

Research Funding FAQ

Q: What are the principles driving the current work?

The Dean's Faculty Resources Committee helped define these principles: (1) Value faculty time above everything else. (2) Provide incentives for our faculty to pursue revolutionary new ideas. (3) Reduce the anxiety that faculty might find themselves with no personal research funds over long periods of time. (4) Be comfortable with the fact that equity doesn't mean providing everyone with the same thing; different faculty have different needs. (5) Expand the pool of those receiving internal research funds as funds become available; some of the best ideas come from those early in their career (e.g., post-docs) and those in non-ladder ranks (e.g., senior lecturers and professors of the practice).

Q. Who is eligible for the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship?

This program is open to FAS assistant, associate and tenured faculty. Professors-in-residence and Professors of the Practice are also eligible. Faculty at other Harvard schools with no more than a zero FTE in the FAS are not eligible for this program.

Q: I have never had sponsored funding in the past and will receive \$4,000 in the new Dean's Distribution program. If I decide to apply for sponsored funding in the future, is my \$4,000 distribution in jeopardy?

No. If you can apply for sponsored research funding, please do. We hope you're successful in your application, but no matter what the outcome, your distribution will not be impacted.

Q: I see talk of research funds and discretionary funds in the announcement. What is the difference?

Research funds are equivalent to what you could receive from a government funding agency or a foundation. The FAS provides these funds because it believes in directly supporting its faculty research. In disciplines with very few opportunities for outside gifts or grants, research funds directly from the FAS (and those from other internal Harvard sources) might be a faculty member's primary funding stream for his or her research program. In disciplines with reasonable opportunities for outside gifts or grants, the deans look to award research funds to help faculty create a research track record in a new disciplinary area, or aid faculty in pursuing truly original research that (risk-adverse) external funding agencies are not yet willing to fund.

While discretionary funds can be used for exactly the same purposes as research funds, they differ in the frequency and size of the award. A faculty member never needs to apply for discretionary funds. The current Dean's Distribution of \$1,000 to the personal research account of every FAS faculty member is a perfect example of discretionary funds. Faculty can use the funds for pretty much anything that advances their scholarship (within reason and definitely not to pay yourself). Some faculty use these funds to pay the expenses of attending the annual meeting of their professional society, while others have used these funds to pay for small retreats for their research groups. These are small expenses that faculty members might not be able to charge to a government or foundation grant.

Q: Are the changes being proposed permanent?

While we are pleased to be able to update our policies and procedures around research funding, it is doubtful that we have created a perfect system. Dean Smith has proposed that, in 10 years, the FAS dean again undertake a review of our policies and procedures for distributing research and discretionary funds. We all imagine that this topic will continue to grow in importance to our faculty, and the FAS will benefit greatly from a regularly scheduled and comprehensive review of our procedures and budgetary emphases.

Q: My grant proposal received some funding, but less than I need. Should I apply for extra funding from the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship?

The Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship is a targeted program with three specific goals. For some, it is a *bridge program* allowing our faculty to continue work on very promising research that has not yet won external funding. For others, it is a *seed program* encouraging work out of the mainstream. Finally, for a few, it is an *enabling subvention* providing small funds for purchasing (or upgrading) critical equipment not funded through an external grant, or for increasing an external fellowship that provided too little in living expenses. Please apply only if your funding needs fit into one of these three categories.

Q: Can I use the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship for funds to help me publish my new book?

No. You should apply to our publication funds. There is one for [senior faculty](#) and a separate one for [tenure-track faculty](#).

Q: What is the composition of the committee that oversees the distribution of the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship? And how will it operate?

Each year, the FAS dean will appoint a small committee of eight faculty (two faculty members from each division and SEAS) to review the submitted applications and make awards with the budget of this program. A staff member from FAS Research Administration Services (RAS) will staff the committee. From the eight faculty, the FAS dean will select a chair and a vice-chair. The committee will meet once a semester to decide upon the applications submitted to date. The faculty serving on the committee and the FAS, SEAS, and divisional deans may not submit applications to the fund. Any committee member with a conflict of interest with a submitted application will not participate in the discussions of that submission. Finally, before the final awards are announced, the FAS dean will meet with the committee chair to review the funding recommendations.

