TTU Internal Grant Program

Handbook for grants awarded by the
TTU Internal Grant Committee

Contents

Introduction

Program Overview and Core Goals:

The TTU Internal Grant Program Committee (IGPC, previously known as the Faculty Research Grant Committee) was established at Tennessee Technological University (TTU) in the fall quarter of 1963 to:

A. Stimulate interest in research on the part of the faculty.

B. Establish and administer policies and standards in connection with faculty research funds, from which assistance may be provided to faculty members who wish to undertake research projects.

C. Assist in the dissemination of information developed in faculty research projects through the publication of research bulletins and through other appropriate media of information dissemination available to the Committee.

As TTU's research enterprise has grown and become increasingly ambitious we continue to hold to the core values that led to the creation of the IGPC while evolving our policies and procedures to better foster the growth of our faculty's scholarly, discovery, innovation, and creative efforts and enhance their success in seeking extramural support, where available, for this work. TTU continues to believe that a primary benefit of faculty research lies in its potential to improve instruction. It is anticipated that faculty engagement in research and creative activities will enable them to remain at the leading edges of their fields. This knowledge will filter downward into the classroom, particularly to advanced and graduate courses, as well as provide opportunities for students to become directly involved in scholarly exploration.

Overall, the IGPC is aimed at further developing the intellectual and creative environment of TTU. As the state's only Technological, STEM-infused research university, TTU must continue to build and strengthen its research and discovery enterprise. The IGPC provides funding to support research and creative initiatives that advance the university's programmatic efforts, build a collaborative and innovative campus, strengthen graduate programs, and promote innovations in teaching and learning. The IGPC is particularly focused on supporting new, expanding, and pilot work that creates the basis for seeking extramural support (in disciplines/areas of study where it is available), the creation of patentable products and significant IP, including exhibitions, performances, and partnerships that increase human welfare and economic development in the community, state, and nation.

More specifically, the program provides support along three tracks:

1. All Faculty who are interested in pursuing scholarly and creative inquiry in disciplines which traditionally do not have extensive external funding opportunities.

2. Early career faculty to establish their scholarly programs and conduct preliminary work that leads to more extensive lines of work, including that which may lead to/require extramural support, creative products/performances, and the related goals noted above.

3. To mid-career/tenured faculty to expand and enhance their lines of scholarly work, Particularly as it may involve multi-unit and interdisciplinary teams in ways that provide the "prior work" required to compete for external funding from federal and state agencies, foundations, business and industry and/or to achieve the related goals of this internal funding mechanism.

Committee Membership

The TTU Internal Grant Program is coordinated by the Internal Grant Program Committee. This committee consists of a minimum of nine (9) faculty members representing each of the colleges and school(s) across the University. Minimum representation is as follows:

- College of Agriculture and Human Ecology – one member
- College of Arts and Sciences – two members
    - one from sciences/math
    - one from social sciences/humanities
- College of Business– one member
- College of Education – one member
- College of Engineering – one member
- College of Fine Arts – one member
- College of Interdisciplinary Studies – one member
- School of Nursing – one member

All members are appointed by the President in accordance with approved procedures.
The Vice President for Research and Economic Development serves as the Executive Officer of the committee. The committee meets at least once each semester of the academic year to oversee the evaluation of research proposals as well as consider progress reports, and the general status of faculty research supported by the University.

Descriptions of Tracks

Track 1: Scholarly and Creative Inquiry Support

This funding mechanism is meant as a source of support for the scholarly and creative accomplishments of faculty in disciplines where external funding is typically not available regardless of career rank. Even here, however, faculty are asked to include a plan for working with the Office of the Vice-President for Research to identify sources of additional/future support for their work that may not always be easily identifiable (e.g., certain foundations, other public/private sector sources, possible donors).

Track 2: Early Career Research Support

The goals of this track are to support new/pre-tenure faculty in establishing and developing a strong foundation for their chosen lines of scholarship. Pilot/preliminary work, acquisition

and development of key laboratory instruments/capacity, and other activities required to establish the investigator and an emerging leader in their field are all encouraged as the foci of proposals. Although collaboration with other faculty within and across disciplines is encouraged, the primary focus of this track is providing the individual faculty member with the support required during this phase of their career.

Track 3: Mid-career/post-tenure research support

The expectations for proposals at this level are somewhat more ambitious. This track will provide support for new research, discovery, and creative investigator initiated programmatic efforts. A particular focus is on faculty-initiated projects that are in the early or pilot stages during which internal support may be key to increasing the competitiveness and readiness of the work to seek external funding (where available) and raise the recognition and distinction of TTU's research, creative works, partnerships, discoveries, and scholarly programs. Clearly developed plans for seeking external funding (when available) are required in applications for funding in this track and submission of a viable proposal is expected at or before the conclusion of the funding period. These proposals are strongly encouraged to be collaborative or Interdisciplinary in nature.

