RESEARCH/CREATIVE ACTIVITY (RCA) GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must follow the guidelines and instructions below. Applications are reviewed and funds are awarded by the University Research Council (URC) and managed by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP). The URC may choose not to review a proposal that does not meet the specifications stated in this document.

Applicants should also review the separate “Policies and Procedures for Awarding Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grants” for scoring criteria and more details about the program.

Applicants may seek advice from URC members or from ORSP in preparing a proposal. It is strongly encouraged that advice be sought prior to the deadline for submitting a proposal to the applicant's academic departmental chair. ORSP will notify applicants of any deviations from the proposal guidelines as time allows up until the final deadline, but ultimate responsibility for adherence to guidelines rests with the applicant.

For purposes of this competition, research is defined as “a systematic study directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied.” Creative activity is defined as the preparation and execution of original works designed to advance artistic accomplishment, principally in art, music, theater, dance, and similar areas. Summer salaries are intended to compensate faculty members while they conduct intensive project activities during the term in which they are paid.

Eligibility: Individuals with a full-time academic appointment as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, and librarian I-IV are eligible.

Time Line: The annual RCA competition is held during the fall semester. Funded proposals are carried out in the spring and summer semesters (January – August).

Application Categories: Applications are divided into the below two categories and are evaluated based on separate criteria: 1. Research and 2. Creative Activity.

Allowable Costs: In addition to faculty 6-week summer salary, funding up to $10,000 is allowable for the following purposes:

- Travel to collect data
- Supplies and materials
- Minor equipment (non-capital)
- Specific services (i.e. contract services, translator, sample analysis, etc.)
- Hourly wages and benefits for student assistants
- Wages and benefits to other staff to assist in the project
- Expendable materials, supplies, chemicals/reagents
- Travel to collect data (travel to conferences is not allowed nor is student travel)
- Contractual and other expenses.

Itemize and justify all line items requested in the budget justification section of the grant application.

Note: All items purchased are the property of SFA, not the investigator. At the conclusion of an award, all items purchased using RCA funds may continue to be used by the faculty member. In the event that the faculty member leaves SFA, the items remain with the department of the faculty member.

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1 From the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board rules, Chapter 13. Financial Planning, Subchapter G. Research Development Fund
**Unallowable Costs:** Activities/items that are never eligible for REP support, regardless of worthiness, include:

- Development or evaluation of curricular materials or instructional support.
- Personal computers, printers, and portable communication devices (upgrades or software will be considered if directly related to research activities; laptops or computers required for field or advanced computational work may be considered with adequate justification);
- Materials for routine use in academic courses;
- Professional or support staff salaries;
- Professional development activities, including speaker fees;
- Program development, curriculum development, or related evaluation activities;
- Non-faculty requests (students or staff), or requests from lecturers, adjunct or visiting faculty;
- University limitations on the use of the funds (e.g., non-per diem food, door prizes, gifts, participant support);
- Support for faculty dissertations or student theses and dissertations;
- Salary for research assistantships/graduate student appointments. Faculty that will require a full-time GRA in order to conduct the research activity should contact ORSP to discuss alternative funding options.

In addition, requested funds should not supplant other funding sources (i.e. department, state, federal).

**Number of Awards:** The number total amount of each award is dependent on the amount of funds available annually through the Research Enhancement Program. This amount is approved by the Board of Regents in the annual SFA budget.
Instructions for Preparing a Faculty Research/Creative Activity Grant Proposal

A proposal must be prepared according to the following instructions:

A. Formatting
1. Type or word-process the proposal on 8½ x 11-inch white paper.
2. Use one-inch margins on all sides.
3. The print must be clear and legible and no more than 15 characters per inch (e.g., Times Roman 12 or Arial 11).
4. Single sided

B. Submission
Submit 1 original and 10 copies to your Dean - prepared at individual or departmental expense.
The dean retains one copy for his/her files and submits the original and 9 copies to ORSP no later than the published deadline.

C. Proposal
Outline the proposed approach to the problem.

Place the proposal sections in the following order:
1. Cover page (standard form)
2. Budget justification
3. Abstract
4. Narrative (limited to 10 pages)
   a. objectives or specific aims
   b. literature review
   c. project justification
   d. methodology or procedures/plan of operation/activities
   e. work schedule
   f. expected outcomes
   g. proposed evaluation
   h. plans for dissemination
5. Bibliography/references
6. Appendices (if any) - For resubmissions, include a description of how reviewer comments were addressed
7. Vita for PI
8. Vita for Co-PI, if applicable

D. Budget Justification: Written explanation of budget line items. See the next section, “Cover Page and Budget Summary Instructions” for more detail.
   • No page limit.
   • Single- or double-spaced.

Justification contains the following sections, in this order:
1. Investigator’s salary
2. Student Assistant
3. Other salaries
4. Operating supplies
5. Purchases over $500 each
6. Travel to collect data
7. Contractual
8. Other

E. Abstract: Brief yet thorough explanation of the proposed project.
   • Max word count: 200 words
   • Single- or double-spaced.
F. **Narrative:** Does not include the cover page, line item budget justification, abstract, bibliography/references, appendices, and vita.

- 10-page limit
- Double-spaced.
- Page numbering begins with the narrative section.
- Pages should be numbered at the top right or bottom center of each page

Narrative contains the following sections in this order:
1. Objective or specific aims
2. Literature review, as appropriate
3. Project justification*
4. Methodology or procedures/plan of operation/activities
5. Work schedule (single space with double spacing between the dates)
6. Expected outcomes
7. Proposal evaluation
8. Plans for dissemination

*If your discipline is considered creative and you are applying for a research project, or your academic field is considered research based and you are applying for a creative activity, your narrative should also explain why your project meets the criteria for that proposal type.*

Bibliography/references and Appendices may be single-spaced and no page limits.

