

TTU Internal Grant Program Request for Proposals (RFP)

Program Overview and Goals

The Internal Grant Program (IGP) at Tennessee Technological University (Tech) was established in 1963 to stimulate interest in research on the part of the faculty. Since then, research at Tech has drastically grown. With the changes in the national research and funding trends, it is necessary to continue, strengthen and enhance the IGP program. The major goal is to provide seed funds for faculty to initiate important research projects, planning out a path for obtaining resources for the research program, generating preliminary results in support of extramural grant applications in areas where such funding opportunities exist, and help bring research to fruition such as the publication of a book, creative products or various other scholarly outputs such as exhibitions, performances, and partnerships that enhance life qualities and economic development in the community, state, and nation.

Tech continues to believe that a primary benefit of faculty research is to create hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for students, as well as to enhance teaching and learning outcomes with state-of-the-art instruction. It is anticipated that faculty engagement in research and creative activities will enable them to remain at the leading edges of their fields. This knowledge will filter downward into the classroom, particularly to advanced and graduate courses, as well as provide opportunities for students to become directly involved in hands-on experiential learning and scholarly exploration.

Application Process

- A. The committee will issue a call for proposals each year and announce a deadline for the submission of proposals. PROPOSALS AND/OR ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION RECEIVED AFTER THE DEADLINE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.
- B. Completed proposals must be endorsed by the PI's and all key personnel's department chair and the dean of their respective college/school (or designated representative). By endorsing the proposal, chairs and deans specifically agree to adhere to the budget requirements including faculty release time, and to cover the cost of overages if the PI overspends.
- C. Fully endorsed proposals and supporting documentation are due to the Office of Research no later than 4:30 p.m. on the deadline date.
- D. The Office of Research will distribute proposals to the Internal Grant Program Committee for evaluation after the deadline date.
- E. The Internal Grant Committee will evaluate the proposed projects, using an approach similar to federal funding agencies.
- F. The committee chairperson will forward the committee's recommendations to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.
- G. Once approved, the committee chairperson will notify the applicant, departmental chairperson, and dean.
- H. For proposals that are not funded, feedback from the committee will be included.

Project Types Supported by IGP

IGP provides support at three levels (tracks):

Track 1: Scholarly and Creative Inquiry Support (Up to \$3,000)

Track 1 provides support of up to \$3,000 for faculty's research, scholarly and creative activities in disciplines where external funding is typically scarce.

Track 2: Early Career Research Support (Up to \$5,000)

Track 2 provides support of up to \$5,000 for early-career faculty to establish their research/scholarly programs and generate preliminary results in support of extramural funding.

Track 3: Mid-career/post-tenure research support (Up to \$20,000)

Track 3 provides support of up to \$20,000 to support investigator-initiated new research and creative projects. A particular focus is on faculty-initiated projects that are in the early or pilot stages of "Proof of the concepts." Typically, mid-career faculty may change research directions based on changes in funding streams, when internal support may be key to increasing the competitiveness and readiness of the work to seek external funding.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants (PI) must be a faculty member at TECH. In addition to tenured and tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply if their Agreement on Responsibilities (AOR) includes a research component. There is no limitation on serving as co-PI with faculty members, but students are not eligible as PI or Co-PI.

Funding Priorities

The highest priority of the IGP program is to enhance faculty's competitiveness for extramural funding and increase their scholarly output. Proposals with the following characteristics will be evaluated positively:

- (1) Extensively involve graduate or undergraduate students in ways that enhance their education and post-graduate or professional opportunities.
- (2) Promote collaborative and research-based experiential teaching and learning for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, particularly those that can develop into initiatives that can attract external support.
- (3) Cost sharing/support from the participating departments.

Proposal Preparation and Submission

When writing a proposal, it is important to remember to "target the audience". The members of the Internal Grant Program Committee are the evaluators of your proposal, as they serve as the

“review panel” to evaluate all proposals. Although the committee members are knowledgeable about research, they are not usually experts in the specialized area of research of all the proposals. They are an educated, intelligent, “lay” audience. Therefore, effective communication using “lay” terms may increase the chances of your proposal to be evaluated more positively.

Application Package Contents

The application package includes the following components: (1) Proposal Narrative; (2) The Project Budget and Budget Justification. The application package will be routed electronically for signatures via DocuSign. Prior to starting the DocuSign routing process, the PI should have each of the following materials completed and ready to be uploaded as attachments:

(1) **Proposal Narrative:** The Proposal Narrative must meet the following format requirements. Failure to follow the formatting requirements will result in your proposal being **disqualified**.