Priority/Eligibility Requirements

Priority / Eligibility will be given to proposals that have one or more of the following elements in all tracks. Of course, Track 1 proposals will not be required to manifest any of the following to the same degree as Track 2 and Track 3 proposals.

(1) Extensively involve graduate or undergraduate students in ways that enhance their education and post-graduate or professional opportunities.

(2) Projects that promote collaborative and research-based experiential teaching and learning for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, particularly those that can develop into initiatives that can attract external support, are also of interest.

(3) Cost sharing/support from the participating departments is a requirement. Such support may vary across units as it is understood that not all units will have access to large discretionary funds/resources. A unit can, however, show support for the proposal by sharing resources such as release time for the investigator, graduate student research assistant stipend and/or tuition, and paying fees for equipment usage, in addition to direct financial support. Any co-investment should be arranged prior to submission and made clear in the proposal.

(4) A faculty member may only be the PI on one project per funding round. However, they may also serve as a co-PI/significant participant in other proposals.

Additional Eligibility Considerations for Track 3 (primarily) Although early career proposals are encouraged to consider ways to incorporate the following elements in their proposals, at least one of these are required for consideration of Track 3 support.

(5)Provide support to interdisciplinary or other multi-faculty collaborations where at least one faculty member is from another department/unit.

(6) Involve collaborative partnerships with business, industry, and non-profit entities that that have strong probabilities of leading to future federal, state, or other external funding.

(7) In all Track 3 cases where the proposal is in an area in which extramural support is available the proposed work is expected to lead to the development and submission of proposals for external funding. The case for the potential of such efforts being successful, as well as the plans for developing and submitting such (a) proposal(s) should be clearly made in the application for funding.

Timeline and Funding Amounts:

Project Period

The period of performance for internal grants is July 1 – June 30 for up to two successive years. This is the period during which the PI is expected to complete the project and to incur and expend approved funds. A proposal that serves to extend a project previously funded by the Internal Grant Program will not be accepted.

Please note that underlined funds will not carryover beyond the project period approved. Any unused funds after June 30 of the final project year will be forfeited. Forfeited funds are returned to the funding pool for faculty research grants to be distributed the following year.

1. Projects can be funded once for a period of one or two years, depending on the project needs.

2. The maximum total project budget is:
   Track 1 - $3,000
   Track 2 - $5,000
   Track 3 - $20,000
   of direct costs from this source, not including funding from other internal or external sources, regardless of award period. No indirect costs (IDC) should be budgeted.

   It is the responsibility of the faculty member seeking funding from the IGP mechanism to explain the significance, relevance, and appropriateness of the research proposed as well as the role of each person listed on the proposal.

It is the responsibility of the evaluators to decide on the merits of the research proposed and which proposals are most worthy of funding.

Allowable Costs

The following categories of expenses fall within the definitions of basic and applied research and other creative scholarly work, including the necessary dissemination of information, and thus are eligible for funding:

A. Release time. Assistance in the form of release time/reduced teaching load will apply only to the regular academic year and will not exceed one course per semester. Requests for release time will be at the same rate as departmental adjunct faculty.

B. Student Salaries. Funds can be requested to support a student (advanced undergraduate or graduate) if the purpose of support is to assist faculty in the design and implementation of the work as well as to collect preliminary data that can be used in developing a research

proposal for external funding.

C.   Travel. Travel primarily within the continental United States in connection with the research. The committee will consider travel outside the United States if the travel significantly contributes to the purpose of the research.

- Travel is limited to faculty members <u>ONLY</u>.
- Allowable travel costs include conference or meeting registration fees, transportation, lodging, per diem, etc. and will be considered in relation to the overall scope of the project budget.
- For travel outside of the United States, justification must be provided on an additional page.

D.   Supplies and Operating Expenses. Funds for special supplies, dissemination/publishing costs, laboratory assistance, data processing, etc. This includes costs to conduct descriptive or normative surveys, i.e., the compilation of data through questionnaires or similar methods and the analysis of the data.

E.   Allowable publication and dissemination costs include:
- Payment of the minimum amount for publication in peer reviewed, quality scholarly journals, short articles, or abstracts of articles related to research supported by the faculty research grant program.

- Cost of the minimum number of reprints of articles related to research supported by the faculty research grant program, if required as a part of the publication agreement.

- Costs of University Printing Services to publish handbooks and similar works related to research supported by the faculty research grant program when the document is of broad interest and when support of such publication cannot be arranged through an outside agency.

