College of Science and Engineering
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Research and Grant Guidelines

Important Note: These guidelines supersede all previous versions and are effective starting with proposals submitted on or after July 1, 2026. The Dean of the College of Science & Engineering (Dean) and Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs (VPRSP) reserve the right to amend these guidelines as circumstances warrant. These guidelines apply to all funded research grants and contracts awarded to CSE faculty and are meant to be used instead of other Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) policies (*e.g.*, Research Incentive Awards) that apply in other colleges.

CSE Proposal Submission Guidelines

The College of Science & Engineering (CSE) and ORSP are required to ensure proposals are consistent with University, ORSP, and CSE policies and that commitments made to granting agencies are understood and supported by CMU. The review of grant proposals also helps the Dean and VPRSP understand faculty research agendas, so they can be effective advocates for faculty research and identify opportunities for external partnerships and support. These guidelines are intended to allow adequate time for these functions without hindering proposal development and submission.

The following guidelines apply to ALL proposals regardless of project size, budget or funding agency.

All CSE and ORSP **commitments for matching funds and reassigned time must be approved by the Dean and the VPRSP, or delegate, in advance** of submitting the proposal.

Timeline:

- At least twenty (20) full business days prior to submission send an e-mail to notify the Associate Dean, Chair, and ORSP that you intend to submit a proposal. Indicate the funding agency, deadline for submission, approximate budget and any requirements for match, reassigned time, or reduced F&A imposed by the funder. Please also specify if the funded proposal will result in a need for additional space (if not already available to the PI) or equipment purchase and installations. The Associate Dean will notify ORSP of approval to proceed; **the ORSP will not begin work on a proposal without this approval**.
- Applicants planning submission of a Standard Proposal must begin working with ORSP **at least ten (10) full business days** prior to submission deadline. Specialized[*] proposals (those involving external partners, cost share, etc.) require working with ORSP **at least twenty (20) full business days** prior to submission deadline.
- **After receiving approval to proceed**, the ORSP research officer (contact person) assigned to your department will work with you to create the Cayuse shell and prepare all necessary forms/documents for the submission.
- At least ten (10) business days prior to submission, provide a detailed draft budget to your ORSP research officer. Please contact your ORSP research officer if you need assistance or a NEW budget template. Your ORSP research officer will work with you to finalize the budget, including justification, and identifying sources of funds for any required match.

  Your ORSP research officer will work with you to initiate the Cayuse approval/review process once all necessary information and documents are uploaded to the proposal's Cayuse shell.
- At least **5 business days** before the submission deadline, ensure the **final ORSP vetted budget and draft narrative** is uploaded in Cayuse (other files might also be required depending on the project). Initiate Cayuse routing.

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[*] Please see ORSP Policy on External Grant and Contract Proposal Submission Timeline

- **All proposal materials required for submission must be available to ORSP in final form at least (3) full business days prior to the sponsor deadline**. This includes subject matter specific forms, equipment bids, subaward or consultant materials, letters of collaboration or support, required compliance documents, etc.

The Dean, or Associate Dean, will only approve proposals that follow the above procedure and allow adequate time for review. **If this timeline is not followed ORSP may designate the proposal as At-Risk[†], and you will be ineligible for university investments such as matching funds or reassigned time. Without timely submission of the final narrative, the proposal cannot be submitted to the funding agency.**

CSE Research Incentive Funds (RIF)

Faculty may utilize 75% of the **net** savings from academic-year salary and benefits covered by a grant or contract. Net savings is the amount remaining after replacement costs and any matching funds are deducted. The savings will be based on the actual faculty 10-month salary and average benefit rate as determined by Financial Planning and Budgets. In rare cases, faculty may be allowed to charge 100% of their effort directly to a grant or contract. In such cases only the first 75% of their academic-year salary and benefits will be considered for RIF funding calculations. Buy out of all teaching obligations requires approval of the Dean and will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances, given the University's educational mission (see also "reassigned time guidelines" section below).

Examples:

Time reassigned from teaching

- Effort that would otherwise be spent teaching is reassigned to research and charged to a grant or contract at full cost. For example, 3 hours of teaching effort is paid by a grant at 12.5% (.125 FTE) of a faculty member's 10-month salary + average benefit cost (call that X). Thus 0.125 X is the amount available in the grant.
- Replacement cost (for someone else to teach that 3-hour course) is deducted from the amount available. Replacement cost for a 3-hour course is set by the University each fiscal year and cannot be negotiated. If there is no grant match, the incentive funds will be 75% of the amount remaining: (0.125 X – replacement cost) x 0.75.