- Page limit: 6 pages total, single-spaced.
- Font size must be 12 pt with Times New Roman or Arial.
- Page margins must be 1 inch on each side, left, right, top, and bottom.
- The Proposal Narrative must include the following six sections with the exact section heading:
 - A. **Introduction/Project description:** Provide Background information as to what questions/problems you are to answer/solve. Include a clear statement of the problem, question, or activity you wish to investigate; a justification of the research considering deficiencies in the existing knowledge base; other evidence of the need for the research, and references to the literature cited. This section should end with your research hypothesis and specific objectives.
 - B. **Significance/Relevance:** Discuss the contribution to knowledge in the field that you expect your project to make, and what problems/questions your research project will solve/provide answers, and how that is relevant to the societal challenges. In other words, this section provides answers why your proposed project is important.
 - C. **Research Methods or Plan of Action:** Describe your research methods for each of the specific objectives. Provide step-by-step description of how the research project will be conducted, including materials and the gathering of data by sampling or whatever means, the preparation of the data for analysis, and the method of analysis. A time schedule for the completion of the various steps of the research must be included. At the end of each specific objective, include a paragraph of **Expected Results and Potential Pitfalls**, and provide ways to alleviate/make up the pitfalls by using alternative methodologies.
 - D. **Leverage for Extramural Grant application:** Describe how this project will help you potentially obtain extramural grants/contracts, including funding agencies, programs your proposal(s) fit, and how preliminary results will enhance your competitiveness in grant applications. Also, in this section (even if extramural funding is unavailable in

your field), describe how you will disseminate your results, including plans for publications, books, exhibitions, performances, among other types of scholarly output.

E. Personnel Qualifications: Describe personnel qualifications, including the strength of your team in doing this research, methods suitability and applications in previous research, track record, previous publications, collaborations, and synergistic or complementary expertise.

F. References (References are outside of the 6-page limit). There is no page limit for References, but suggestive of 3 or fewer pages, formatted according to the predominant style used in your field, such as APA, MLA, or others, and include appropriate in-text citations.

(2) **Budget and budget justification:** Provide detailed budget and budget justification for the requested budget. Include Special budget justification for expenses such as international travel or computer hardware if needed. The following are relevant to your preparation of the project budget:

A. Funding Amounts: The IGP funding starts on July 1, and ends on June 30, for a period of one or two years. Please note that funds will not carryover beyond the project period approved. Any unused funds after June 30 of the final project year will be forfeited. Forfeited funds are returned to the funding pool for faculty research grants to be distributed the following year.

B. Funding level: The maximum total project budget is: Track 1 - \$3,000; Track 2 - \$5,000 Track 3 - \$20,000. No indirect costs (IDC) should be budgeted.

C. Allowable Costs: The committee will review the budget and its justification, making recommendations if a change in budget is necessary.

(i) Release time. Assistance in the form of release time/reduced teaching load will apply only to the regular academic year and will not exceed one course per semester. Requests for release time will be at the same rate as faculty's actual salary.

(ii) Student Support. Funds can be requested to support students as hourly paid workers or stipends for graduate students. However, funds will not be allowed to pay students who are also a full-time employee at TECH.

(iii) Materials and supplies of the project.

(iv) Equipment (cost of \$5000 or more for a single item, otherwise item(s) is to be listed in "Materials and supplies") required for the project. Computer purchases are generally NOT allowed unless a special computer is required for the project.

(v) Travel. Travel is limited to faculty members ONLY. The purpose of travel is to report research results, or to collect research data or materials, or to go to conferences including registration, airfare, ground transportation, hotel, and food.

(vi) Publication costs such as open access journal processing costs. Cost for reprints are discouraged as pdf files are currently a predominant way of dissemination.

- (vii) The making of recordings when such is an essential part of the proposed research.
- (viii) Other costs, please justify why such costs are needed for the projects.

(3) Special situations:

- If a faculty member is awarded an Internal Grant for a given year but is not able to accept it that year, the award is forfeited. The faculty member may resubmit the proposal for consideration in a subsequent year's award competition.
- Internal Grant Program Committee members may submit a proposal but will not review their own proposals. They must follow the conflict-of-interest procedures, excuse themselves from a portion of the meeting if their own proposals are under discussion.
- A faculty member may apply for an instructional grant, a non-instructional grant, and a faculty research grant for the same academic year. However, if more than one grant is approved, the faculty member must select one to be awarded.