- The making of recordings when such is an essential part of the proposed research.

F.   Equipment. Special purpose equipment with a total acquisition cost of $5,000 or greater, used for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities must be justified. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, genomic sequencers, imaging equipment, and spectrometers.

Special justification must be provided on an additional page if computer hardware or special purpose equipment is requested.

Application Process: Competitive; the committee issues an RFP.

Administrative Regulations

A. If a faculty member is awarded an Internal Grant for a given year but is not able to accept it that year, the award is forfeited. The faculty member may resubmit the proposal for consideration in a subsequent year's award competition.

B. *Internal Grant Program Committee members may submit a proposal but will not review their own proposals. They must excuse themselves from a portion of the meeting if their own proposals are under discussion. Although their proposals may or may not be funded, they may continue to serve their term on the committee.*

C. A faculty member may apply for an instructional grant, a non-instructional grant, and a faculty research grant for the same academic year. However, if more than one grant is approved, the faculty member must select <u>one</u> to be awarded.

Funding Information

Availability of Funds

The Internal Grant Program is funded by the indirect costs recovered on externally-funded projects.

Investigator Requirements

Applicants must meet the following requirements to be eligible for an award under this program:

A. The PI and Co-PIs must be eligible to be an investigator at Tennessee Tech University.

- All full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply.
- Non-tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply if (a) their Agreement on Responsibilities (AOR) includes a research component, <u>AND</u> (b) the project includes a tenured or tenure-track faculty member as PI or Co-PI.
- Staff members who conduct research as part of their responsibilities.

Proposals will not be considered if <u>any</u> of the following conditions are satisfied:

A. Previous awardees of Track I who have not submitted a proposal to an outside funding agency.

B. Proposals by faculty are to complete requirements for their own degree.

C. Proposals that are substantially similar to projects previously funded by the Internal Grant Program.

D. Proposals that do not show deliverables (demonstrable outcomes appropriate to the discipline).

E. Proposals requesting extra or summer compensation.

F. Proposals that have received external funding.

Proposal Submission and Evaluation

When writing a proposal, it is important to remember to "target the audience." The members of the Internal Grant Program Committee are the audience, as they will evaluate the proposals and decide which are eligible and which will receive funding. Although the committee members are knowledgeable about research, they are not usually experts in the specialized area of research in the proposal. They are an educated, intelligent, "lay" audience.

Application Contents

The application package will be routed electronically for signatures via DocuSign. Prior to starting the DocuSign routing process, the PI should have each of the following materials completed and ready to be uploaded as attachments:

    A. Narrative proposal (6 page limit)

    B. Budget Summary and special budget justification, if needed. (please fill out form provided)

    C. Summary of Previous Assistance Received (please fill out form provided)

    D. Letters of support from external organizations, if involved.

    E. References (1 page limit)

Application Procedures

    A. The committee will issue a call for proposals each year and announce a deadline for the submission of proposals. PROPOSALS AND/OR ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION RECEIVED AFTER THE DEADLINE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

    B. Completed proposals must be endorsed by the PI's and all key personnel's department chair and the dean of their respective college/school (or designated representative). By endorsing the proposal, chairs and deans specifically agree to adhere to the budget requirements including faculty release time, and to cover the cost of overages if the PI overspends.

    C. Fully-endorsed proposals and supporting documentation are due to the Office of Research no later than 4:30 p.m. on the deadline date.

    D. The Office of Research will distribute proposals to the Internal Grant Program Committee for evaluation after the deadline date.

    E. The Internal Grant Committee will evaluate the proposed projects. Using an approach similar to federal funding agencies.

    F. The committee chairperson will forward the committee's recommendations to the Vice President for Research.

Once approved, the committee chairperson will notify the applicant, departmental chairperson, and dean.

Criteria Used to Evaluate Research Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated based on the project description and justification of need, intellectual merit, plan of action, PI qualifications, dissemination plan, and reasonableness of the budget. A detailed rubric is included in the back of the handbook (Appendix B).

A. Applicants must be knowledgeable and experienced in the proposed research area.

B. The research project must promise significant contributions to knowledge in the field of work.

C. The results of the research must hold decent possibilities of both publication and in successful external funding proposal(s).

D. The project must not duplicate research already accomplished by others but may represent extensions of such earlier research.

