POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR AWARDING RESEARCH/CREATIVE ACTIVITY (RCA) GRANTS

Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grants provide funds for substantive support of research and creative activities and are intended to advance a faculty member’s scholarly activities. They are intended for larger faculty research and creative projects that require more support and time than pilot studies or minigrants.

Applications are reviewed and funds are awarded by the University Research Council (URC) and managed by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

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.

As of FY18, applicants select if they are applying for the Research or Creative Activity funding.

Time Line
The annual RCA competition is held during the fall semester, and funded proposals are carried out in the spring and summer semesters (January – August). The University Research Council (URC) reviews the RCA proposals and makes recommendations to the Provost and VPAA. Approximately 5-7 RCA awards will be made each academic year, depending on the quality of applications and availability of funds.

Application Categories
Applications are divided into the below two categories and are evaluated based on separate criteria:
1. Research
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;
- Non-capital equipment;
- Expendable materials, supplies, chemicals/reagents;
- Travel to collect data (travel to conferences is not allowed nor is student travel); and
- Contractual and other expenses. Contractual expenses must be reasonable.

RCA awards are not for the development or evaluation of curricular materials or instructional support. Summer salaries are intended to compensate faculty members while they conduct intensive project activities during the term in which they are paid. RCA funds do not support graduate student assistant appointments and should not supplant other funding sources (i.e. department, state, federal).

Eligibility and Conditions
1. Individuals with a full-time, tenure-track academic appointment detailed in SFA policy 8.11 are eligible to apply for the RCA Grant. These are: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor, and Librarian I-IV.
2. RCAs will not be awarded for the purpose of obtaining an advanced academic degree and cannot be used to fund student theses or dissertations. This does not preclude the use of RCA funds to hire students at an hourly rate to assist faculty members with their research or creative endeavors.

3. Except in extraordinary circumstances, an applicant is limited to one source of funding (RCA, RGD, RPS, or Minigrant Project Support) in a single year. Furthermore, the recipient of an RCA in a given year is ineligible to apply for a new RCA the following year.

4. New researchers or faculty members who have not utilized the Research Enhancement Grant Program in the past are encouraged to apply and may receive bonus points if they meet the criteria listed under the Criteria sections for each type of proposal.

5. Faculty members who will be on sabbatical or faculty development leave during the term of the award are eligible for an RCA in support of their work if they do not have other financial support, but they are not eligible to receive summer salary.

6. RCAs should be considered seed money and are not intended to support the continuation of research funded from external awards or continuation projects from internal awards (pre-existing awards with a continuing theme), including previous awards from the Research Enhancement Program.

   If applicable, a faculty member who has previously received Research Enhancement funding should justify in the proposal why another internal award is warranted (rather than submitting an application for external funds). To be competitive, the research or creative activity should target a new and/or innovative area or propose innovative approaches to a problem. Initial research to enhance external grant applications is encouraged.

7. For resubmission of a previously unsuccessful RCA application, a faculty member should describe clearly in an addendum to the proposal how the URC’s comments from the previous competition were incorporated into the revised proposal.

8. RCA funds may not be used to pay for research activities or equipment that are, or have been, supported with grant funds from an external sponsor or from university resources (i.e. they cannot be used to supplant).

9. Individuals who have access to research funds from other sources are encouraged to exhaust all alternative funding pathways prior to applying for an RCA.

10. In the expenditure of RCA funds, a recipient is subject to all local, state, and federal fiscal regulations and SFA policies and procedures.

11. Research proposals selected for funding that involve the use of human subjects, laboratory animals, or hazardous materials must be accompanied by a memorandum of approval from the chair of the appropriate university committee prior to award. These committees are: Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Environmental Safety and Health/Radiation Committee, Biosafety Committee, and Public Health Committee.

12. An RCA recipient must attend a brief orientation session with ORSP to review the terms of the grant and to provide an opportunity for the faculty member to ask questions about use of funds, grant accounts, and grant management.

13. An RCA recipient must provide progress and final reports about the project as required ORSP. The final report must consist of a 3-5 page (single or double-spaced) report that includes a
description of project activities and outcomes for each project objective, as well as a 200-word abstract of the research findings or creative outcomes suitable for posting on the ORSP web site.

