Accelerator Grant Guidelines

Accelerator Grant Program Description
The Accelerator Grant program is intended to assist teams of Lehigh investigators in developing multi-investigator research programs in particularly promising areas. Based on a team's identification of a major, specific area of opportunity and importance, and ways in which the group can collectively excel in that area, these grants provide significant flexibility in use of the grant funds to help the group establish itself as prominent and productive. Grants can support forays into new areas and can help individuals or groups who have worked separately to coalesce around a theme. They should in all cases build upon existing, demonstrated strengths. Awards will be for up to $100,000 over a two-year period. As always, awards will be made based on prospects of fulfilling the purpose of the program and applicants should ask for only what they need.

As described in detail below, a proposal should describe an opportunity to establish a new multi-investigator research program, or to add substantially to the breadth, competitiveness and ultimately the scale and impact of an existing program. Applicants should write clearly and convincingly about their potential impact and competitive position in an area of rising importance. A successful proposal will lay out a clear vision for the future of the program, describing how the work will be of value to collegial and constituent communities including those expected to provide sustained support, will include a description of how the group will distinguish itself through the novelty of its ideas, approach, composition and/or other resources it can bring to bear, and describe short-term goals that will guide it in its pursuit of the opportunity.

Funding for this program is provided by the Smith Fund for Research and Innovation in Science and Engineering for research in the natural sciences and engineering, and by university funds for research in all fields. Funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) for research related to human health[1] may be used according to the subject matter of the best proposals.

Award
An Accelerator Grant provides funding of up to $100,000.

Generally, it is expected that the awardees are ready and eager to commence with the proposed work and able to complete their use of the funds within 24 months from the start date. Reasonable accommodations will be made in the interest of gaining the most impact, including time needed to recruit students or fellows.

Awards may not be used to replace current funding, nor to support work within the scope of an active research grant. An award may be used to build upon work supported by current funding. Funds may not be used for remodeling or alteration of facilities, faculty salaries or tuition. Equipment costing over $15,000 must be very carefully justified. Grant funds must be expended in furtherance of the goals of the research program as described in the proposal.

Eligibility
The proposed research program must involve at least three tenure-track faculty members, including at least one tenured member of the faculty, as co-Principal Investigators. Each co-PI should have contributed

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[1] Relevant topics as defined by DOH include research in the natural sciences related to human disease and mechanisms thereof; research on promotion and maintenance of health, including bio behavioral research; research on the prevention and reduction of disease; research on the delivery of health care services to reduce health risks or to transfer research advances to community use; and patient-oriented research including epidemiological and behavioral studies and the development of new technology.

to the conception of the program and preparation of the application. At least three should be clearly committed to ongoing involvement and should, collectively, be capable of sustaining it as a core team. Involvement of additional contributing members of the faculty, and prospects for drawing in additional people over time, are welcomed.

The team will designate one member as Principal Investigator (PI). The PI must be a tenured member of the faculty. The PI will often be a team member who has taken a leadership role in conception of the project and is expected to have an ongoing leadership role and/or particular ongoing commitment to the program. The PI will receive all correspondence, and must take responsibility for managing the budget and for reporting.

All Lehigh team members must have completed submission of all reports and other required materials under all prior internal grant awards. A faculty member with a current Lehigh internal grant may apply as a member of a team.

While a Lehigh team may be collaborating with colleagues elsewhere, all funds awarded under this program must be spent at Lehigh.

Review Process
Lehigh's Internal Review Committee (IRC) will review proposals. IRC members are nominated by their deans based upon their experience and subject area expertise. As part of the review process, applicants may be asked to present their plans to the IRC.

Reviewers will be reading and evaluating proposals within and across subject areas. **Proposals should therefore describe the research program and its import in a manner that can be readily appreciated by non-specialists.** Details enabling specialists to fully appreciate proposals should be kept as concise as possible.

Final selections for funding will be made based upon IRC review and available funding by the Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies. Depending upon the sizes of individual awards, we anticipate making two or more awards on this cycle, one of which is expected to relate to human health as broadly defined in PA Department of Health Guidelines.

Selection Criteria
Reviewers will evaluate each proposal according to each of the following criteria. While reviewers may judge that some criteria are more critical than others for a given proposal, these criteria will form the entire basis for evaluation. The following will be provided, verbatim, in instructions to reviewers:

- **The opportunity.** *Have the applicants identified a compelling opportunity?* Have they identified a field of study, problem or research question of major importance, evidenced either by consensus in a field or the applicants' insight, such that we should expect interest and activity in the area to increase substantially in the future? Have they, in addition, identified outside communities, including those in a position to support the work in the future, who will become invested in the program and support its success?
- **The team.** *Have the applicants shown that they have a competitive advantage in this area?* Collectively, are the investigators particularly well positioned to do important work in the field? Are they able to differentiate themselves from others working in the field by their individual and combined capabilities and/or the novelty of their approach? Does the group, or subsets of the group, have a history of working together productively? Will they have the facilities and other resources they need to build upon their existing strengths as described in the proposal?
- **Plans for program development.** *Do the applicants present a well-conceived plan for building their program?* While awardees will have significant flexibility in use of funds over a two-year period, they should describe their intended approach to growing their program, including their

strategy for sustaining the program in the long term. Have they detailed initial steps and key milestones? Do these make sense in light of the current state of the field and ways in which the team expects to advance it? Is the size of the requested budget appropriate given the potential for growth of the research program? If in a field in which agency or foundation funding should be possible, have they identified target sponsors and programs?