Q: What is required to apply for funding from the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship?

The application process is meant to be as simple as possible. If you have a proposal that you have already submitted for competitive funding and you didn't receive funding (or enough living expenses if this is a fellowship to extend your paid sabbatical leave to two semesters), please feel free to submit that original proposal and any external reviews you received, if any. If this is an entirely new idea that you hope to send eventually to an internal or external funding competition, please feel free to use the proposal form required by that competition. Along with this proposal, please send along a one-page budget and one-page budget justification for moving the work forward.

Q: Will the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship fund every application it receives?

No. The committee will make awards to only the most promising of the applications and will stay within the budget of the Fund. While there is no expectation that every application received will be funded, the committee will strive to award many small grants rather than a few large ones.

Q: How will I receive my award from the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship?

Except for a fellowship top-up, awards are simply transferred to a faculty member's FAS research account, and the faculty member can spend this money in whatever way and over whatever time period makes the most sense for him or her. We expect that the awarded faculty member will use these funds to advance his or her research

so that the faculty member can eventually apply for other internal or external competitive funding. Please note that the only check on this expectation is made at the next time that faculty member applies to the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Research. In other words, one of the things that the committee will check when reviewing applications is how a faculty member used the money from this Fund the last time (if ever) that he or she applied.

Q: Is there a cap on the number of times I can apply to the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Research?

No. There is no cap on the number of applications or how often a faculty member can submit.

Q: How much does the FAS invest in faculty research each year?

This question can be answered in many ways. For example, the FAS distributes more than \$2 million in annual discretionary funds. Separate from these discretionary distributions, the FAS faculty as a whole spends annually about \$20 million from their FAS-provided research accounts; the total liability of these research accounts on the FAS financial statements is six to seven times larger than this annual expense. Another way to look at the support the FAS provides is to measure the annual subventions from the FAS to the faculty's shared research cores (approximately \$16 million annually), which does not include FAS subventions of our library or museums. Finally, the FAS expends an average of \$4 million annually for compensation to faculty during the summer months and on research sabbaticals.

Q: Why is the FAS proposing these changes to faculty research funding now?

There are several reasons. First, federal funding for research continues to decline and has become increasingly political. While some new non-federal sources are emerging, projections for the total amount of federal funding to Harvard and our peers remain stubbornly on a multi-year downward trajectory. While our investments in FAS Research Administration Services (RAS) have created new resources that make it easier for faculty to identify and apply for external research support, the time has come for us to consider new ways to distribute our own internal funds so that we better support the scholarship of our faculty and keep the FAS an exciting and generative environment for cutting-edge research.

In addition, there are Harvard-specific reasons for taking up this task now. After many years of significant fiscal constraint, some faculty are struggling with a lack of research funds, and yet there is no general funding program in the FAS to help faculty bridge between grants, or start up newly original work. In other cases, our

policies are simply out of date. For example, it is long past time to increase the Dean's Distribution (the \$1,000 given annually to each ladder faculty member).

Q: Will the current proposals solve all the problems with our current system and policies?

No. The current work is a first step in addressing these issues. Further changes to overcome related thorny problems (see the next paragraph for a list) will require additional faculty consultation before we can propose other effective paths forward. And of course, we need to do this all within the context of ongoing financial constraint.

Some of the most pressing questions that we plan to address in the future include: (1) How do we deal with the inequitable allocation of administrative assistants, since the issue of TAD isn't just about discretionary funds? (2) Can we create a well-understood process for regularly funding the opening of new research cores and service centers, the review of old research cores and service centers, and the shutting down of those that have outlived their primacy? (3) What should we do about the allocation of research funds beyond the ladder faculty? For example, how can we improve and regularize research funds for term-appointed faculty, post-docs, and possibly advanced graduate students?

Q: Whom can I contact if I have questions about the Dean's Distribution or the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Research?

If you have questions about the Dean's Distribution, please contact the administrative dean in the divisional dean's office where you hold your primary faculty appointment. As a reminder, the first distribution at these new levels will not occur until FY17.

If you have questions about the Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Research, contact Susan Gomes, Director of Research Development and Strategy (susan_gomes@harvard.edu).