14. The project should result in faculty publications, grant applications, or other form of scholarly advancement.

15. Any publication, presentation, or exhibition resulting from an RCA shall acknowledge that “The project was conducted under a Stephen F. Austin State University Faculty Research/Creative Activity Grant.”

Awardees are encouraged to provide ORSP with copies of publications, DVDs, or other appropriate media that constitute documentation of a published work or exhibition. Awardees are also encouraged to submit publications to the Center for Digital Scholarships at the Steen Library for submission as a research project in the university’s digital archive ScholarWorks.

URC METHODS OF EVALUATION
Because grant proposals are often improved as a result of internal peer review, the URC strongly recommends that departments and colleges establish peer review procedures. The procedures should be completed in time for the applicant to make revisions prior to the final deadline for proposal submission.

A. Discussion of Proposals
1. In preparation for the first review meeting, URC members should read the proposals and prepare preliminary scores and a list of questions, as applicable.

2. If, after preliminary discussion of a proposal, there are unresolved questions, a member of the URC may be assigned to contact the applicant. This URC member will contact the applicant and will obtain answers to the URC questions. As applicable, the URC will then briefly discuss the proposal again with input from the designated URC member.

3. Final scoring will be completed after the URC discussions are complete.

4. After URC members have completed evaluating the proposals, either the URC Chair or ORSP will compile the scores in the form of a table. The table will have a row for each proposal that lists the numerical scores received for each criterion. Totals, medians, and means will be calculated.

B. Ranking of Proposals
1. After the table of scores has been discussed, URC members will determine the rating cut-off for proposal to be funded and the amount of funding each proposal should receive. After discussion, the voting members of the URC will formulate a funding recommendation that will be adopted if a simple majority of the URC is in favor of the recommendation.

2. With the URC’s recommendation, the URC Chair will submit the Council’s recommendations to the Provost/VPAA for approval.

3. The URC Chair will provide a summary of written comments upon request.

4. All funded and not-funded notifications are done according to the ORSP Research Enhancement Procedures Manual.
Criteria for Evaluating RESEARCH RCA Proposals

The URC will evaluate Research RCA proposals based on the criteria listed below. The written proposal should clearly meet the evaluation criteria to receive a competitive score. The faculty member may discuss his/her proposal and the evaluation criteria with a member of the Council before the final written proposal is submitted to the respective Dean.

A. Significance of the Proposal (30 points)
1. The proposed project should improve the faculty member's knowledge and increase his/her ability to conduct more research in the area of interest or to create further artistic work in the area of interest.

2. The new knowledge gained from the project should be significant to the faculty member's academic discipline. The project should require the use of knowledge and skills usually possessed only by those having terminal degrees in the field.

3. The originality of the research or creative activity often determines its success and recognition. As a result, the project should possess unique characteristics in comparison to similar projects.

4. Once the project is completed, similar projects in the same discipline should follow. In some cases, it may be possible to obtain grant money from outside sources for further research. Such success enhances the University's prestige, provides a better learning environment for its students, and enables the University to better the community at large.

5. Applicants should show how they plan to disseminate the results of the RCA through presentations at professional meetings and/or publications in refereed journals. The project should be designed to lead to further study or an exhibition.

B. Proposed Approach (30 points)
1. The proposal should outline the objectives or specific aims, methodology, plan of operation/activities, expected outcomes, proposed evaluation, and plans for future dissemination.

2. The proposal should clearly describe the proposed procedures. The applicant should provide evidence that other professionals within the field will find the procedures acceptable.

3. The proposal's objectives should be clear, concise, and understandable to the Council members, who may not be specialists in the discipline.

4. The written proposal should follow the prescribed format as described in the "Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grant Application Instructions" (separate document).

5. The applicant must demonstrate knowledge of research or knowledge of existing art/performances within the area of interest by discussing the research findings or works/performances of others who have made significant contributions in the area and cite any relevant literature or critical response.

C. Feasibility of the Proposal (20 points)
1. The proposal should clearly establish a feasible schedule for the proposed project.

2. The applicant should be able to conduct the project within the proposed time period.

3. The applicant should be able to complete the project with the funding requested.
4. The applicant should be able to complete the project with the available physical resources.