G. **Vita**

- May be single-spaced
- Page limit: two, one-sided pages.

H. Compile the pages into complete sets, including all attachments, and staple each set in the upper left-hand corner or use a bulldog clip. Please use no other bindings, folders, or covers.

I. Revisions to the proposal (based on comments from your department chair, dean, ORSP, or college advisory committee) may be made up until the final submission to ORSP.
Cover Page and Budget Summary/Justification Instructions

You may obtain the cover page from ORSP or from ORSP's Web site: http://www.sfasu.edu/orsp/ internal.html. Contact ORSP at extension 6606 with any questions.

1a. Proposal Title: Enter the project title.

1b. Proposal Type: Select either “Research” OR “Creative Activity.”

2. Applicant Name: Enter your name (investigator) in the first column. If applicable, enter the name of the co-investigator in the second column.

3. Department: Enter the investigator’s academic department/office in the first column. If there is a co-investigator, enter the academic department/office in the second column.

4. Est. Time per Week on Project - Long Terms: Enter the number of hours per week that the investigator, and co-investigator if applicable, will spend working on the project during the long semesters. Specify by semester. Example: 4 hrs/wk in fall and spring.

5. Investigator Summer salary: Each participating faculty member may request salary and benefits for up to 100% of one summer session, 50% for two summer sessions, or may elect to receive no summer compensation from the project.

   Select whether you will require summer salary from the grant or not. If awarded, ORSP will confirm with you, your department, and Human Resources in the spring which session(s) you will work on the project.

   You cannot receive salary in any one summer session that exceeds your normal rate of pay.

   If both the principal investigator and the co-investigator request salary, explain in your line item budget justification why salary is required for both investigators.

6. Previous RCA Awards: Indicate if you have received an RCA Grant in the past five years. For instance, if you were awarded an RCA during September 1, 2013 – August 31, 2014, select “2014.” If you have not received an RCA for the years listed, do not mark any item.

7. Resubmissions: Indicate if this is a resubmission and that you have incorporated previous URC review comments.

8. New Investigators: For the PI, Indicate if you have been in an RCA-eligible position (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or librarian) for less than five years. Indicate if you have never applied for an RCA before as lead investigator or are resubmitting an RCA proposal.

9-11. Signatures: Sign and date the cover page. If the proposal has an investigator and a co-investigator, both persons must sign and date the cover page. The chair(s) and dean(s) for the investigator and co-investigator must also sign the cover page.

Budget Summary Section and separate Budget Justification

Complete each of the below sections as needed. If no funds are requested for an item, enter ‘0’.

12. Investigator’s Salary: Leave blank.

   Budget Justification: Explain your request but do not calculate an actual salary amount. Your salary and benefits will be calculated based upon the amount and percent of time the URC approves. A salary cap may be imposed by the Council.
13. **Student Assistants**: Enter the amount of wages & fringe benefits needed for undergraduate student assistants.

   **Budget Justification:**
   a. Indicate the number of hours the student(s) will devote and the rate of pay and associated fringe benefits.

   The requested rate of pay rate should be reasonable in relation to the level of work the student will be performing – contact your department administrative assistant with any questions concerning what your department typically pays for that type of work. You must pay at least minimum wage (currently $7.25/hour).

   Calculate benefits at 2% of salary. Please note that actual benefits incurred will be charged to your award and may reduce the total amount available. If a student does not have a full summer load, benefits increase to 7.65% of salary.

   b. Outline the student’s responsibilities

14. **Other Salaries**: Enter the amount requested for other SFA employees (non-student) who would be paid to work on your project. This may include a statistician, analysis of samples, etc. Benefits of 16.45% should also be included in this total. Please note that actual benefits incurred will be charged to your award and may reduce the total amount available.

   **Budget Justification**: Explain who will be paid, at what pay rate, the number of hours, and outline their responsibilities. Faculty/staff cannot receive salary that exceeds their normal rate of pay.

15. **Operating Supplies**: Enter the amount of your request for minor equipment, materials, operating supplies, and chemicals/reagents, if any. Operating supplies include costs for photocopies, postage, long distance calls, lab supplies, microfilm, etc. Remember to include an estimate of shipping and handling costs, as applicable.

   **Budget Justification**: Explain the types of materials requested.

16. **Purchases > $500**: Enter total amount requested.

   **Budget Justification**: Explain each item is, its cost, and why the item is necessary for your project.

17. **Travel to Collect Data**: Enter the total amount of your request for travel to collect data. Do not request travel to present research findings, which may be funded in part through a minigrant the following year. Consult the SFA Travel Office for information on meal, lodging, and mileage calculation rates. Other travel expenses include airfare, parking, and rental car fees. Be sure to detail travel expenses in the budget justification. Student travel cannot be paid using these funds.

   **Budget Justification**: Explain travel costs, either by line item or by trip.

18. **Contractual Expenses**: Enter the total amount of your request for non-SFA services or activities, including sample analysis performed at another institution.

   **Budget Justification**: Detail why the work is required, how the contracted entities are chosen, and the amount each will be paid.

19. **Other**: Enter the total amount for all other costs you are requesting through the grant.

   **Budget Justification**: Detail each item – what you are requesting, the cost, and the purpose.

20. **TOTAL**: If you complete the form electronically, your total budget request will be calculated for you. Otherwise, ensure the line items in the Budget Summary section equal your total.

Leave the “Recommended by Council” column of the Budget Summary section blank.

Check the box “I certify that this project does not directly support the conduct of a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation” as appropriate.