Evaluation of Research Proposals

State law prohibits the use of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, or marital status in nearly all aspects of this grant. As a reviewer, you are expected to identify and flag any content in applications that appears to violate these provisions. Please review each application with the following in mind:

- **Race-based or identity-based eligibility criteria.**
 - Examples: "This program will support outreach to students of color" or "programming is intended for female-identifying students only."
- **Identity-exclusive programming or outcomes.**
 - Examples: "The project will create mentoring circles specifically for Latino students" or "will develop a women-only research or conference event."
- **Use of protected characteristics in participant selection or service delivery.**
 - Examples: "Students will be selected based on their racial background or religious affiliation."
- **Programming tied to protected characteristics.**
 - Examples: "We will survey diverse students by prioritizing color or LGBTQ+ background."

Proposals will be evaluated by the Research Committee with scores for each of the following sections:

1. **Introduction of Project (20 points):** A clear statement of the problem or activity is contained in the proposal, with adequate justification for the project as supported by the literature or other evidence to support the need for the project, with appropriate references.
2. **Significance of the Project and Intellectual Merit (15 points):** clearly demonstrates intellectual merit and broader impact, answering the question, "so what?"
3. **Research Methods/Plan of Action (25 points):** Demonstrates the understanding of the problem and methods you choose to use, and why and why not the alternative methods. A clear

description of step-by-step plan to achieve the stated specific objectives.

4. **Personnel Qualifications of Investigator and likelihood for success (10 points):** How the PI, and co-PI and other personnel, as appropriate, is qualified to conduct the project and achieve the results.
5. **Plan for Seeking Extramural Grants/Contracts (25 points):** A clear vision of how to obtain grants and contracts in support of the research program using this project as seed funding. In cases where extramural funding is not available, the publication plan (e.g., for a book) or dissemination of research results (especially in the fields where scholarship is reflected in other forms than traditional publications or books).
6. **Budget (5 points):** The budget for the project is reasonable, and the use of funds is effective in achieving the goals of supporting extramural grant applications, or producing significant scholarship or scholarly output, products, exhibitions or performance.

Internal Grant Program Committee

The TECH Internal Grant Program is coordinated by the Internal Grant Program Committee. This committee consists of a minimum of nine (9) faculty members representing each of the colleges and school(s) across the University. Minimum representation is as follows:

College of Agriculture and Human Ecology – one member

College of Arts and Sciences – two members

one from sciences/math

one from social sciences/humanities

College of Business – one member

College of Education – one member

College of Engineering – one member

College of Fine Arts – one member

College of Interdisciplinary Studies – one member

School of Nursing – one member

All members are appointed by the President in accordance with approved procedures.

The Vice President for Research and Economic Development serves as the Executive Officer of the committee. The committee meets at least once each semester of the academic year to oversee the evaluation of research proposals as well as consider progress reports, and the general status of faculty research supported by the University.

Funding of Approved Projects

- Funds must be expended in a timely manner. No extension of funds is allowed.

Procedures

- A. All research compliance-related issues must be resolved before the start of the research project. For example, if human subjects or laboratory animals are involved, the Committee's approval of the award is contingent upon the applicant's obtaining appropriate clearance

from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

- Working With Minors:

Applicants whose grants involve minors are required to adhere to these guidelines and take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the university's Minors on Campus (MOC) policy, denoted as Policy #120. To facilitate compliance, we require that all applicants working with minors contact MOC Coordinator, Deb Combs

DKCombs@tntech.edu, with a bulleted list of facts describing their proposed activities involving minors **before** submitting their grant applications. Deb Combs will provide guidance and assist in reviewing the MOC policy, ensuring that recommended measures are in place to safeguard minors participating in the research.

Furthermore, as a formal acknowledgment of their commitment to compliance, applicants working with minors will be asked to sign an 'Attestation of Compliance (AOC).' This attestation signifies that they have thoroughly reviewed the university's MOC policy, engaged in discussions with the MOC Coordinator, and have taken the necessary actions to align their research activities with the established policy. The AOC must be attached to the application appendix. The AOC will not count against proposal page length limitations. Finally, grant awardees must contact Deb Combs at least two weeks prior to implementation of their activities involving minors.

