

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

<b>RFA Release</b>	Oct. 2022
<b>Full Proposal Deadline</b>	April 3, 2023
<b>Award Start Date</b>	July 1, 2023
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	\$750,000 (with unit cost share funds a total of \$1.0M)
<b>Award Ceiling</b>	Up to \$50,000

<b>Unit level cost share</b>	25%
<b>Fund Release</b>	Initial: 60%; Remaining 40%: following successful 6-month progress report
<b>Project Period</b>	18 months
<b>Anticipated # of Awards</b>	~20
<b>Program Category</b>	Pilot/small project, funds for part of a larger project.
<b>Eligibility</b>	<p>Multi-PI encouraged but single investigators accepted.</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 encompassing meaningful participation of all members, are strongly encouraged, including URM and/or minoritized faculty, early-stage investigators, 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>

**Purpose:** The goal of the VCU Quest Fund (Quest, formerly the VCU Presidential Research Quest Fund) is to afford all faculty an internal funding opportunity to support new, emerging, or continuing research. Research proposals that advance any discipline and area of research focus are appropriate for consideration. Requests for grant support may be based on a broad array of needs, from restarting an inactive research program to pilot studies that would produce preliminary results on which external grant applications could be based. Proposed work that helps advance transdisciplinary research, multidisciplinary research, and cross-campus collaboration, as well as research that has the potential for translation to practice or market, is especially encouraged.

**Eligibility:** The VCU Quest fund encourages trans- and multidisciplinary project proposals, as well as single-investigator projects. Principal investigators may be any full-time VCU faculty, research faculty or clinician researcher regardless of rank or tenure status, whose appointments are approved by the dean of their college or school. Inclusive research teams encompassing meaningful participation of all members, are strongly encouraged, including URM and/or minoritized faculty, early-stage investigators, trainees, and students. Projects must demonstrate alignment with initiative, along with specific goal(s) and objective(s).

The following stipulations include current and past Presidential Research Quest Fund awardees, as well as Quest awardees:

1. Faculty receiving a grant from the VCU Quest Fund as either a PI or Co-PI must delay subsequent applications to the Quest for a specified time depending on their rank. Early-stage (pre-tenure) faculty may submit a second proposal three years from the termination date of their first award. Senior faculty (tenured) are required to wait four years from the termination date of their first award, and
2. No faculty member may receive more than two Quest awards in a 10-year period.

**Award Period:** Funding up to \$50,000 total (including 25% required cost share from colleges/schools) for 18 months. Project start: July 1, 2023.

**Full proposal deadline:** Application packages should be submitted via here [Quest: OP00000508](#) no later than **5pm (ET) on April 3, 2023**. You will receive a confirmation email upon receipt. **Applications will not be accepted after the deadline for any reason.**

**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 if applicable (3-pages):**
  1. Full team roster including name, affiliations (college/school/center/institute), and department, organized by discipline.
  2. 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).
  3. Detailed description of the team’s prior collaboration history (e.g., as evidenced by co-authored papers and/or jointly held grants).
  4. 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. Description of preliminary data/findings/results as appropriate.
  4. Research questions/methodology for proposed work as appropriate.
  5. Specific list and description of measurable outcomes/outputs that can be leveraged into external support including detailed evaluation plan.
  6. Sustainability plan: Description of how project outcomes/outputs will advance the team’s scholarly trajectory/line of inquiry, including specific information on applications for external funding, community impact, intellectual property, and/or other outcomes. This section is a leading criterion for award selection and should be sufficiently detailed to show a tangible return on investment within one year of project end date.
- **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 (18 months) culminating in submission of the external proposal. Anticipated start: July 1, 2023.
- **Biographical Sketches:** NIH and NSF bio sketches accepted. If you do not have a current bio sketch, use the [biosketch 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.

**Proposal review:** The submission, review, and funding process are coordinated by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. There are three levels of review: 1) schools and colleges level review and ranking with recommendations, 2) review and approval of level one recommendations by the Research Development Advisory Council (ReDAC), consisting of the associate deans for research from each school and college, and 3) ReDAC makes final recommendations for funding to the VPRI. Multi-investigator proposals will undergo initial review in all units from which cost share funds are requested. The number of proposals recommended for funding is dependent upon available funds. While each school/college/relevant unit will establish its own review process, proposals are assessed in the following areas:

1. Merit: 1) scholarly merit and impact, and 2) feasibility (budget and timeline).
2. Broader impacts: 1) translational potential, and 2) potential for high return on investment.
3. Relation to Strategic Research Priorities Plan: specific potential for a project to further the goals and objectives identified.
4. Team if applicable: 1) PI(s) preparedness, 2) trans- and multi-disciplinary qualities, 3) diversity (meaningful participation of trainees, students, URM and early-stage investigators as well as cross-campus collaboration).
5. Additional school/college criteria as relevant.

**Award and Reporting Requirements:** The award period is 18 months beginning on July 1, 2023. Forty percent of award funding will be released at the start of the project period with the remaining 60% contingent submission of a six-month report documenting meaningful progress toward fulfillment of the project aims/goals. The VPRI and the respective PI(s) associate dean(s) for research will review progress in comparison to budget utilization and project milestones based on the initial project proposal. The remaining 60% of funds will only be released following approval from the VPRI. A final project report including an accounting of all funds expended and progress on sustainability plans will be required 30 days after the initial project end date.

**Questions:** For specific questions about proposal budgets, cost-share commitments, school/college level review and endorsement signatures contact your [Associate Dean for Research](#). All other questions may be directed to [ovprifunds@vcu.edu](mailto:ovprifunds@vcu.edu).

**Additional requirements:**

1. Projects must have documented compliance approvals (e.g., IRB, IACUC), as applicable and appropriate, secured before work may begin.

2. 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 fund-sponsored research. Participation will begin one year after the project end date and continue annually for a total of three years.
3. All publications, presentations, etc., resulting from the project must acknowledge financial support from the VCU Quest Fund,.
4. Projects are expected to be completed within the specific budget period. No-cost extensions will be granted only in highly exceptional circumstances. PIs will be expected to fully justify any extension requests in writing. Extensions are at the sole discretion of the VPRI.