

New Research Fund Will Support Faculty Research That Benefits Students, Community

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(Photo by Sanjay Suchak, University Communications)

The University of Virginia has made the first round of awards from a new seed fund designed to support research conducted by faculty members that has the potential to benefit the University community.

The President and Provost's Fund for Institutionally Related Research is intended to support key elements of the University's strategic plan, "A Great and Good University: The 2030 Plan,"

while also having a positive effect on higher education more broadly.

“We’re excited about the unique focus of this fund,” President Jim Ryan said. “By supporting UVA research that has the potential to benefit our university and our community directly, we hope to create a virtuous circle.”

Two projects received support in the first round of awards:

- “Hoos Connected: A Scalable Intervention to Foster a Sense of Belonging and Enhance Mental Health in Entering UVA Students” is a proposal from psychology professor Joseph Allen for a Grounds-wide collaboration designed to enhance entering students’ academic functioning and mental health by building their sense of community and belonging, specifically among students who might otherwise feel marginalized.
- “eGlobal UVA,” proposed by the School of Medicine’s Marcel Durieux, will support the strategic plan’s goal of providing all undergraduate students with at least one international experience by comparing the effects of international engagement through an existing travel program to Rwanda with an experimental virtual international engagement via “eTwinning,” or connecting students to counterparts in Rwanda electronically.

The catalyst for the creation of the fund was a proposal by Sarah Turner, University Professor of Economics & Education and Souder Family Professor, for a collaborative effort to increase the pool of high-achieving, low- and moderate-income students applying to Virginia’s most resource-intensive universities.

The “Gateways to College Opportunities in Virginia” project, which is now underway, seeks to answer the question: How could a small group of similarly competitive colleges collaborate in outreach in the early high school years to increase the pool of students from traditionally underrepresented groups applying to competitive colleges?

“Sarah’s proposal really helped us see the potential for a fund designed specifically to seed projects that contribute to the greater good of our community and reinforce the vision of the University’s strategic plan,” Provost Liz Magill said.

The President and Provost’s Fund for Institutionally Related Research will accept another round of proposals this fall. Projects eligible for funding could include research related to attracting low-income or first-generation applicants or assuring their success; improving student mental health; helping fully realize the benefits of diversity and fostering a sense of belonging for all students; or any research to improve the quality of life and learning for UVA students, faculty and staff.

The fund is designed to provide initial support to launch projects that can either be completed with one-time funding, or, if they will require a larger investment, have the potential to attract longer-term funding from federal agencies, private foundations and other sources. The fund has an annual pool of \$500,000, with a cap of \$200,000 per award.

MEDIA CONTACT

Wesley P. Hester

*Director of Media Relations
Office of University Communications
wph8f@virginia.edu*
● 434-924-1453

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