**Office of Research Development announces new intramural grant program: Sponsored Activities and Research Catalyst Program (SPARC)**

**Goal:** To support faculty in new and continuing research projects, ultimately to support follow on funding.

Over the last five years, ECU has recorded an impressive and growing portfolio of sponsored activities. Total awards over the period increased from about $40 million to $82 million per year. Over the next five years, our goal is to top $100 million in sponsored projects annually. A noteworthy feature of ECU’s funding portfolio is that nearly half of the awards support non-research outreach, educational and/or service projects. This feature exemplifies ECU’s mission. We care about how our sponsored programs impact eastern North Carolina and the extent to which they focus on issues of regional importance. Finally, funders increasingly prioritize interdisciplinary teams for funding. ECU has seen growth in funding for such teams and will continue to support and facilitate team-based scholarly activities.

The number of ECU faculty who submit proposals and receive awards has grown from 1 in 10 with funding to 3 in 10. Recently, some faculty have noted the need for seed funding to stimulate scholarly activity and extramural proposals so that more faculty can benefit.

REDE announces the Sponsored Activities and Research Catalyst Program (SPARC) to support scholarly activities that lead to submission of competitive extramural proposals. This program will provide seed funding for projects to build the capacity to enhance and support proposal development and submission. SPARC participants will be encouraged to participate in a variety of curated professional development experiences. A SPARC writing accountability group will be facilitated by the Office of Research Development.

The program will provide up to $10,000 per project. Up to ten projects may be selected for SPARC during FY24. The funds can be used for scholarly activities including supplies, travel, participant incentives, student assistantships or other expenditures required to support the project. The budget may include up to a total of $4,000 for reassigned time and/or summer salary for up to two faculty included on each project team.

Faculty designated as either fixed-term or tenured/tenure-track are eligible for participation in this program. Startup program recipients with funding during FY23 or FY24 may not participate in this program. One goal of this program is to aid faculty with limited grant experience in developing competitive extramural proposals. Thus, faculty with no funding history and/or those with few intramural awards between FY19 and FY23 will be given priority. Interdisciplinary efforts across departments (including clinical departments), schools, colleges, and/or centers/ institutes are strongly encouraged. Requests to collaborate with faculty at other institutions to prepare competitive proposals also will be considered; however, no funds will be transferred to other institutions.

Applications will be evaluated on strength of project, need for funding, potential return on investment, broader impacts, previous funding history, and interdisciplinarity (see Rubric).

Program participants are expected to prepare and submit at least one extramural, competitive grant proposal within six months of the award period. REDE will provide selected program participants access to an external grant reviewer for proposals resulting from SPARC projects.

Applications must be submitted via [Smartsheet](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/08dd023b27104e189978bf67156a1428). Requested information includes the following:

* faculty member name(s) and contact information
* name and contact information of chair for each faculty participant
* project description that addresses the rubric (1,000 word, 7500 character maximum)
* at least one extramural funding program for targeted and planned submission resulting from seed projects including a link to the relevant Request for Proposals or other grant application guidelines
* a budget including budget justification (on provided SPARC Budget Form), including a spending timeline (Note: some funds will be awarded in FY23 if they can be spent by June 30, 2023)

Proposals will be due April 3, 2023 and evaluated on the rubric by a panel of grant-experienced faculty from across the campus. Funds will be available beginning May 8, 2023. Funds can be spent in FY23 and/or FY24. All funds must be expended by April 30, 2024.

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