Charging University-paid research effort

- Effort devoted to research that would otherwise be paid by the University is instead charged to a grant or contract at full cost. 75% of the salary + average benefit cost paid by the grant will be available as incentive. (Summer salary paid by a grant or contract is **not** eligible for any incentive funding under these guidelines because no salary savings accrue to the University.)

Guidelines for spending research incentive funds

- Funds will be controlled by the CSE and may be reallocated if the account is inactive for a year or more.
- Funds may be used for travel, supplies and equipment in accordance with University guidelines.
- Funds may be used to pay students or temporary staff provided funding is available at the time of hire.
- Funds may NOT be used for summer salary, supplemental pay or overload pay for regular faculty.
- Funds may NOT be used to cover tuition or fees for students who are not supported on graduate assistantships (research assistantship with its tuition remission benefit for students is allowable).
- Any over-spending of funds will be the responsibility of the faculty member's department.

CSE and ORSP Guidelines for Grant Matching Funds and F&A (Indirect) Costs

- Grant proposals should request all the support needed to complete the project successfully and projects should be designed to fit within the budget limitations established by the sponsor. If the maximum award is $100,000 your scope of work should be limited to what can be accomplished for this amount.

[†] Please see ORSP Policy on At-Risk Proposals

- Match will only be provided where it is explicitly required by the funding agency's guidelines. Match may also be provided in those circumstances where the funder has a written policy indicating that non-required match is considered in funding decisions.
- Wherever possible, required match will be met from the contributed match category (defined below) that represents support available for the project that is already provided by CMU.
- Reassigned time (see below) is based on F&A minus any required paid match; thus grants that require match will qualify for fewer course releases than those with no match requirement.
- Reduced F&A will only be approved where a federal or state agency or foundation specifically limits F&A in their policy or program guidelines. Contracts with for-profit companies must charge the full cost of the activity including the applicable F&A and covering time of faculty, staff and students involved in the work. Requests for reduced F&A must be approved by the VPRSP and should be initiated by reaching out to the respective ORSP research officer supporting the contract or grant proposal submission with a justification for the reduction in F&A.
- **All requests for match must be submitted to your department chair at least 20 business days before the proposal deadline**; chairs will forward requests to the Dean. The Dean makes the decision and, where the ORSP is asked to contribute, submits a request to the VPRSP. The Dean then communicates match decisions to the PI and ORSP research officer.
- Regular faculty should use their non-instructional time (25% of semester effort if teaching a 9-hour load) as match, providing it is not already committed to other grants or proposals.

Contributed match: In general, this includes personnel, facilities or equipment that CMU pays or supports regardless of whether the grant is awarded. Examples: a) CMU faculty devote a portion of their academic year time to the project, typically via reassigned-research/service time (i.e., there is no teaching replacement cost associated with such reassignment), b) CMU staff with research responsibilities devote a portion of their time to the project, and c) unrecovered F&A (indirect) where the sponsor's cap is less than the federally negotiated rate.

Paid match: This is match that is a) specific to a particular project, and b) involves expenses that would not be incurred if a grant were not funded. Examples include summer pay for project-related work or purchasing supplies and equipment that are only required by the grant-funded project. The CSE provides paid match only when all three of the following apply: 1) match is required by the sponsor; 2) the required match cannot be covered by contributed match; and 3) with prior approval of the Chair, Dean, and VPRSP.

CSE Faculty Reassigned Time

To foster research CSE and ORSP will, under certain circumstances, fund research reassignments for regular faculty during the academic year. "Reassigned time" indicates time, equivalent to the workload of a **3-hour course**, that is reassigned from teaching to research. Reassigned time is allocated under the following system in accordance with the guidelines below and consistent with existing policies and practices. As stipulated in the CMU-FA *Agreement*, any adjusted workload must be recommended by the department and approved by the Dean.

1) **Grant supported reassigned time**: the CSE and ORSP may fund reassigned time for CSE **regular** (tenured or tenure-track) faculty who garner funded external **research** grants or contracts that include F&A costs based on the following guidelines and with the **prior** approval of the Department Chair, Dean and VPRSP, or delegate. The cost of grant supported reassigned time will be covered 50:50 by the CSE and ORSP and is in place of other ORSP reassigned time policies that apply to faculty members from other colleges.
    - In all cases, reassigned time requires the **written approval** (via Cayuse) **of the Dean or Associate Dean and VPRSP, or delegate, <u>before</u> submitting the proposal.** Research-reassigned time cannot be negotiated after the award of a grant.
    - Scheduling of reassigned time must be planned in conjunction with departmental teaching schedules, recommended by the Department Chair, and approved by the Dean or Associate Dean.
    - **Allocation of reassigned time is NOT automatic.** Consideration of reassigned time must take into account researcher's workload and time commitments, as well as required project match and the availability of net F&A needed to pay for reassigned time.