- B. When a research proposal has received final approval, the committee chairperson will notify Grant Accounting of the recipient's name, department, and a copy of the itemized budget.
- C. Release Time: If release time is an approved funding category, the recipient's department would prepare the labor reallocation to move the appropriate labor expense amount from the academic/departmental index to the individual faculty research index.
- D. Other Expenses: If funds for student salaries, supplies, travel, and/or equipment are involved, Grant Accounting will assign an index number to the project and establish the account. The department administrative assistant in the PI's department will be assigned as the bookkeeper on the account. Grant Accounting will email the FOAPAL information to the PI once the account is activated in July.
 - Expenditures shall be made in accordance with university policies and procedures.
 - Standard requisition forms shall be used and shall be forwarded through regular department and college/school offices for approval.
- E. Budget Revisions: Re-budgeting within 10 percent of the total project budget is permitted so long as the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries is not reduced. Any requests for budget revisions where the total cumulative amount of changes exceed 10 percent of the total budget, and/or the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries would be reduced will require prior written approval by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.
- F. Overages: Project budgets are only approved for the amount funded in the award letter. Overspending is not permitted for any reason. **If expenditures are made in excess of the**

approved amount, the PI's department or college will be required to fully-fund the cost of those overages.

Ownership of Equipment

The ownership of all equipment purchased from funds allocated for internal research shall rest, upon completion of the research, with the PI's department or center.

Project Reports

Recipients of research assistance are required to provide the committee with final reports relating to their projects as well as special reports if requested. These reports are necessary so that the committee may constantly assess the progress of both individual projects and the overall research program. The recommended format of the final report is a short description of proposal(s) that are submitted, with funding agencies, dollar amount, PI, and collaborators, or a list of publications, book(s), significant scholarly output or other products.

The [Final Report Form](#) should be submitted to the Office of Research no later than October 1 of the fiscal year following the end of the project period, WHETHER OR NOT THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN COMPLETED. The report should summarize the results of the entire project and in cases where a project was not completed on time, a revised report should be submitted when the project has been completed. Recipients are encouraged to make special progress reports at any time if they encounter unanticipated difficulties and delays in their projects. They are also encouraged to consult the committee in such cases.

Publications

Many faculty research projects result in publications of one type or another, or in papers presented at scholarly meetings. Such publications and papers provide one of the most significant measures of the overall success of the research program. The [Final Report Form](#) has spaces for listing these points of evidence of the successful conclusions of the project.

It is understood that some articles and papers will not have been published and/or presented by the time the final report is prepared. Once available, the committee should be furnished a copy of the reprint of each article resulting from internal research projects. In submitting articles for publications, recipients of the Internal Grant Program assistance should identify themselves with Tennessee Technological University.

Patents and Copyrights

The provisions of Tennessee Tech Policy 732 – Intellectual Property – shall govern the interests of the researcher and the University in all inventions, discoveries, or copyrightable materials resulting from a faculty research award. Information and assistance are available in the Office of Research.

APPENDIX: Instructions for Submitting the Application via DocuSign

The PI must be the person completing the application as s/he will be required to sign prior to submission. The PI should have all documents finalized and ready to be uploaded *before* starting the DocuSign process. DocuSign supports multiple file extensions and attachments so files do not have to be combined before submission, and they will still route together as one envelope.

[Click here for more information on supported files.](#)

The application is a simple one-page form that serves as the cover sheet for signature routing. It looks like this:

DocuSign Envelope ID: F6FC1E3F-90C9-4127-97AE-A4331355D02C

Proposal No. _____

Faculty Research Committee Grant Application

Title of Project _____ Track **-- select --** ▼

Joe Schmoe _____ **-- select --** ▼

PI Name Department Rank/Tenure Status

Is this a collaborative proposal? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Co-PI (1) Name Department Rank/Tenure Status

Co-PI (2) Name Department Rank/Tenure Status

Co-PI (3) Name Department Rank/Tenure Status

Attachments:

*Narrative proposal; References	*Budget Summary; Special justification	*Summary of Previous Assistance Received	Letters of Support; supporting documentation
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**Optional
Required

Approvals:
I agree to the terms of the program as stated in the Faculty Research Grant Program Handbook dated October 25, 2019. If my proposal is selected for funding, I will take appropriate care to adhere to the budget as approved by the Committee and will not spend more than the approved amount for this project.

Sign ↓

PI Signature _____ Co-PI (1) Signature _____

Co-PI (2) Signature _____ Co-PI (3) Signature _____

I agree to the terms of the program as they apply to departmental chairpersons and college deans. If this project is funded, I agree to adhere to the budget requirements and that my department or college/school will be expected cover the cost of overages if the PI overspends.

