



## Faculty Research and Creative Activity Awards

Application and Submission Guidelines

Revised: September 2020

### Submission Guidelines

The focus of the Research and Creative Activity (RCA) program is to provide internal funding for new, innovative, and interdisciplinary research efforts. RCA Funds are intended to address important needs not met by other unit-level support programs and to develop preliminary research that can lead to external funding opportunities.

**Eligibility:** All instructional faculty may apply and applications are evaluated by anonymous subject matter experts. Junior tenure-track faculty will be given priority.

**New Peer Review Process:** RCA proposal review has traditionally been conducted by an all campus committee, with representation from each school and college. Beginning in 2020-2021, peer review will be conducted by **anonymous** internal U-M peer reviewers. The UMF Office of Research will use the university's competition space, InfoReady, to solicit online peer reviews. With more direct subject matter feedback (from experts in the same fields of research) proposals will benefit from substantive feedback and recommendations for improvement (much like the peer review publication process). Applicants may also recommend independent peer reviewers during the application process. UMF Office of Research will work with U-M Office of Research staff to help identify appropriate peer reviewers (across the 3 U-M campuses) based on the subject matter of RCA applications.

Key considerations during review include:

- **Significance:** potential impact or scholarly merit is clear.
- **Innovation:** potential to develop novel concepts, approaches or technology
- **Approach:** design, methods and analytical strategies are appropriate to achieve goals
- **Investigator(s):** PI, co-investigators are well suited to carry out the project, with appropriate experience and training

**Deadlines:** No specific submission deadlines will set in advance. The RCA competitions will be conducted on a rolling basis during the academic year. Applicants will generally receive notification of the funding decisions within 12 weeks of their submission date. And should allow for sufficient lead time to meet anticipated project start dates accordingly.

Application materials must be submitted using the UM-Flint InfoReady Review portal, <https://umflint.infoready4.com/>, which allows for electronic collection of application details, proposal documents and electronic approval signatures from the Department Chair and Dean.

RCA proposal narratives will be limited to **5 single-spaced pages** (with text no smaller than 11 point Calibri and margins no smaller than 1 inch). Budget documents should be 1 page in length. Budget justifications (explaining the expenses proposed and the basis for the cost estimates) are limited to 2 pages. Biosketches or abbreviated curriculum vitae (CV) must be no longer than 2 pages (similar to NIH, NSF or NEH submission criteria). See biosketch examples posted on our webpage and see <http://orsp.umich.edu/research-proposals-biosketches> for a discussion of ways to highlight your expertise. References and other supporting materials (survey questionnaires, etc.) will be excluded from the proposal narrative page limit.

### **Proposal Narrative:**

The proposal narrative must be *paginated* and include the following sections.

#### **1) Project abstract:**

State the objectives, methods, timing and outcomes in a short summary paragraph. Please keep the project abstract to a single paragraph.

#### **2) Project Narrative:**

- a) *Background and Significance:*** State the primary aims or key research questions that the project will address. For *humanities and arts* disciplines, provide a literature review or an artist's statement detailing the significance of the proposed work to the field and how it will break new ground. For other *research* proposals, describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, experiments or treatments will improve current knowledge and practice.
- b) *Innovation:*** Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research practice or paradigms. Describe any novel concepts, approaches, methods, measurement or practices that will move beyond current knowledge, fill important gaps in the body of disciplinary knowledge, or artistic expression (ie., artistic communities, arts education, dance, literature, media arts, museums, music, theater and visual arts).
- c) *Approach:*** Provide an overview of the study aims or objectives of the project and explain the benchmarks for self-evaluation. This section is written with comprehensive paragraphs to illustrate *how* each definable objective will be achieved and measured. Describe the research methods or creative process to be used to achieve the study aims. This section should convey enough "step-by-step" detail to convince peer reviewers of the validity of the approach but stay broad enough to explain the approach to non-specialists on a cross-disciplinary review panel.
- d) *Impact Statement and Future Plans:*** Explain how your proposed project will advance your research potential and progress. How does it fit into the career arc of your intellectual interests and future plans? In what ways might the current project lead to future funding opportunities, or help identify funding sources that will allow you to continue or advance your research going forward.

- e) *Timeline:*** Provide a proposed timeline (i.e., chart or graph of project milestones by time period) that illustrates the progress expected for each study aim or activity. Proposed projects generally range between 1 and 2 years.

**Budget:**

Project budget requests are limited to no more than \$20,000. The UMF Office of Research will only consider funding requests that reflect **reasonable and necessary costs** to achieve project objectives. The Office of Research may offer less than the original requested amount based on scholarly merit, practicality of the request and available funds.

Provide a descriptive Budget Narrative that explains each of the following categories as included in the project budget request:

**1) Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-investigator compensation:**

Principal investigators and co-investigators must be UM-Flint faculty. Descriptions of personnel should include their project role. Salary rates can be confirmed with the Office of Research or your departmental office.

