



Sponsored Programs

A&M-COMMERCE

Research Strategic Plan FY19

Our Mission

The Office of Sponsored Programs is dedicated to assisting faculty in the acquisition of extramural funds, promoting a vibrant and supportive environment for scholarly activities, and fostering ethical conduct in research.

Objectives for FY19

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) has three primary objectives during FY19, as detailed in the sections below

- Grow and Diversify our research portfolio
- Advance Strategic Communication
- Improve processes for OSP operations

Grow and Diversify our Research Portfolio

With a change in administration and recent classification as a Carnegie R2 (Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity) institution, A&M-Commerce is in the process of transforming to become a more research-intensive university. The primary purpose of this document is to outline a strategic plan and culture change focused on actions that will increase extramural sponsored research funding. There are several reasons to focus on extramural sponsored research funds:

- Extramural sponsored research funds bring much needed financial support to researchers to conduct their research activities – it allows researchers to purchase equipment, to hire students and postdoctoral researchers, and travel to collaborate and disseminate research results.
- Extramural sponsored research will provide students with research experience and increase their knowledge base.
- Extramural sponsored research helps introduce our students to the forefront of scholarly activity, either directly as a participant, or via classes with funded faculty.

- The amount of extramural sponsored research expenditures is a common metric by which research universities are ranked.
- Extramural sponsored projects contribute to new knowledge, the local economy via salary lines, and direct expenditures.

While the amount of extramural funds received is viewed as an indicator of research productivity for a university, the real value of extramural funds is that they help provide the PIs the personnel, equipment, and travel funds needed to achieve their research goals. It is incumbent upon the university to ensure that our researchers who receive extramural sponsored research funds are granted the time required to achieve their research goals. In this document, I focus on strategies that we can implement to help grow our extramural sponsored research funds, recognizing that this is but one imprecise measure of research and scholarly excellence. By necessity, this will be a ‘bootstrap’ process, given that our capacity to implement some of the recommendations below will be limited by available funds – as our extramural sponsored research grows, our ability to foster additional growth will increase in tandem.

Specific Recommendations

1. OSP will support faculty capacity to submit competitive proposals. It has always been the role of OSP to support faculty ability to submit competitive proposals, but we can improve on the process. We are working to identify faculty with a strong potential to prepare and submit competitive proposals, and we will provide support in the form of reassigned time so those identified faculty can have the time required to prepare competitive proposals (OSP will reimburse those faculty’s departments for the cost of hiring an adjunct). Priority will be given to tenure-track faculty. We have two grant writers that we hire as needed to help support the preparation of the non-technical aspects of grant proposals
2. ProQuest Pivot training for all faculty members, including helping all faculty members set up a Pivot portfolio. Pivot is an online resource that enables PIs to quickly and easily identify funding opportunities relevant to their research and/or creative interests. Pivot integrates both funding and collaboration into a single tool, so that researchers can effectively discover potential collaborators and secure funding.
3. In areas where extramural sponsored research funding is available, incorporate sponsored project award metrics in performance evaluations for merit raises, and for tenure and promotion (T&P) decisions. For example, we recommend that departments with research disciplines that are commonly funded require the submission of a grant proposal to an external funding agency as a component of the third-year T&P dossier as well as the sixth-year T&P dossier. It may not be appropriate to require that extramural funding be secured, but if a faculty member in an NSF- or NIH-funded research field has not submitted any proposals by their sixth-year T&P review, the university likely does not want to grant tenure to that individual. Absent of a requirement that extramural funding requests are submitted, a department that listed only a minimum publication requirement might be obligated to recommend tenure for a faculty member that would not be active in seeking extramural funding to support their research.

