

## VCU MOMENTUM FUND Request for Applications

With the launch of the [One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan](#) (research strategic plan) in July 2021, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) entered a new research paradigm, driven by our culture of collaboration designed to facilitate discovery, scholarship and creative practice. Further catalyzing the commitment of VCU, with the approval of the VCU Board of Visitors, President Michael Rao, Ph.D., has authorized the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI) to invest in our second year of the six-year research strategic plan

The research strategic plan aligns the strengths of VCU’s faculty, staff, students, and our greater community into four research themes designed to further our goal to improve the human condition including recognition that diversity, equity, inclusion, and sustainability are imperative to success:

1. **Enriching the human experience:** apply creative expression, critical analysis and advancements in knowledge and technology to enhance individual quality of life and social infrastructure.
2. **Establishing a just and equitable society:** commit to identifying injustices and finding solutions to the most difficult social problems to build a better world, recognizing that change begins with us.
3. **Optimizing health:** use trans-, multi-, and interdisciplinary approaches at scales from molecules to populations in search of new ways to preserve and restore human health.
4. **Supporting sustainable energy and environments:** create evidence-based solutions that contribute to a better future in a rapidly changing natural world.

The research strategic plan’s overall return-on-investment indicators include, but are not necessarily limited to, faculty, staff, trainee, and student contributions in accordance with some or all of the following priorities:

1. Expands external funding awards and research expenditures, developing VCU’s national program rankings, including increased externally sponsored awards, growth of federally supported research activities, increased research expenditures, and full indirect cost recovery on external funding awards as applicable.
2. Expands the rate of growth of diverse, multidisciplinary research teams in all disciplines, including STEM, humanities, social sciences, and the arts (sponsored funding, impact, etc.).
3. Expands the number of underrepresented minority faculty as part of team leadership on extramural grants submitted and awarded.
4. Increases the engagement of students and trainees in research and scholarship.
5. Expands the rate of growth and impact of VCU community-engaged research activities and measurements of public/societal impact that contributes to diverse and inclusive communities.
6. High impact publications in quality peer-reviewed journals, monographs, editions or edited collections.
7. Advances community access to innovation through increases in patents, licensing, public-private partnerships, and start-ups, leading/translated into community practice.

### VCU Momentum Fund At-A-Glance (see full details below)

<b>RFA Release</b>	Oct. 14, 2022
<b>LOI Deadline</b>	Nov. 18, 2022
<b>Full Proposal Deadline</b>	March 15, 2023 (by invitation only)
<b>Award Start Date</b>	June 2023 (use June 15, 2023 as project start date)
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	\$1 million

<b>Award Ceiling</b>	Up to \$200,000
<b>Unit level cost share</b>	None
<b>Fund Release</b>	Initial: 50%; remaining 50%: following successful 6-month progress report.
<b>Project Period</b>	24 months
<b>Anticipated # of Awards</b>	Minimum of 5 awards based on maximum funding
<b>Program Category</b>	Large-scale center and initiative planning
<b>Eligibility</b>	<p><b>Multi-PI required.</b> Principal investigators (PIs) may be from the same school/college.</p> <p>PIs may be any <u>full-time, primary appointment</u> VCU faculty, research faculty or clinician researcher regardless of rank or tenure status. Clinician researchers must have a university faculty appointment to serve as a PI. Staff without affiliate college/school faculty appointments are not eligible to be a PI.</p> <p>Inclusive research teams are required, including recruitment of underrepresented, minority, and early-stage faculty, trainees, and students.</p> <p>Alignment with a research strategic plan initiative, including specific goal(s) and objective(s) identified in the <a href="#">One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan</a>.</p> <p><b>Cancer-focused proposals are not eligible for this program</b> as a funding program is already provided for these projects. Cancer-focused proposals should be submitted to the Massey Cancer Center <a href="#">Team Science Pilot</a> Award internal funding opportunity.</p>

**Purpose:** The **VCU Momentum Fund** promotes impactful interdisciplinary research by providing multi-principal investigator research teams with support to prepare and submit competitive, external, multi-component large-scale proposals. Competitiveness for these large-scale grants requires significant advanced planning, a well-defined and central research theme, strong preliminary data, and a history of partnership among collaborating investigators that often spans multiple schools/colleges and/or disciplines. Examples include, but are not limited to, large funding opportunities from federal agencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health P- or U-series mechanisms, National Science Foundation Gen4 Engineering Research Centers, NSF Science and Technology Centers, Department of Energy’s Energy Frontier Research Centers) or foundations (e.g., Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and MacArthur Foundation). Each award will provide up to \$200,000 for up to 24 months, as well as a tailored plan for OVPRI research development team support in collaboration with other units across campus.

Research teams are expected to propose tackling significant and complex research questions that would not be feasible to pursue through individual efforts. Partnerships across schools/colleges are strongly encouraged but not required, and teams must submit a competitive external proposal before the end of the project period.