Proposal Preparation Instructions
Electronic submission of proposals through our [InfoReady Review](#) website is required.

The Accelerator program requires teams to submit a letter of intent before applying. When submitting your letter of intent, the online system will prompt for the following:
- A descriptive title
- Names and department affiliations of the PI and all faculty members involved
- A brief (up to about 250 words) abstract

When submitting your full proposal, 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 at the level of Associate Professor or Professor. A minimum of two other members of the tenure track faculty who will have substantive and ongoing commitments to the program must be identified as co-PI's. Others who will contribute in important ways should be listed as well.
- IRB/IACUC status. Please refer to our Research Integrity web page at http://research.cc.lehigh.edu/research-integrity.
- Conflict of Interest statement
- 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.

When submitting, the following must be uploaded to the online system as a single pdf. Page margins must be at least one inch. Exclusive of any figures, text must be 11 point or larger.

- A proposal narrative, not to exceed six pages, that enables reviewers to judge its merits per the criteria listed above. **After reading the narrative, a reviewers should fully appreciate why the team's chosen topic is important, how the team is particularly well suited and well positioned, compared with others in the world, to address the topic, and the team's strategy for establishing and growing a sustained program. The narrative must adhere to the following outline:**

  1. Opportunity
     Provide the reader with a clear understanding of the opportunity at hand. Describe the research question(s) or problem(s) that the team is addressing, being sure to provide sufficient background and context for the reader to understand why these questions or problems are of clear and rising importance. Importance might be evidenced by, for example, a long-standing and acknowledged impasse, emerging consensus, or the team's particular insight. Describe approaches being taken by any others working in this area, noting gaps or shortcomings that the team expects to address. Identify constituencies that have natural or expressed interest in the research, including those who would benefit from the team's work and those who will be expected to support the program over the long term.

  2. Research team, resources and approach

Describe the particular capabilities of the research team, the approach the team will take to pursue the opportunity, and ways in which the team is, or expects to become, particularly competitive. This section should be organized in the manner that the team finds to be most effective, being sure to include (a) the team's approach to addressing the opportunity; (b) the specific capabilities, and current and past activities, of each member of the team and how they will work in combination; (c) any critical Lehigh resources, outside resources and relationships being brought to bear, including existing funded projects and pending proposals whose aims are relevant to the pursuing the present opportunity.

3. Goals and use of funds
   While the team is expected to be agile and opportunistic and will be afforded with flexibility in its use of grant funds over a two-year period, it should also have goals for the first stages of its work and plans for achieving them. Describe initial goals, what work will be undertaken to achieve them, and what will guide allocation of resources over time. Teams should plan to use grant funds within two years of their start dates, and will be free to work more quickly.

   During and after the grant period, teams are expected to aggressively pursue external support needed to sustain and grow their programs, and should plan to pursue multiple avenues. The team should succinctly identify (a) sources of external support such as funding agencies, foundations, industry groups, etc., (b) any specific programs to which the team expects to apply, and (c) strategies for competing successfully in those programs. The team should also discuss ways in which it plans to grow its reputation in the field, e.g. through presentations, publications and contacts with important constituents.

- Budget: In tabular form, provide an initial budget showing amounts that the team plans to allocate to graduate student stipends and other personnel including employee benefits, supplies, materials, small equipment, equipment use charges, and travel. **Include direct costs only; do not include indirect costs in the budget.** If the total direct costs exceed the amount requested, identify sources of co-funding and attach letters of commitment as applicable. **The total amount requested, not including any cost sharing, may be up to $100,000.**
- A listing of all internal Lehigh grants and external grants completed within the past two years, currently active, and currently pending. In any case in which a non-specialist might perceive the Acclerator application to support work already funded by the completed, pending or current grant, provide a brief explanation of how the work and its goals are different.
- Short-form biographical sketches for each of the faculty members involved in the project. You may use the form prescribed by any federal agency or a listing, not to exceed two pages, of educational preparation, research activity and relevant publications, presentations, etc.

General Requirements
Required reports. Awardees will be required to submit interim reports, end-of-project reports and follow-up outcome assessments, using reporting forms provided by the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies.

Pennsylvania Department of Health funding. Any investigators funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) using Tobacco Settlement Funds must assist in preparation of a project plan for submission to DOH and will be required by DOH to prepare multiple progress reports and to respond to DOH comments.

Need More Information?
Questions and requests for additional information should be directed to VPResearch@lehigh.edu.