Interdisciplinary Research Seed (IRS) Fund
College of Engineering

The College of Engineering (COE) will continue its Interdisciplinary Research Seed (IRS) fund that was launched in spring 2015 in order to support exploratory interdisciplinary research. The aim of this fund is to encourage collaborative activities across departments in the college and to bridge traditional disciplinary boundaries. Expanding interdisciplinary research activities, particularly as they align with federal funding initiatives that are targeted to address pressing societal grand challenges, is becoming increasingly important to enhance research growth. Through this seed fund, the idea is to provide the faculty with an opportunity to enable them to gather the critical “preliminary data” and establish working partnerships that may otherwise not be possible, so the team is well-positioned for larger federal (or private) grants in the future. While the university-wide IDR fund can involve faculty across colleges, the IRS fund is specifically targeted to enhance interdisciplinary activities within the College of Engineering. In 2016 – 2017, the college will accept proposals that are aligned with the areas of strategic importance to the college, which are noted under “Thrust Areas of Interest” below.

The awarded team can pursue their research over the course of approximately 10 months, and all of the funds need to be expended within the 2016 - 2017 fiscal year (no carry over allowed).

Specific requirements for the COE IRS Fund:

Number of Departments in CoE: Minimum of 2 faculty from 2 different departments in the college should propose a collaborative research idea.

Thrust Areas of Interest: The Dean’s office is interested in receiving proposals in the four Thrust areas outlined below, which are of strategic importance to the college and provide opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration from departments within the college.

- Thrust 1: Sustainability & Renewable Energy
- Thrust 2: Advanced Manufacturing and Materials
- Thrust 3: Biomedical and Health Systems
- Thrust 4: Information and Security

In the proposal, the PIs should clearly mention which of the four thrust areas they are best aligned with. Failure to clearly identify the targeted Thrust area can affect the decision on your proposal.

Length of Proposal: Approximately 3-5 pages for the technical portion (not including budget justification, bios, etc.).

Submission Deadline: Sept. 16, 2016; announcement of awards will be made by Oct. 3, 2016.
Amount: $20,000 total per award for this year (duration of award is as early as Oct. 10, 2016 – July 31, 2017). We anticipate awarding up to 2 IRS grants for the current 2016 – 2017 competition.

Submission Format: 1 single pdf file sent via email to Professor Anupama Kaul (aka@utep.edu) with cc to Ms. Paulina Alvarado (palvarado4@utep.edu), including a budget justification statement on how the funds will be expended.

Fund Usage: Funds can be used to support graduate students over the period of the award for the research described, materials and supplies, etc. Funds will not be allowed for travel, equipment, or for supporting undergraduates in the research; there are other mechanisms for integrating undergraduates in research across campus (e.g. COURI program).

In the budget justification section, if two teams from different departments are collaborating, the PIs should indicate how approx. 50% of the total funds will be utilized to support research activities from Team A and how the other approx. 50% of the total funds will be utilized for supporting activities in Team B. If more than two research teams are collaborating, then the allocation of the funds for each team should be clearly reflected in the budget and explained in the budget justification section.

It is anticipated that the fund will be particularly beneficial to junior faculty who are seeking to establish their research programs. Department Chairs are not encouraged to apply.

Proposal Review Process: The proposals will be peer-reviewed.

Review Criteria: Proposals will be reviewed based on: 1) technical merit, 2) the interdisciplinary extent of the research, and 3) the likelihood of securing follow-on funding based on the research proposed. The team should clearly identify future targeted funding opportunities (federal or private) they will seek at the end of their IRS fund.

Decisions: Award decisions will be made by Oct. 3, 2016.

Reporting of Outcomes: A final report of up to 5 pages is required identifying how the funds were expended, list of publications that resulted from this support, any IP that was generated, and identification of the follow-on funding opportunities that will be sought out. In addition, the awarded teams are required to present their work at a forum that will be held in the Fall of 2017.