

April 27, 2021

Karen (Casey) Casebier
Chair, Faculty Grants Committee
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To: Charlene Simmons, Faculty Senate President
Nominanda Barbosa, Faculty Senate Secretary

Re: Faculty Grants Committee Report

Dear Charlene, Nominanda,

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the leadership of the Faculty Senate for maintaining the increased membership of this committee, as well as for its diversity in disciplines and ranks. The committee's representation from the several colleges is critical to help answer questions of committee members who are not familiar with all academic disciplines. The increased membership allows the committee to review a large number of applications in a timely fashion, and it also meets the need to have fair and adequate representation for application review, since members cannot participate in application review during those rounds in which they themselves submit applications.

The Faculty Grant committee met three times during the 2020-2021 academic year to review faculty grant applications and award faculty grants. Proposals were evaluated on the basis of overall merit using the application rubric. Committee members that submitted a proposal for a specific round of funding were exempt from reviewing any application or attending the committee meeting.

The committee received a total of 86 applications, a decrease of 20 percent from the previous academic year. This is largely due to travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 that continue to impact travel for research and faculty development. The committee received 22 applications for the Fall round, 13 applications for the Spring round, and 51 applications for the Summer round. For the summer round, the committee invited applications for a pilot program to alleviate the imbalance in teaching duties and research productivity produced by the impact of COVID-19, the Summer Stipend for Writing and Creative Activity, which would allow more faculty to devote this summer to research instead of summer teaching. The stipend proved immensely popular, representing 61 percent of all applications: the committee received 14 research and faculty development applications and 37 applications for the summer stipend.

Of the 86 applications reviewed by the committee, 40 proposals were funded (47%) and 46 were not funded (53%). This represents a significant decrease from the 2019-2020 academic year, in which 92% of proposals were funded and only 15% were not funded, which is largely due to budget constraints.

The committee awarded a total \$74, 406, a 49% decrease from the 2019-2020 academic year, when the committee awarded \$144, 636. The decrease in funding is mainly attributed to a tight university budget and the logistics of conducting research and participating in faculty development activities during a global health crisis.

To address the budget shortfall and maximize the distribution of limited funds, during the Fall 2020 meeting, the committee passed a temporary resolution that only one application per faculty member would be funded during the 2020-2021 academic year. Further, to

address the potential abuses of this program, the committee also passed a new, permanent resolution to accept only one application per faculty member, per round.

At a special meeting in March, the committee adopted the Summer Stipend for Writing and Creative Activity, a flat grant to allow tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty and lecturers recover in part from COVID-19's effect on research productivity. Moreover, we set aside 25% of funding for the Summer Round for the Stipend, so that the primary mission of funding research and faculty development would not be impacted by the addition of a special summer stipend. Due to lower numbers of research and faculty development applications for this round (which followed the general trends for the Fall and Spring Rounds), we were able to fully fund 6 stipend proposals, and partially funded 7 stipend proposals with the remaining funds. Although we would like to continue the summer stipend, next year's committee should be tasked with reviewing the effectiveness of this summer's pilot in the fall to determine its status, which will be based on the accountability of this year's awardees.

At the April meeting, the committee discussed the merits of having next year's committee revise both the rubric and the application for the summer stipend, as well as revisit the rubric and application for faculty grants that has been in use since Fall 2019. The committee also proposed a norming session for rating proposals prior to the Fall Round; although individual committee members consistently rate the applications that they are assigned, we recommend that next year's committee participate in a norming session to improve consistency in ratings among all members of the committee.

Respectfully,

Casey Casebier

Cc: Dawn Ford, Provost designee
Jerold Hale, Provost