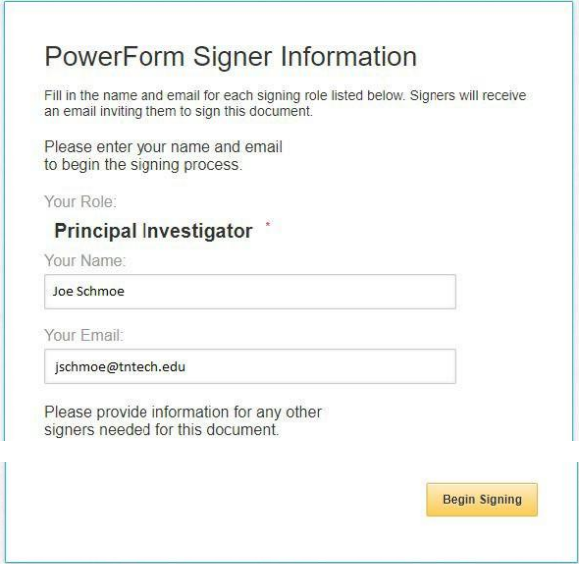
Approval of PI's Chairperson _____ Approval of PI's Dean _____

1. Before starting the application form in DocuSign, please have the following documents/information ready:

- ┌ Narrative proposal
- ┌ References
- ┌ Budget Summary and Special Budget Justification
- ┌ Summary of Previous Assistance Received
- ┌ Letters of support from outside agencies if any are involved
- ┌ Names and email addresses for each of the following:
 - All Co-PIs (if applicable)
 - PI's department chair
 - PI's college/school dean or designee

2. [Click here to open the Faculty Research Committee Grant Application](#)

3. Enter the signers' names and email addresses (PI, chair, and dean are required; you may leave Co-PI fields blank if none), then click "Begin Signing" at the bottom of the screen.



The image shows a 'PowerForm Signer Information' screen. It contains instructions to fill in names and emails for each signing role. The role 'Principal Investigator' is selected. The name 'Joe Schmoe' and email 'jschmoe@tntech.edu' are entered in the respective fields. A 'Begin Signing' button is at the bottom right.

PowerForm Signer Information

Fill in the name and email for each signing role listed below. Signers will receive an email inviting them to sign this document.

Please enter your name and email to begin the signing process.

Your Role:
Principal Investigator


Your Name:
Joe Schmoe

Your Email:
jschmoe@tntech.edu

Please provide information for any other signers needed for this document.

Begin Signing

4. You must agree to DocuSign's electronic record and signature disclosure, which can be accessed by clicking on the hyperlink. To accept, click the checkbox and hit "Continue."



The image shows a DocuSign review screen. It includes a cookie notice at the top, a 'Please Review & Act on These Documents' header, and the user's name 'Joe Schmoe' and department 'Faculty Research Department'. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'I agree to use electronic records and signatures' and buttons for 'CONTINUE', 'FINISH LATER', and 'OTHER ACTIONS'.

This site uses cookies, some of which are required for the operation of the site. [Learn More](#)

OK

Please Review & Act on These Documents

DocuSign

Joe Schmoe
Faculty Research Department

Please read the [Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure](#).

☒ I agree to use electronic records and signatures.

CONTINUE FINISH LATER OTHER ACTIONS

5. Click “Start” to move through the required fields automatically and populate the information. When you get to the attachments section, click on the paperclips to upload the attachments.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Faculty Research Committee Grant Application". At the top left is a yellow "START" button. The form includes a "DocuSign Envelope ID" and a "Proposal No." field. The main section contains several input fields: "Title of Project" (a large text box), "Track" (a dropdown menu), "PI Name" (pre-filled with "Joe Schmoe"), "Department" (a text box), and "Rank/Tenure Status" (a dropdown menu). Below these are three rows for "Co-PI" information, each with fields for "Name", "Department", and "Rank/Tenure Status". A section labeled "Attachments:" contains four boxes, each with a red paperclip icon and a label: "*Narrative proposal; References", "*Budget Summary; Special justification", "*Summary of Previous Assistance Received", and "Letters of Support; supporting documentation". Each box has a red arrow pointing down to the paperclip icon. A small "*Optional" label is at the bottom right of the attachments section.

6. Once all the fields are populated, click any of the “Finish” buttons.

The screenshot shows a document review interface. At the top, a blue banner contains the text "Done! Select Finish to send the completed document." and three buttons: "FINISH", "FINISH LATER", and "OTHER ACTIONS". Below the banner is a toolbar with icons for zooming, searching, and downloading. The main area displays a preview of the document, which is a table with two columns: "Dissemination/accomplishments" and "External proposals". Below the table, the text "Please attach pages if additional space is needed." is visible. At the bottom, a yellow "FINISH" button is prominently displayed. The footer shows the filename "Summary of Previous Assistance Received 20191028.pdf" and the page number "1 of 1".

7. The envelope will route for signatures automatically. Once all approvals are complete, the PI will receive a copy of the final application via email.