- Reassigned time equivalent to one 3-hour course may be provided for every $23,000[‡] in **net** F&A funds. Thus a $270,000 grant at the current F&A rate (46.5% yields about $85,000) could provide three course releases.
- For grants within CSE: Net F&A is calculated as the total F&A amount less any match (defined above). **Net = (total F&A) - match.** Thus, a $270,000 grant with 46.5% F&A that required a 10% match ($27,000) would generate $58,700 in net F&A ($85,700-$27,000) and could qualify for two course releases rather than three. Match for this calculation is "paid match" as defined above. If one or more of the PI's are ineligible for reassigned time (due to the nature of their appointments), the course releases that would have been apportioned to those PI's will be subtracted from the total available.
- For grants that include faculty from other colleges, the net F&A funding available for CSE faculty for reassigned time will be: **Net = [(total F&A)/number of colleges] - (CSE match + any match from ORSP attributed to CSE's part of the project).** Match for this calculation is "paid match" as defined above. Example: grant with $80,000 F&A split between CSE and one other college and requiring a match of $10,000 would be: net = $80,000/2 - $10,000 = $30,000 so will qualify for one course release.
- Reassigned time will only be awarded in units of 1 course (3 hours). For example, a grant with $12,000 in net F&A costs will not qualify for one-half of a course of reassigned time.
- Reassigned time is awarded for individual grants and contracts; it cannot be earned by adding multiple small grants or contracts. The goal is to provide a block of time for faculty to focus on a large project.
- Reassigned time (in one-course units) can be allocated among PIs from CSE based on an agreement made prior to submission of the proposal.
- Grant-supported reassigned time must be taken during semesters that overlap with the active period of the grant; reassigned time is intended to allow faculty to focus on the funded research.
- Reassigned time for research is contingent on departmental commitment to meet their enrollment (semester credit hours - SCH) goals and deliver their academic programs.
- Faculty who earn more reassigned time than they can use during the grant period cannot "bank" that time for future use. However, CSE and the ORSP will consider requests for use of course releases after a grant period ends based on the below criteria.
    - **Extensions for the use of course releases during the two academic year semesters immediately after the course releases originally expire require only Chair's and Dean's office approval** (for example, if a grant expires in the fall 2026 semester, then an extension can be requested to use course releases in spring 2027 and fall 2027; similarly, if a grant expires in spring 2026 or summer 2026, an extension can be requested for fall 2026 and spring 2027 semesters).
    - **Requests for the use of courses releases beyond two academic year semesters immediately after the grant expires will only be considered in truly extraordinary situations** (for example, medical leaves, FMLA type situations, etc.) and will require VPRSP approval in addition to endorsement from the Chair and the Dean.
- Faculty with surplus course releases that cannot be fully utilized during the grant period may submit an **irrevocable** request to convert a specified number of those course releases into Research Incentive Funds (see RIF funding above).Conversion will occur at an equivalency of one course release to $4,000 in RIF funding, with costs shared equally (50:50) by the CSE and ORSP.

2) **Department Discretionary time**: Reassigned time may also be granted to individual faculty members who are actively engaged in research, as recommended by the departments (and pending approval by the Dean). Funds to support discretionary reassigned time may be provided by the college to departments as the budget allows. Departments may supplement this category with their own discretionary funds, although the workload for each semester must be approved by the Dean regardless of the funding source.

[‡] For proposals submitted on or after July 1, 2026, $23,000 in net F&A funds will be expected. In future years, additional increases should be expected.

