

The Basic Assistance Grant – the Federal Research Chair (Draft of 12/8/03)

BACKGROUND

The focus of this FRC grant mechanism is on facilitating research and grants administration of outstanding researchers who are supported from multiple federally grants. Excellent scientists are typically engaged in a range of research activities involving a number of students, postdocs, and collaborators. The research program of successful researchers cannot be supported by an individual grant. The proliferation of grants needed support the larger research program is inefficient for both the researcher and the administrator. Researchers struggle to provide non-overlapping specific aims for each grant while administrators are required to maintain separate accounting for each grant. While inefficient, multiple funding sources do have the advantage of affording the successful researcher with a measure of financial security in keeping the research program going in the event that a single grant is not funded. An important aspect of this funding mechanism is the preservation or enhancement of the present levels of financial security gained from being supported by multiple funding sources.

SCOPE

Researchers in the physical, natural, social, and biomedical sciences and engineering can be nominated for Federal Research Chairs by their Universities. The criteria include: 1) scientific merit; 2) relevance to the mission and areas of research interests of the federal agencies; 3) multiple grants; 4) a minimum of 2 years of remaining funding; and 4) a total annual research portfolio at the time of nomination that is greater than \$500,000 direct costs.

A Chair is the title granted to scientists and scholars who are at the forefront of their disciplines. The goal of Federal Research Chairs is to advance the frontiers of knowledge within their fields, not only through their own work, but also by coordinating the efforts of other researchers within their area of research.

There are two levels of Federal Research Chairs:

- Level 1 Chairs are awarded to experienced researchers whose peers acknowledge them as world leaders in their field. These appointments are worth \$200,000 a year for a period of seven years and are renewable.
- Level 2 Chairs are for researchers whose peers acknowledge them as having the potential to be world leaders in their field. These appointments are worth \$100,000 a year for a period of five years, and can be renewed once.

MECHANISMS OF SUPPORT

- 1) US scientists with extensive funding from federal agencies are eligible to be nominated as Federal Research Chairs. Nominations are reviewed by the federal agency supplying the largest amount of the scientist's current support.
- 2) The university must maintain a single individual account for each Federal Research Chair grant which contains funds from all federal grants active at the time of the award and those subsequently awarded during the period of the Federal Research Chair grant.
- 3) Scientific reporting requirements for each federal grant existing at the time of the award and those subsequently awarded during the period of the Federal Research Chair grant are unaffected by a Federal Research Chair grant.
- 4) The FRC mechanism is an institutional award, made in the name of the Federal Research Chair, for the support of multiple, concurrent research projects involving a single investigator. Funds are provided either for the direct support of existing research projects or for the integration of existing projects in a specialized area of research or within a central theme.

HOW TO APPLY

Universities nominate a researcher whose work meets the rigorous criteria of excellence for either a Level 1 or a Level 2 Chair. Nominations will be reviewed by a team of reviewers selected by the federal agency. The number of Chairs a university can nominate is proportional to the federal funding that researchers affiliated with that university have recently received.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITIES

Universities must submit an annual report on the management of their Federal Research Chairs and the progress made in integrating existing projects and facilitating research and grants administration. For each Federal Research Chair award, universities must submit an annual financial report.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHAIRHOLDERS

Chairholders are not required to provide annual progress reports, but must provide whatever information their university requires to complete its annual report. If the Chair is to be renewed at the end of its five- or seven-year term, a progress report must accompany the nomination. If the Chair is not to be renewed, the Chairholder must submit a final activity report within six months after the termination of the award.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES INCLUDE :

- the FRC's salary and non-discretionary benefits (including bonuses or merit increases);

- the salaries and non-discretionary benefits of members of the incumbent's team (students at all levels, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, technicians, clerks, secretaries, research assistants) in accordance with each funding agency's rules;
- the costs of teaching replacement for the Chairholder only, including compensation to a department for one of its faculty members to teach one or more of the Chairholder's courses.
- the cost of travel, workshops, computing, expendables, publications, materials and supplies for the Chairholder or members of the research team;
- travel and accommodation expenses for speakers invited to research conferences and workshops;
- fees for memberships in scholarly associations related to the Chairholder's field of research;
- the cost of professional and technical services;
- the cost of acquiring, operating and maintaining research equipment and other resources required for research
- administrative costs related to the Chair (for proposal writing, technology transfer, libraries, research services, financial management, human resources).