

# VSU Faculty Research Seed Grant (FRSG) Program Guidelines

## **Program Description:**

The Faculty Research Seed Grant (FRSG) Program is a competitive internal funding program for Valdosta State University faculty. It is financially supported by the Division of Academic Affairs, managed by the Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee (FRSC) of the Faculty Senate, and administered by the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research Administration (OSPRA).

The goal of the FRSG Program is to support faculty research and creative activity in the furtherance of the scholarly mission of the University. The program objectives are:

- To assist early-stage scholars in establishing themselves as independent investigators or artists, thus increasing their chances of scholarly publication, extramural funding for research, or comparable recognition in the creative arts. Non-tenured faculty who are on tenure track and who have not served as a principal investigator/project director on a competitively funded federal award (excluding fellowships and individual training awards) are considered early-stage scholars.
- To assist established scholars in transitioning to a new avenue of inquiry or creative activity; in performing exploratory high risk research for which external funding is currently unlikely; in determining the feasibility of conducting a larger, more complex research or creative project; in developing preliminary data to support an extramural funding application; or, in the arts, to pursue a new avenue of creative activity. Established scholars are faculty who are tenured and/or who have served as a principal investigator/project director on a competitively funded federal award (excluding fellowships and individual training awards).

## **Definition of Research:**

Faculty initiated research and creative activity are broadly defined as any creative, critical, scholarly, and/or empirical activity that expands, clarifies, reorganizes, or develops knowledge or artistic perception.

Research is more specifically defined as a systematic process of investigation or study that will produce facts or theories or will demonstrate or apply such knowledge to problem-solving within the discipline or in society. Results of research funded by the FRSG Program should be worthy of submission for publication in refereed journals or meet comparable dissemination standards for the discipline and/or should serve as a foundation for an external funding application.

Creative activity includes development of creative works in, or technology supporting, the disciplines of arts education, dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literature, mass media, museums, music, music theatre, opera, theatre, and visual arts. Creative activity funded by the FRSG Program should result in performance and/or juried exhibition of new works or some other form of public dissemination appropriate for the discipline.

## **Award Information:**

Subject to continued Strategic Focus funding, a total of \$65,000 per fiscal year is available for the FRSG program. In the event not all of the available funds are awarded through the March call for proposals, a second call will be announced in September. It is anticipated that a total of 8 – 12 proposals will be awarded.

Maximum award amounts are as follows:

- Individual Faculty Award - \$5,000
- Collaborative Award (two or more eligible faculty members) - \$7,500

## **Application Deadlines:**

The call for proposals is in March. Should there be remaining funding, a second call for proposals will be announced in September. Funds awarded through the FRSG competition must be spent or encumbered prior to April 30th. Funds not spent by April 30th must be encumbered by that date either through eProcurement or Authority to Travel for May or June travel. If funds are awarded in a September competition, those funds will be available to grantees by January 1st.

### **Eligibility:**

All tenure-track faculty and all tenured faculty at the instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor level are eligible for FRSG funding, including those with administrative assignments. Eligible faculty may apply individually or collaboratively. Collaborative research or projects with Department Heads or Deans must be new avenues of inquiry or creative activity. Collaborations may involve only other eligible VSU faculty members.

Lecturers/senior lecturers, full-time temporary instructors, visiting faculty, part-time personnel, Department Heads, and Deans are not eligible for FRSG funding.

Any faculty member who received a FRSG award for the previous fiscal year is ineligible to apply. (i.e., a faculty member is eligible for an award only every other year).

A faculty member who previously received a Faculty Research Seed Grant who is delinquent on any reports is ineligible.

Any faculty member who receives FRSG funding is expected to generate at least one scholarly product that results in part or in whole from the FRSG support within three years following the year of receipt of the award. Scholarly products include a manuscript submission to an academic journal, a peer-reviewed publication, or a comparable standard for the discipline; submission of a research proposal to an external funding agency; or, for creative activity, performance or showing of new works or submission of works for juried competition or performance. Failure to meet this expectation may negatively affect the faculty member's ability to compete for future FRSG funding. Please note that the Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee recognizes that research by its very nature is unpredictable, and that an investigation or creative activity may not produce results that are appropriate for dissemination. FRSG recipients who find themselves in this situation when applying for additional FRSG funding are advised to provide an explanation in the application.

### **Ineligible Activities:**

FRSG funding is not intended to support the following:

- Faculty development activities, such as learning a new technique, language, or methodology or completing a thesis or dissertation;
- Departmental curriculum development, such as preparation of curriculum materials, curriculum modifications, and student interest surveys (Note: Curriculum development that includes empirical study of the effectiveness of new program formats or techniques and content that are generalizable and have application beyond VSU are considered research eligible for FRSG funding);
- Professional or public service or provision of consulting services;
- Projects judged to be profit-oriented (i.e. production of a textbook or development of works intended for sale);
- Institutional research (i.e., studies related directly to the operation of the University that are not generalizable and have little application beyond VSU); or
- Research that is conducted by a graduate student to meet thesis or dissertation requirements.

