed the amount requested, identify amounts and sources of co-funding, show the balance requested from this program, and attach letters of commitment as applicable. The total amount requested from this program may be up to \$25,000

Review and award process

Proposals and awards will be made on a rolling basis: A proposal may be submitted at any time, and an award will be made per determination that the proposed activities are likely to advance the goals of the program (see Expected outcomes and review criteria above).

In the interest of obtaining the strongest possible proposals, applicants may after initial review be invited to submit revisions.

Awards will be made by the Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Research Futures Advisory Committee.

Consultation with our office and with colleagues

We encourage consultation prior to proposal preparation and submission. Please contact us at vpresearch@lehigh.edu .

Listings of current and past awards will be listed on the Research Futures web site at [LINK]. Those considering organizing a community-building and ideation effort should feel free to consult with colleagues who are currently, or have recently, organized such efforts.