E. Funds cannot be used to assist faculty in completing the requirements for any degree.

F. In reviewing proposals, the Committee will carefully look for the following:

- Evidence of plans that have been thoughtfully and carefully worked out.
- Clear definition of the objective(s) and an outline of steps, methods, and procedures leading to the accomplishment of the objective(s).
- Thoughtful estimates of required time frames and anticipated needs for special aids, equipment, supplies, travel, and other assistance as needed.
- If public schools or other outside agencies/entities are involved, letters of agreement from appropriate persons included in the form of an appendix.
- Statements relative to the possibility of publication of the results and, in the case of Tack 2 and 3 proposals, plans for successfully seeking external support, including how the work will address agency priorities
- Adherence to the guidelines.

Funding of Approved Projects

Funds should be expended in a timely manner. If, for example, purchasing approved equipment is delayed, it may be necessary to apply for an extension of the ending date of the award. The committee may not approve the extension if doing so will deprive other applicants of research assistance. In addition, delays in making expenditures may lead to the loss of funds with the expiration of the fiscal year.

Procedures

A. Human Subjects and Animal Care: If human subjects or laboratory animals are involved, the Committee's approval of the award is contingent upon the applicant's obtaining appropriate clearance from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

B. When a research proposal has received final approval, the committee chairperson will notify Grant Accounting of the recipient's name, department, and a copy of the itemized budget.

C. Release Time: In cases involving release time, Grant Accounting will transfer the portion of the recipient's salary from the faculty research account into the appropriate departmental account. The department must submit a properly completed "*Request for Revision in Budget*" form transferring funds from the faculty member's position line to the appropriate account code from which the funds will be expended.

D. Other Expenses: If funds for student salaries, supplies, travel, and/or equipment are involved, Grant Accounting will assign an account number to the project and establish the account. The department secretary in the PI's department will be assigned as the bookkeeper on the account. Grant Accounting will email the FOAPAL information to the PI and Bookkeeper once the account in activated in July.

    - Expenditures shall be made in accordance with University policies and procedures.
    - Standard requisition forms shall be used and shall be forwarded through regular department and college/school offices for approval.

E. Budget Revisions: Re-budgeting within 10 percent of the total project budget is permitted so long as the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries are not reduced. Any requests for budget revisions where the total cumulative amount of changes exceed 10 percent of the total budget, and/or the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries would be reduced will require prior written approval by the Vice President for Research.

F. Overages: Project budgets are only approved for the amount funded in the award letter. Overspending is not permitted for any reason. If expenditures are made in excess of the approved amount, the PI's department or college will be required to fully- fund the cost of those overages.

Ownership of Equipment

The ownership of all equipment purchased from funds allocated for internal research shall rest, upon completion of the research, with the faculty member's department or center. The committee may make the decision when there is an overlap of pertinence that items such as microfilm revert to the Library or may give special consideration to equipment disposition in other cases, such as grants involving faculty from more than one department/center.

Project Reports

Recipients of research assistance are required to provide the committee with final reports relative to their projects as well as special reports if requested. These reports are necessary so that the committee may constantly assess the progress of both individual projects and the overall research program.

The Final Report Form should be submitted to the Office of Research no later than October 1 of the fiscal year following the end of the project period, WHETHER OR NOT THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN COMPLETED. The report should summarize the results of the entire project and in cases where a project was not completed on time, a revised report should be submitted when the project has been completed. Recipients are encouraged to make special progress reports at any

time if they encounter unanticipated difficulties and delays in their projects. They are also encouraged to consult the committee in such cases.

Publications

Many faculty research projects result in publications of one type or another, or in papers presented at scholarly meetings. Such publications and papers provide one of the most significant measures of the overall success of the research program. The Final Report Form has spaces for listing these points of evidence of the successful conclusions of the project.

It is understood that some articles and papers will not have been published and/or presented by the time the final report is prepared. Once available, the committee should be furnished a copy of the reprint of each article resulting from internal research projects. In submitting articles for publications, recipients of the Internal Grant Program assistance should identify themselves with Tennessee Technological University.

Patents and Copyrights

The provisions of Tennessee Tech Policy 732 – Intellectual Property – shall govern the interests of the researcher and the University in all inventions, discoveries, or copyrightable materials resulting from a faculty research award. Information and assistance are available in the Office of Research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Instructions for Preparing the Narrative Proposal

The narrative proposal must follow the formatting requirements and include the each of the headings listed below. Adherence to the formatting requirements is necessary for fair competition among applicants, and to ensure the ability of reviewers to read the text.

Formatting Requirements

The narrative must be double-spaced with one-inch margins at the top, bottom, and on each side. The narrative must not exceed six (6) single-sided pages and must include each of the headings listed below. The type must be clear, readily legible, and of 12-point size. Spacing should be between 10.0 and 14.0 characters per inch, including spaces and punctuation marks.