**Eligibility:** A minimum of three VCU PIs are required. Research teams with PIs from different VCU schools or colleges are strongly encouraged but not mandatory. PIs may be any full-time, primary appointment VCU faculty, research faculty or clinician researcher regardless of rank or tenure status. Clinician researchers must have a university faculty appointment to serve as a PI. Staff without affiliate faculty college/school appointments are not eligible to serve as a PI. Inclusive research teams encompassing meaningful participation of all members are strongly encouraged, including URM and/or minoritized faculty, early-stage investigators, trainees, and students (graduate and undergraduate).

Note: External subawards are not allowed. PIs external to VCU may be included but cannot be paid via Momentum or any OVPRI internal funds.

As stated above, cancer-focused proposals are not eligible and should be directed to Massey Cancer Center's [Team Science Pilot](#) award program.

Projects must demonstrate alignment with research strategic plan initiative, along with specific goal(s) and objective(s).

**Award:** Funding up to \$200,000 total with project periods up to 24 months. Project start: June 2023 (subject to completion of review process).

**Letter of intent:** Submit the required letter of intent as a single PDF file via Google form here: [Momentum Fund LOI](#) no later than **5 p.m. (ET) on Nov. 18, 2022**. Letters of intent will be sent to the corresponding Research Development and Advisory Council (ReDAC) for review and approval. If approved, the team will be invited in December to submit a full proposal.

The letter intent is limited to two pages, single spaced, Arial, 11-point (minimum) font with half-inch margins on all sides and should include the following:

1. The title of the proposal.
2. The names, titles, departments, and school/colleges of the co-PIs.
3. Corresponding research plan initiative(s), goal(s), objective(s).
4. Hyperlink for funding opportunity and deadline.
5. A brief description of the significance of overall research theme.
6. A brief description of the proposed planning activities.
7. A brief description of the team's history of collaboration, inclusivity, and its qualifications to receive a large-scale grant.
8. Appendices: a bio sketch for each PI/co-PI (NIH and NSF bio sketches are acceptable, or use this [bio sketch form](#)).

The following criteria will be used to evaluate letters of intent:

1. Does the team have a well-developed research or initiative theme?
2. Does the team possess synergy and/or have a history of collaboration, with a strong foundation to submit a large center or initiative grant within the 24-month project period?
3. Does the team meet the minimum eligibility requirements for VCU Momentum Fund support?
4. Does the chosen funding opportunity meet the RFA criteria? Is it appropriate for both the team and the research or initiative theme?

**Full proposal:** Application packages from invited teams must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. (ET) on March 15, 2023**, via RAMS-SPOT internal opportunities here: [Momentum Fund OP00000503](#).

**Proposals not following the content and format requirements will be returned without review.**

**Format:** Applications should be single spaced, Arial, 11-point (minimum) font with half-inch margins on all sides. Required forms can be downloaded here: <https://onevcuresearch.vcu.edu/funding/> in the "Quick Links" box. **Include the following components in order as a single PDF file for upload:**

- **Project abstract or specific aims (1-page):** Include information on the external funding opportunity targeted.
- **Team Profile (3-pages):** This section is a leading criterion for award selection and should be sufficiently detailed.
  1. Full team roster including name, affiliations (college/school/center/institute), and department, organized by discipline.
  2. List of Internal Advisory Board members who have agreed to support the research team (required) including names and affiliations. Also list any additional advisory boards used (i.e., external, community-based) to be used with description(s).

3. Discuss the diversity (specifically URM and/or minoritized members, early-stage faculty) of the proposed team, including how team composition and members specifically contribute to the design of project strategies, operations, evaluation, and dissemination (inclusive of PIs, Co-PIs, Co-Is, collaborators, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate/undergraduate students as applicable).
  4. Detailed description of the team's prior collaboration history (e.g., as evidenced by co-authored papers and/or jointly held grants).
  5. Multi-PI management plan.
- **Project plan (6-pages total):**
    1. Identify the corresponding strategic research plan initiative(s) and the specific goal(s) and objective(s).
    2. Background and significance of central research theme.
    3. Justification for need of funds and plan for external submission before end of project period. State the specific funding target and due date. **This section is a leading criterion for award selection.**
    4. Description of preliminary data/findings/results as appropriate.
    5. Research questions/methodology for proposed work as appropriate.
    6. Description of outcomes/outputs from planning funds.
  - **References cited (if applicable – no limit):** Use the citation format appropriate for your field.
  - **Timeline (1-page):** Outline planning activity milestones and timeframes for accomplishment(s) anticipated during the project period (24 months) culminating in submission of the external proposal. Anticipated start: June 15, 2023.
  - **Biographical Sketches:** NIH and NSF bio sketches accepted. If you do not have a current bio sketch, use this [bio sketch form](#).
  - **Budget and budget justification:** Use the [budget and justification form](#) to list and justify all requested costs associated directly related to planning activities only. Momentum funding cannot supplant existing support for a proposed project. Facilities and administrative (F&A or indirect) costs are not allowed.