D. Applicant's Record (5 points)
1. The applicant should demonstrate his/her ability to carry out the proposed project; therefore, the applicant’s previous success in research or creative activities should be presented clearly in the proposal.

2. In addition, the applicant should list any previous projects, including those supported by an RCA at SFA, in the vita along with any resulting presentations, publications, works, or performances.

E. Budget and Cost Effectiveness (15 points)
The applicant should request an adequate and relevant budget for the proposed project. See the Allowable Costs section and the “Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grant Application Instructions” (separate document).

F. Bonus Points (up to 10)
The University encourages proposals from beginning researchers/artists and new faculty members, as well as new and innovative lines of inquiry from established faculty members.

- Five points will be added for the first RCA application ever submitted by a faculty member (as primary investigator).
- Five points will be added for a faculty member employed by the University in an RCA-eligible position less than five years, including those faculty members who have previously submitted an unsuccessful RCA application.

G. Recommendation
- Fund as submitted.
- Fund with revisions.
- Not recommended for funding, but has merit. Recommend resubmission with revisions in a future competition.
- Not recommended for funding.
Criteria for Evaluating CREATIVE ACTIVITY RCA Proposals

The URC will evaluate Creative Activity RCA proposals based on the criteria listed below. The written proposal should clearly meet the evaluation criteria to receive a competitive score. The faculty member may discuss his/her proposal and the evaluation criteria with a member of the Council before the written proposal is submitted to the respective Dean.

A. Significance of the Proposal (30 points)
   1. The proposed project should create further creative work in the PI/PDs area of interest.
   2. The project should require the use of knowledge and skills usually possessed only by those having terminal degrees in the field.
   3. The originality of the creative activity often determines its success and recognition. As a result, the project should possess unique characteristics in comparison to similar projects.
   4. Once the project is completed, similar projects in the same discipline should follow. In some cases, it may be possible to obtain grant money from outside sources for further creative endeavors. Such success enhances the University's prestige, provides a better learning environment for its students, and enables the University to better the community at large.
   5. Applicants should show how they plan to disseminate the results of the RCA through presentations at professional meetings and/or publications in refereed journals. The project should be designed to lead to further study or an exhibition.

B. Proposed Approach (30 points)
   1. The proposal should outline the objectives or specific aims, methodology, plan of operation/activities, expected outcomes, proposed evaluation, and plans for future dissemination.
   2. The proposal should clearly describe the proposed procedures. The applicant should provide evidence that other professionals within the field will find the procedures acceptable.
   3. The proposal's objectives should be clear, concise, and understandable to the Council members, who may not be specialists in the discipline.
   4. The written proposal should follow the prescribed format as described in the “Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grant Application Instructions” (separate document).
   5. The applicant must demonstrate knowledge of existing art/performances within the area of interest by discussing the research findings or works/performances of others who have made significant contributions in the area and cite any relevant literature or critical response.

C. Feasibility of the Proposal (20 points)
   1. The proposal should clearly establish a feasible schedule for the proposed project.
   2. The applicant should be able to conduct the project within the proposed time period.
   3. The applicant should be able to complete the project with the funding requested.
   4. The applicant should be able to complete the project with the available physical resources.
D. **Applicant's Record (5 points)**
   1. The applicant should demonstrate his/her ability to carry out the proposed project; therefore, the applicant's previous success in creative activities should be presented clearly in the proposal.
   2. In addition, the applicant should list any previous projects, including those supported by an RCA at SFA, in the vita along with any resulting presentations, publications, works, or performances.

E. **Budget and Cost Effectiveness (15 points)**
The applicant should request an adequate and relevant budget for the proposed project. See the *Allowable Costs* section and the “Research/Creative Activity (RCA) Grant Application Instructions” (separate document).

F. **Bonus Points (up to 10)**
The University encourages proposals from beginning researchers/artists and new faculty members, as well as new and innovative lines of inquiry from established faculty members.

   - Five points will be added for the first RCA application ever submitted by a faculty member (as primary investigator).
   - Five points will be added for a faculty member employed by the University in an RCA-eligible position less than five years, including those faculty members who have previously submitted an unsuccessful RCA application.

G. **Recommendation**

   - Fund as submitted.
   - Fund with revisions.
   - Not recommended for funding, but has merit. Recommend resubmission with revisions in a future competition.
   - Not recommended for funding.