4. Implement adjustments in workload proportional to the amount of extramural funding to incentivize the submission of competitive grant proposals. If we are to substantially grow our research profile, our researchers must have time to perform their research activities. Our nominal 12 SCH per semester undergraduate teaching load is not conducive to research productivity. We recommend the university shift to a workload policy that rewards extramural-funded research-active faculty with the reduced teaching loads consistent with their research activity. A faculty member that is awarded some modest extramural funding (that generates F&A cost recovery) should receive a one-course reassigned time per year, and that substantial annual expenditures (and associated F&A cost recovery) should result in further reductions in teaching obligations. We recommend that only faculty that completely buy out their annual salaries with extramural funding be permitted to reduce their teaching responsibilities to zero courses per academic year. In such a case, the department would be able to hire a visiting faculty member for the duration of the grant using salary savings.
5. Incentivize grant submission through our Proposal Submission Incentive (PSI) program. We implemented this program early in FY19, so it is too early to determine how effective this program may be in the future, but we note that as of 1 October 2018 we have had 2 PIs receive PSI funds totaling \$1,900. The PSI rewards proposal submissions with the funding of a Research Incentive Account. Awards range from \$200 for a \$15,000 submission to \$1,500 for a submission of \$1M or more.
6. We are implementing a variation of a Boise State program that rewards faculty directly with supplemental pay when they use extramural funds. Our program is named the *Faculty Research Incentive Pay Program (FRIPP)*. The core incentive of the FRIPP program is that up to 50% of salary savings generated by a faculty member who uses extramural funds to “buy out” courses may be paid directly to the faculty member at the end of the fiscal year.
 - a. Example: Dr. Brown has a 9-month appointment with a base salary of \$80,000. She receives extramural funding for salary support of \$10,000 for the Fall term (25%), and negotiates with her department head to reduce her teaching workload proportionally. The cost to hire an adjunct to teach one of Dr. Brown’s classes is \$3,000. The net salary savings are \$7,000. At the end of the fiscal year, Dr. Brown may receive up to \$3,500 in incentive pay (50% of the net salary savings).

We have announced the program to the deans and department heads.

Advance Strategic Communication

[this section is about getting the word out – Donna’s been doing a great job on this with website and social media – we need to get more collaboration with MarComm, and Scott Cason indicated this week that they have 2 new writers on board now, so that can be a start]

OSP has a presence on social media (Facebook and Twitter), and works with MarComm to get the word out about our research and funding successes.

OSP maintains and continually updates our website that supports our mission and which provides easy navigation to all of our services and information.

OSP will be working with MarComm to produce an annual research magazine.

OSP is implementing a TED-style lecture series, starting in Spring 2019. The series (tentatively called Lion Lecture Series) will be held at The Club on the 4th Thursday of the month. There will be two speakers per night, each talking for about 20 minutes about something interesting in their area (e.g., a biologist might talk about CRISPR technology, or an engineer might talk about micro machines). The idea is to provide a forum for our faculty to get to know faculty from other departments and for our students and community members to get to know us better. We've discussed these ideas with MarComm and will likely try to video the events so they can be put on our website.

OSP is working with MarComm to help identify the researchers who can be interviewed for a planned podcast series.

Improve Processes for OSP Operations

We have been working to improve our processes. We will continue to train departments and faculty to use Pivot and to alert specific faculty with extramural funding information that may be pertinent to their research. We have asked all department heads to let us visit their regular department meetings so we can do a quick demonstration of Pivot and discuss how OSP can help their faculty identify extramural funding opportunities, and help them prepare and submit a competitive proposal.

Our university PIs report a high level of satisfaction with their interactions with OSP staff, and we will continue to provide top-shelf service and support.

Our new Administrative Coordinator, Leah Kanaman, will assist with seeking funding opportunities for faculty – we've sent out email to department heads to forward to faculty, asking the faculty to forward the keywords that will help OSP find funding opportunities.

OSP will work towards identifying interdisciplinary initiatives to increase the likelihood of receiving extramural funding and advancing team-based research.

OSP will work with the regional agencies to improve community development when possible and make an impact in our community's future.

OSP (Wood, Kinnaird, Russell, Denton, and Kanaman) meet bi-weekly with Financial Services (Hansen, Baker, Robinson, and Neill) to discuss pre/post-award issues, both general and specific. Starting October 2018, we are now inviting Advancement (Beatty) to these meetings as well.

OSP hopes to work with Advancement to update our Gift vs. Grant document, and to have this document indicate that both offices are in agreement to its content.