Required Headings

- Description of Project: Provide a description of your proposed project. Include a clear statement of the problem, question, or activity you wish to investigate; a justification of the research considering deficiencies in the existing knowledge base; other evidence of the need for the research, and references to the literature cited.

- Significance/Merit: Discuss the contribution to knowledge in the field that you expect your project to make.

- Plan of Action: Describe step-by-step each stage of your plan including the gathering of data by sampling or whatever means, the preparation of the data for analysis, and the method of analysis. Discuss steps being taken to protect the rights of human subjects and laboratory animals, if such are involved, and the preservation of the confidentiality of information relating to the former. If feasible, include a time schedule for the completion of the various steps of the research.

- Personnel Qualifications: Describe the experience and knowledge you and your team possess regarding the project area.

- Dissemination of Results: Describe your plans for facilitating the utilization of the results of the project by interested and appropriate audiences. What are the possibilities for publication or other dissemination? If the research will result in an article, list the periodicals that may be interested in publishing it. What are the possibilities of preparing a proposal for external support? List prospective agencies to which your proposal will be submitted.

- Plans for seeking extramural support

- Budget and budget justification

- Special budget justification for expenses such as international travel or computer hardware if needed.
- Letters of support in the form of an appendix if public schools or other outside agencies are involved.

APPENDIX B: Rating System for Internal Grant Program Proposals

When evaluating proposals, Committee members rate each eligible proposal in the following six areas. The maximum number of points that can be awarded in each area is indicated in parentheses.

To rank eligible proposals, the totals of all evaluators' ratings are averaged. Any evaluator perceiving a conflict of interest relative to any proposal will not submit a rating of that proposal. Funding proceeds from the highest to lowest until available funds are expended.

1. Description of Project (20) points)

   - A clear statement of the problem or activity is contained in the proposal.
   - There is adequate justification for the project.
   - There is an adequate review of the literature or other evidence to support the need for the project.
   - There are adequate and appropriate references.

2. Significance of the Project and Intellectual Merit (20) points)

   - The project is of significance and clearly demonstrates intellectual merit.
   - The project is of significance and clearly demonstrates broader impact.

3. Plan of Action (20 points)

   - An effective plan of management is in place that ensures proper and efficient administration of the project.
   - The step-by-step plan will ensure that the objectives are met.
   - There are adequate measures to ensure compliance with human subjects and laboratory animals committees.
   - The plan of action is adequate as applied to such factors as data gathering and analysis.

4. Personnel Qualifications of Investigator (10 points):

   - The PI is qualified to conduct the project.
   - Co-PIs and other personnel (if applicable) are appropriate and adequate.

5. Dissemination Plan (5) points)

   - The dissemination plan is adequate and appropriate. There are possibilities for publication – including identification of target outlets and how work will contribute to field.

6. Plan for seeking and potential for Obtaining Extramural Support (20 points):

- Identification of potential external funding sources, how project aligns with funding agency priorities, and why it will make sufficient contribution to merit funding.

7. Budget (5 points)

- The budget for the project is adequate to support the activities.
- Costs are reasonable and appropriate in relation to the objectives.

APPENDIX C: Instructions for Submitting the Application via DocuSign

The PI must be the person completing the application as s/he will be required to sign prior to submission. The PI should have all documents finalized and ready to be uploaded *before* starting the DocuSign process. DocuSign supports multiple file extensions and attachments so files do not have to be combined before submission, and they will still route together as one envelope.

Click here for more information on supported files.

The application is a simple one-page form that serves as the cover sheet for signature routing. It looks like this:

1. Before starting the application form in DocuSign, please have the following documents/information ready:

   ⌋ Narrative proposal
   ⌋ References
   ⌋ Budget Summary and Special Budget Justification
   ⌋ Summary of Previous Assistance Received
   ⌋ Letters of support from outside agencies if any are involved
   ⌋ Names and email addresses for each of the following:
      • All Co-PIs (if applicable)
      • PI's department chair
      • PI's college/school dean or designee

2. [Click here to open the Faculty Research Committee Grant Application](#)

3. Enter the signers' names and email addresses (PI, chair, and dean are required; you may leave Co-PI fields blank if none), then click "Begin Signing" at the bottom of the screen.

4. You must agree to DocuSign's electronic record and signature disclosure, which can be accessed by clicking on the hyperlink. To accept, click the checkbox and hit "Continue."

5. Click "Start" to move through the required fields automatically and populate the information. When you get to the attachments section, click on the paperclips to upload the attachments.

6. Once all the fields are populated, click any of the "Finish" buttons.

7. The envelope will route for signatures automatically. Once all approvals are complete, the PI will receive a copy of the final application via email.