

VPR GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT FOR TENURE-TRACK FACULTY START-UP PACKAGES

Introduction

Start-up packages are an essential component of recruiting exceptional tenure-track faculty to Iowa State University (ISU). They provide direct support for establishing a research program and signal the institution's commitment to the faculty member's future success.

When a tenure-track faculty member is expected to pursue external research funding as part of their responsibilities, partial financial support for the start-up package may be requested from the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR). Start-up funds are provided as three-year internal cost-sharing grants to assist a new faculty member in accelerating their research progress and pursuing significant sponsored funding as they start their ISU employment.

The purpose of the VPR's contribution is to help a tenure-track faculty member establish a successful externally funded research program at ISU. In return, the faculty member is expected to actively pursue external research funding from agencies and sponsors that are aligned with the faculty member's research program. As an institutional investment, start-up packages are expected to provide returns that include sponsored funding, advancement of research and related education and outreach programs, and visibility for the faculty, their departments and colleges, and the institution.

ISU augments the financial component of tenure-track faculty start-up packages with a range of mentorship and research services provided by departments, colleges and central administration, including the OVPR. To facilitate a new faculty member's sponsored funding success, the VPR provides mentorship and support via its faculty development programs, the Grants Hub, and individual consultations.

Planning for Tenure-track Faculty Start-up Support Discussions

Because colleges, departments and prospective tenure-track faculty have differing needs, there is considerable variation across campus in what constitutes a start-up package. At the same time, there are broad considerations that affect nearly all discussions and planning for a start-up package, which we outline below.

Faculty start-up packages are part of the negotiation process when a candidate has been selected for hire. Although discussions about what is needed to establish a funded research program may happen at any stage of the recruitment process, substantive negotiations with a candidate start when a departmental representative informs the candidate that s/he is interested in the candidate and wants to understand what it takes to recruit the candidate to ISU.

As a part of planning for start-up costs, the chair should review research plans with the prospective faculty member and signal the expectation to pursue externally funded research agreements.

For new tenure-eligible assistant professors, the discussion should focus on early career research goals, possible approaches to establishing a successful research program, and potential funding sponsors.

For tenured faculty candidates, a similar discussion should be held within the context of the anticipated role for the candidate, such as a leadership role, establishing a new research focus, and contributing to

an existing priority research area. The candidate should also be asked to provide information on current awards and proposals, whether or not they will be transferred to ISU, and any special conditions or obligations associated with the agreements (along with any other contractual relationships that may exist with the previous institution).

Tenured and/or senior faculty hires or new hires with relatively large start-up packages for a given department are required to be interviewed by the VPR or VPR representative during their campus visit.

Most start-up packages include one or more of the following components:

- Summer salary or course buy-out
- Graduate research assistant, post-doctoral fellow, or other personnel
- Small equipment such as computer, printer, or other small instruments
- Travel to agencies, professional meetings
- Moving costs
- Major equipment

If the prospective faculty member indicates that major equipment is needed, the specific type of equipment should be identified, and the hiring unit should evaluate whether the equipment that already exists on campus can be leveraged. If no suitable equipment exists, the hiring unit should identify whether there are other potential users of the equipment on campus (e.g., other research groups or new research topics that are enabled by equipment). The VPR is prepared to help in gathering information on the presence of equipment elsewhere on campus or on its potential use by other researchers.

For any tenure-track faculty candidate with VPR start-up funding, the offer letter should include the expectation to pursue an externally sponsored funded research program. The [template](#) found in Workday includes draft language for such an expectation.

Requesting VPR Funding for Faculty-Start-up Support

Faculty start-up requests originate in the hiring department, and require approval from the appropriate college office(s) and other collaborating units before being submitted to the VPR. Start-up package requests are coordinated for OVPR by a designated Associate VPR, who works with the Associate Dean for Research in the college submitting the request to resolve any questions.

The default proportion for the OVPR contribution is 1/3 of the start-up cost. Deviations from this guideline must be discussed with the VPR or designated Associate VPR prior to submitting the request.

VPR strives for rapid turn-around of the request, typically in 1-2 days for a new assistant professor and potentially longer for more complex senior hire packages. VPR reviews the request for the amount specified for VPR, as well as the CV, in part to become familiar with future research needs signaled by incoming faculty. VPR does not review how the package is divided among other partners, nor does it review start-up letters or budget plans for the start-up request. If there are questions, the Associate VPR will contact the Associate Dean for Research from the college submitting the form.

Once approval has been granted, a representative of the OVPR will sign the form and route it to the VPR Fiscal Officer. The VPR Fiscal Officer will route approved documentation to the relevant Department Chairs and College Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Fiscal Officers, and HR Liaisons.

A meeting between the candidate and the VPR or VPR representative during the interview process is required for large start-up packages and senior hires. The VPR or representative is also available to visit with any candidate during the interview and recruiting process.

Completing the Faculty Start-up Request Form

OVPR start-up funding requests are submitted using DocuSign. Initiating the request requires entering names and emails for requestors, reviewers and approvers; providing information about the candidate and their CV; and then submitting the form for routing.

To request VPR start-up funding, click on the [Adobe Acrobat Sign form](#) and follow these instructions:

1. The person completing the form should enter their name and email as the requestor.
2. Enter names and emails for the following roles:
 - a. Fiscal Officer (reviewer)
 - b. Associate Dean (reviewer)
 - c. Chair 1 (approver)
 - d. Chair 2 (approver if position is affiliated with two departments)
 - e. Dean 1 or delegate (approver)
 - f. Dean 2 or delegate (approver if position is affiliated with two colleges)
3. Click 'Begin Signing'
4. Enter all information assigned to the requestor role on page 1 of the form.
5. Attach the Candidate's CV, a document addressing grant expectations and mentoring plan, and, if applicable, equipment needs, at the bottom of page 1
6. Click 'Finish' below the form or at the top of the page
7. DocuSign will then route the form for all required signatures

Terminations and Extensions of Faculty Start-up Packages

Faculty Startup Funds are expected to be utilized within three years of funding. Any request to extend beyond three years must be approved by the Dean or Associate Dean for Research (ADR) and submitted by email to Jeremy Nepl and the approving Dean/ADR.

- Fourth year extension requests will be granted only under extenuating circumstances, such as long-term FMLA, and with approval from Dean/ADR. Requests for a 4th year of funding availability must include a brief justification for each faculty member for whom the college is requesting an extension (e.g., FMLA for 6 months, leading to an extension of tenure clock). If such a justification does not exist or the extension is denied, remaining funding will revert to units in proportion to amounts contributed to the total package per original guidance.