### **Allowable Expenditures:**

FRSG funds may be used for the following types of expenditures to support research or creative activity:

- Release time during the academic year at part-time faculty rate plus applicable employer-paid fringe benefits (maximum of one course release, subject to approval of the department head);
- Summer compensation for nine-month faculty (maximum 10% of base salary; total summer compensation limit established by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents applies);
- Employer's share of fringe benefits on summer compensation;
- Graduate and/or undergraduate student assistants or other assistants at a data collection site;
- Travel required for data collection and/or collaboration that is necessary for project development;
- Supplies and materials that are directly related to the conduct of the project, such as postage, photocopying, datasets, illustrations and photographs, art and performance supplies, chemicals and other expendables, software, and small equipment items (<\$3,000 per unit), etc.;

- Contractual services provided by an external vendor, such as transcription services, data entry assistance, analytical services, editing and indexing services, etc.;
- Telecommunications costs for telephone surveys or for Internet survey services
- Equipment ( $\geq$ \$3,000 per unit) that is specific to the proposed project, not normally provided by the department or other university departments, and/or is not an appropriate request for the University's equipment pools (requires explanation with signature of department head);
- Repair of used equipment donated to the University in the current fiscal year, provided the equipment is required for completion of the proposed project; and  Research participant payments.

FRSG funds may not be used for the following types of expenditures:

- General supplies and items that normally are or should be provided by the applicant's department;  Literature searches;
- Journal subscriptions or book purchases;
- Memberships in professional organizations;
- General conference travel and travel for presentation/dissemination of project results;
- Dissemination of research results or creative works;
- General telecommunications;
- Repair of donated equipment in inventory before the beginning of the current fiscal year; or
- Routine or ongoing maintenance of equipment.

### **Review Process and Evaluation Criteria:**

*Late proposals will not be accepted.* In order to be eligible for review, a proposal must be complete and in a single package (either a single PDF file or a one-sided hardcopy). Questions about eligibility for review will be decided by the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration upon proposal submission and by the Chair of the Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee, who may, at his/her discretion, consult with the entire committee. Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee members will independently review eligible proposals and assign a preliminary score to each based on the criteria below. Preliminary scores will be averaged for each proposal and a preliminary ranking will be established. The committee will meet face-to-face to discuss the applications, using the preliminary rankings to guide discussion. Following the group discussion, committee members will independently finalize their scores. A final average score will be calculated for each proposal and a final rank order established.

**The maximum proposal score is 100. Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:**

- **Alignment of the project with FRSG program goal and objectives (maximum 30 points)**
- **Intellectual merit of the proposed project (maximum 20 points)**
- **Clarity and appropriateness of the research/project design and procedures (maximum 20 points)**
- **Appropriateness of the budget and strength of the budget justification (maximum 10 points)**
- **Likelihood of external funding and/or scholarly publication/presentation of results (maximum 20 points)**

Only those proposals with an average score of 70 and higher will be automatically eligible for funding. Awards will be made in rank order until available funds are exhausted or until all proposals scoring 70 or higher are funded, whichever occurs first. The size of the award may be decreased at the committee's discretion based on the nature of the work and the budget justification provided.

In the event funds available for the second competition of the fiscal year are not exhausted, unfunded proposals from the first competition that scored 70 or higher will be funded in rank order. If funds still remain, the committee will consider proposals from the second competition that scored below a 70 on a case-by-case basis for possible funding. Funding of any proposals below the 70 score will be decided by majority vote, and the committee may require changes to the proposed project as a condition of award. The committee may also allow funds to lapse if remaining proposals are not deemed to be of the quality that reasonably assures peer-reviewed publication or other scholarly outcomes. At all times, the committee's decisions will be based on proposal quality without regard to discipline, department, college, or faculty rank/status represented.

Following the selection process, all applicants will be informed of funding decisions and the final average proposal score will be provided to each applicant.

The funding decisions of the Faculty Scholarship and Research Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

**Other Terms and Conditions of Award:**

- For collaborative proposals, the faculty member whose name first appears on the Application Cover Page will be responsible for financial management of the award and reporting.
- All FRSG funds must be expended in accordance with University policy and procedures by the close of fiscal year (June 30). Unexpended funds cannot be carried over to the next fiscal year.
- If a proposal is withdrawn before the Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee makes a final funding decision, the submission is not counted.
- Awards may not be deferred to a future fiscal year. If funds cannot be used in the year for which they are awarded, they will be de-obligated and, if possible, awarded to another applicant. The faculty member may reapply in a future year, subject to the limitation on proposal resubmission.
- Nine-month faculty may request FRSG funding for summer salary (not to exceed 10% of base pay). If the awardee resigns his/her position at the end of the preceding academic year, he/she will forfeit the summer salary and associated fringe benefits.
- Funds may be requested for one course release during the academic year. A proposed course release must be approved in advance by the department head, as evidenced by signature on the budget page. If an award includes funding for a course release, no teaching overload or extra compensation for additional duties will be permitted during the semester of the FRSG funded release.
- The FRSG program is funded in part with Strategic Focus funds, requiring long-term outcomes assessment. Award recipients will be required to report annually, for up to six (6) years following expiration of the award, on scholarly products and extramural funding received that resulted in full or in part from the work funded by the FRSG. Failure to provide such reports will make the recipient ineligible for future FRSG funding until delinquent reports are received.
- FRSG recipients must acknowledge support of the research/creative activity by the Valdosta State University Faculty Research Seed Grant program in any publication or presentation of results.
- In the event a project funded by the FRSG program generates *unanticipated* sales or royalty income for the faculty member at any time in the future, the faculty member agrees to report such income to the Faculty Research & Scholarship Committee and to reimburse the University the amount of the award from the first proceeds received.
- Budgets that request a GA must include salary and tuition reimbursement. Tuition reimbursement is under Other on the budget template. If you need assistance in determining the dollar amount please contact the Graduate School and ask to speak to the Graduate Student Services Specialist.