

VPR GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT FOR FACULTY START-UP PACKAGES

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Contact: Office of the Vice President for Research

Introduction

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

When a 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 (VPR). The purpose of the VPR's contribution is to help a 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 faculty start-up packages with a range of mentorship and research services provided by departments, colleges and central administration, including the VPR. 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 Faculty Start-up Support Discussions

Because colleges, departments and prospective 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 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 to be interviewed by the VPR 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 already exists on campus that 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 faculty candidate with VPR start-up funding, the offer letter should include the expectation to pursue an externally sponsored funded research program. The Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost (SVPP) has developed a [sample offer letter](#) with 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 VPR 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 VPR contribution is 1/3 of the start-up cost. Deviations from this guideline must be discussed with the VPR prior to submitting the request.

To request VPR start-up funding:

- 1) Complete page 1 of the VPR Request Form for Faculty Start-Up Funds found [here](#).

The form asks for funding amounts to be specified by source in each fiscal year. Required signatures include the department chair(s) and corresponding college representative(s) as specified by the college's internal procedures (Dean, Associate Dean for Research, or Fiscal Officer).

- 2) Submit the signed form, the Candidate's CV, a document addressing grant expectations and mentoring plan, and, if applicable, equipment needs, to the request link [here](#).

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 VPR will sign the form and forward it to the VPR Fiscal Officer. The VPR Fiscal Officer will scan and send the approved request to the relevant Department Chairs and College Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Fiscal Officers, and HR Liaisons.

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