REASSIGNED TIME GUIDELINES:

- **Reassigned time is contingent on fulfilling all other teaching and service obligations.**
- Reassigned time will normally be granted in blocks of 3 hours, although reassignment of 4 or 5 hours may be appropriate in some instances. All reassigned time will be **at least 3 hours** in any semester.
- The **maximum** reassigned time provided for any individual in a single semester is **6 hours from all CMU sources,** including items 1 and 2 above, and any other CMU programs. Additional reassigned time in excess of the 6 hours per semester may be granted under highly exceptional circumstances. **Faculty requesting a semester with no teaching load must submit a detailed written plan outlining how and when they will fulfill their service obligations to the Department, College, and University.** This plan requires approval by the Chair. Ultimately all requests to teach less than one three-credit hour course in a semester requires prior approval from the Dean.
- **Overload teaching**: The Dean will not approve a teaching load below 9 credit hours in a semester for any faculty member in the CSE who has an overload (or out-of-load) appointment (*e.g.*, to teach an on-line course) in the same semester. Specifically, such faculty are not eligible to receive reassigned time from teaching under the ORSP-CSE grant-funded reassigned time program, any department funded release time, or any other University reassigned time program. Exceptions to these guidelines may be approved by the Dean on a case-by-case basis.
- Chairs are responsible for allocating discretionary time, which must be allocated to promote or enhance research. Departments can establish their own criteria and processes, but the Dean must approve workloads.

Fixed-Price Contracts

Budgets for all fixed-price contracts must be approved by the CSE before proposals are submitted. Budgets for such contracts should be developed to cover actual anticipated costs of doing the proposed work. Estimated costs should be as realistic as possible and include faculty time and benefits. Because CMU is a public institution, we should neither profit from nor subsidize work for external clients. **All** activities relating to the contract should be charged to the contract account: personnel, supplies, instrument fees, vehicle time, *etc.*, and include full F&A.

If funds remain in the contract account at the end of the project, half of the remainder, up to a maximum of $2,000 (half of $4,000), will be kept by the CSE in a professional development account for the PI. Any excess will revert to the CSE. Examples: $600 remains, PI has access to $300; $4,500 remains, PI has access to the maximum $2,000.

Pre-Proposals

All CSE faculty and staff contemplating the submission of a pre-proposal, letter of intent, white paper, draft budget, etc. to an external entity must first contact their ORSP Research Officer and CSE to discuss institutional and sponsor requirements at the earliest opportunity. Most pre-proposals contain a number of factors, some of which require Cayuse routing and some that may not require routing. Generally, preliminary submissions required by an external sponsor that include a detailed or unmodifiable budget, make any commitments on behalf of CMU, or require AOR signature, will require review via Cayuse prior to submission. Upon notification, ORSP will determine whether Cayuse routing is required.

Irrespective of whether a proposal is Cayuse-routed, ORSP will need to review the final document prior to submission and determine who will make the final submission to the sponsor.

This policy applies not only to formal pre-proposals required by many funding agencies, but to any instance where a budget or scope of work is sent to a potential funder or directly (by you) or indirectly (by a colleague) to the sponsored programs office at another university. Full proposals will not be allowed where this policy is circumvented. This policy ensures that funders and collaborating institutions receive budgets that have been subject to institutional oversight and do not contain any omissions or inadvertent errors that may jeopardize the applicant's and CMU's relationships with funders or partner institutions. This policy does not apply to informal discussions with funding sponsors or colleagues at other institutions regarding a possible collaborative proposal.

Graduate Student Support

Graduate student support should be budgeted as full-time, calendar-year support, including tuition. The dean's office will not approve proposals that include only academic year support. The rationale is to ensure that graduate student research assistants receive an appropriate level of support, which in turn will help recruit better graduate students and benefit grant-funded projects. Some other considerations:

- It is possible to pay graduate students on an hourly basis during the summers (*i.e.,* as an hourly employee rather than a graduate assistant). In this case, the weekly pay should be equal to that provided during the academic year. Paying students on an hourly basis can reduce the amount of tuition included in the budget, but the grant must include sufficient tuition to allow the student to graduate in a timely manner. It is also important to remember that there are non-discretionary **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) restrictions** that apply to non-exempt hourly employees (graduate students are in this category). Hourly employees must sign in and out at the start and end of work and must receive overtime payments of 1.5 x their hourly rate for each hour worked in excess of 40 hours a week (but grants restrict/limit overtime pay). Neither the employee or employer can agree to waive the FLSA overtime rules, nor can comp time be offered in lieu of overtime.
- Graduate student support for a shorter period (*e.g.*, semester) may be allowed on a case-by-case basis for small grants or contracts where funding is limited. Students should be supported full-time for the covered period.
- Summer-only full-time support for a graduate student may be allowed on a case-by-case basis for small grants, when the student will be supported as a teaching assistant or CMU-funded research assistant during the academic year. The guiding principle is that students working on a grant-funded project should be paid to do so wherever possible.