*Re-assigned time requests (Fall or Winter Semesters):* RCA funds can be requested to cover one-ninth of your 9-month effort during a given academic year, plus benefits, to fund a single 3 credit course release. Please be sure to include the signed Reassigned Time Request Form with your RCA grant application.

*Spring or Summer stipends:* up to a maximum of \$5,000 plus benefits. PI and/or Co-PI cannot receive spring/summer research stipends during periods when they are also teaching.

**2) Research assistance:**

Whenever possible, it is expected that students on the UM-Flint campus will benefit from RCA funds by being hired as research assistants on projects. Services purchased from off-campus must be carefully explained in the budget narrative.

**3) FICA and fringe benefits:**

Applicants should factor FICA and fringe benefits into their requests.

**a) *FICA:***

Students working during **Fall and Winter** semesters: UM-Flint **undergraduate** students are **exempt from** FICA if they are enrolled for **6 or more** credit hours during the semester in which they work. UM-Flint **graduate** students are **exempt from** FICA if they are enrolled for **4 or more** credit hours during the semester in which they work.

Students working during the **Spring and Summer** semesters: UM-Flint **undergraduate** students are **exempt from FICA** if they are enrolled for **3 or more** credit hours during the semester in which they work. UM-Flint **graduate** students are **exempt from FICA** if they are enrolled for **2 or more** credit hours during the semester in which they work.

\*The only exception to the above is that all graduate students working on their theses and graduating seniors will be exempt from FICA tax withholding during the terms in which they are enrolled for 1 or more credit hours.

Non-students: Non-student employees are not exempt from FICA and require a payment of FICA in addition to the hourly wage they will earn. FICA is calculated at the rate of 7.65% (.0765 x hourly wage).

**b) Fringe Benefits:**

*Re-assigned time requests:* If a re-assigned time (rather than spring or summer salary) is being requested (e.g. during the 9 month academic year), the average cost of fringe benefits for **faculty/staff** can be estimated to be 30% (0.3) of the annual salary. Please contact the Office of Research at (6-6839) for a more precise calculation of your benefit costs.

*Spring or Summer (up to \$5,000) stipend requests:* Because the university covers *health insurance* costs for faculty/staff throughout the year, these costs are calculated proportionally into fringe benefits. Fringe benefits for salaries requested during the Spring or Summer semesters (e.g. up to a maximum of \$5,000) can be estimated as follows:

For faculty members in their first year at UM-Flint, apply a rate of 20% (0.2) when calculating fringe benefits.

For faculty members who have been at UM-Flint for a year or longer, apply a rate of 30% (0.3) when calculating fringe benefits.

Please contact the Grants and Contracts Accountant in the Office of Research for a more precise calculation of your benefit costs.

**4) Itemized Expendable Supplies:**

Laboratory supplies, office supplies, etc.

**5) Permanent equipment:**

Specify and justify major items of equipment to be purchased. Be sure to include any shipping charges. Demonstrate that equipment requested is not available for use from any other source (e.g. a nearby campus, other department, etc.). Ordinary office equipment, including desktop computers, is NOT eligible. In rare cases, funds may be requested for highly specialized computer hardware/software. On completion of the project, all equipment becomes the property of the department of the university.

**6) Travel and Subsistence (post-COVID) <sup>\*</sup> :****a) *Travel to conduct research, to performance sites, etc.:***

Grants may include costs of travel to research/performance sites, field work, etc. Cost estimates should include number of travel days, destinations, travel mode, etc. Two airfare estimates are required. The current University mileage reimbursement rate applies. Lodging is to be budgeted at the cost of reasonable single occupancy, and meals are limited to \$50 per day unless special circumstances require an increased amount.

The University Standard Practice Guide SPG 507.10-1 (<http://spg.umich.edu>) provides information about documenting and reporting travel and subsistence expenditures and should be consulted in advance of your trip.

If your project involves International travel, please consult the University Standard Practice Guide SPG 601.31 at [spg.umich.edu](http://spg.umich.edu) while developing your proposal.

**b) *Dissemination costs:***

Anticipated travel costs to present the results of the research project at professional meetings is allowed as a part of the original RCA grant. Travel costs requests that exceed 10% of the total budget are not allowable. Publications costs for open source or other publications costs are allowable under the dissemination costs budget item, provided the estimated costs are matched by the home academic department or unit on a 1:1 basis.

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Department Chair approval via InfoReady must be secured before the proposal is sent out for peer review. UMF Office of Research will arrange for Dean approval. Please submit any questions about the application process to: [research.flint@umich.edu](mailto:research.flint@umich.edu).

\* Currently, travel cost restrictions apply because of internal U-M financial limits on internal spending, due to COVID-19. See U-M Office of Research guidance on research operations at <https://www.research.umich.edu/covid-19/covid-19-research-operations>

1. Research travel, conferences, hosting, professional development are not allowable research expenses on internal UM accounts, currently, as of 9/01/2020.
2. Events, marketing and advertising, outside printing, subscriptions, prizes, gifts and awards, and supplies (all categories, including office, computer) require justification that they are needed and urgent to complete the current aims of the internally funded project.