**Note: Budgets will require approval from the chairs and deans (or their designees) in RAMS-SPOT before submission. Please allow adequate time for approval routing.**

Eligible costs:

1. Salary support, **including fringe benefits**, for PI(s) and co-investigator(s) **collectively** cannot exceed 20% of total project costs (i.e., if the total project budget is \$200,000, the PI/co-I salaries and fringe cannot exceed \$40,000 total).
2. Salary support, including fringe benefits, for research staff.
3. Research supplies.
4. Undergraduate, graduate student and postdoctoral stipends if relevant to the project with a detailed justification.
5. Essential travel related to the project.
6. Other expenses (i.e., laboratory and shared core facilities/resource fees).
7. Consultant costs.
8. Equipment/technology critical to the project. (Requests over \$5,000 must include a detailed justification.)
9. Participant fees.

Ineligible costs:

1. Salary support for administrative personnel or 12-month UAP/executive personnel.
2. Office equipment and supplies (including faculty computers/laptops/tablets, unless strictly related to project).
3. Travel not strictly related to the project.
4. Tuition other than graduate student tuition.
5. Professional organization dues or membership fees.

6. Sub-awards to institutions or salary support for individuals external to VCU.
7. Pre-award costs.

- **Current and Pending Support (no page limit):** Use this form to itemize all current and pending support associated with the proposed project.
- **Required appendices:** 1) Letter of support from the team's Internal Advisory Board chair for the proposed submission, 2) copy of external funding opportunity request for proposals, and 3) optional additional collaboration/support letters (limit 4).

**Review Process:** Letters of intent will be reviewed by the respective Research Development Advisory Council (ReDAC) member of each PI's college/school/unit. If there is no corresponding ReDAC member, or if the ReDAC member is serving on the proposal (PI, co-I or collaborator) one of the Committee co-chairs will review the LOI. Letters of Intent must be approved by all relevant ReDAC members for the team to receive an invitation to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals will be reviewed and scored by the Research Institute and Center – Oversight and Review Committee (RIC-ORC). Reviews and scores will then be submitted to the One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan Advisory Council. Recommendations from the Council will be forwarded to the VPRI, Provost and VP for Health Sciences collectively for final award decisions. Written reviews will be sent to those applicants not awarded. Review criteria include:

1. Merit: 1) scholarly merit and impact, 2) feasibility (budget and timeline), and 3) clear and feasible plan toward submitting a competitive large-scale center or initiative proposal by project end.
2. Broader impacts: Articulated potential impacts and benefits of the large-scale project and knowledge produced to actions for addressing critical scientific and/or societal problems or challenges (e.g., through policy and decision-making, practice, programs, etc., not necessarily taken up by the project itself).
3. Relation to research plan: 1) specific potential for a project to further the goals and objectives identified, and 2) culture of collaboration: interdisciplinary focus of projects (through theory, methods, and/or approaches that cross-cut disciplines/fields).
4. Team: 1) PI(s) preparedness; 2) trans- and multi-disciplinary qualities; 3) diversity, with meaningful participation of trainees, students, URM and early-stage investigators as well as cross-campus collaboration; and 4) relevant experience/expertise and capacity of project personnel related to the targeted grant opportunity.

**Award and Reporting Requirements:** The award period is 24 months with an anticipated start date of June 15, 2023 (dependent on conclusion of review process). Fifty percent of award funding will be released at the start of the project period with the remaining 50% contingent submission of a six-month report documenting meaningful progress toward fulfillment of the project aims/goals. Progress should include evidence that the applicants have met with a relevant program officer/director from the planned funding agency if such a meeting is allowed by the agency. The Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) and members of the Advisory Council will review progress in comparison to budget utilization and project milestones based on the initial project proposal. The remaining 50% of funds will only be released following approval from the VPRI. A final project report including an accounting of all funds expended, a summary of work completed, and a full copy of the final external proposal submission (via OVPRI Division of Sponsored Programs or Office of Development and Alumni Relations CFR) will be required 30 days after the initial project end date.

**Additional Requirements:**

- Project PIs must apply for the external grant opportunity identified in the project plan before the end of the project.
- Projects must have documented compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC), as applicable and appropriate, secured before work may begin.
- Project PIs must meet with the Research Development Division at least twice annually, and more as appropriate to manage their external grant submissions.
- The principal investigator(s) will be required to participate in an annual survey of results and outcomes (e.g., external grants submissions and awards, publications, creative work, intellectual property, etc.) associated with

their VCU Momentum Fund-sponsored research. Participation will begin one year after the project end date and continue annually for a total of three years.

- All publications, presentations, etc., resulting from the award must acknowledge financial support from the VCU Momentum Fund.

**Questions:** Please direct all questions to [ovprifunds@vcu.edu](mailto:ovprifunds@vcu.edu).