UC Davis STAIR and DIAL Proof-of-Concept Grant Programs
2019-20 Cycle Summary

The **Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR™)** grant program, managed by Venture Catalyst, is designed to provide funding to support translational science and innovative research performed by UC Davis researchers. The goal of the program is to demonstrate early proof-of-concept and commercial potential or feasibility for technologies being developed with the intent of commercial translation.

Examples of outcomes that might be realized from research results enabled by this funding include:
- Development of research or early commercial prototypes
- Generation of translational data from experiments typically not fundable by traditional research grants
- Enablement of patent claims
- Promotion of more competitive licensing opportunities
- SBIR/STTR grant applications by subsequent startups benefiting from license rights to the underlying technologies.

The **Data, Informatics and Application Launch (DIAL™)** grant program provides funding to UC Davis researchers with the intent of demonstrating commercial potential, proof-of-concept or other outcomes that improve or clarify the commercialization risk profile for data, information science or software and related applications being developed at UC Davis.

These two proof-of-concept grants are one element of a suite of Venture Catalyst programs designed to stimulate translational research and facilitate early engagement by entrepreneurial researchers with campus programs that support technology commercialization and provide resources needed to successfully form and grow new ventures.

The objectives of the STAIR and DIAL programs align with major goals of the University to foster a vibrant community of learning and scholarship, drive innovation at the frontiers of knowledge, nurture a sustainable future, and develop of an innovative and entrepreneurial culture that extends the benefits of our research activities beyond the boundaries of the university.

The STAIR and DIAL grant application period for the 2019-20 cycle opened on Wednesday, January 28, 2020 through the solicitation of an application form and submission of a three-page research proposal (not including biographical sketches, budget justification, milestones, citations and references). The Innovation and Technology Commercialization team (Venture Catalyst and Innovation*Access*) conducted seven information sessions on the Davis and Sacramento campuses to raise awareness of the programs and answer questions regarding objectives, eligibility, and process. In addition, the team proactively contacted and engaged directly with more than 90 principal investigators (PIs), and organized outreach through several campus partners, including the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Applications were due on March 10, 2020. A total of 35 eligible STAIR and 6 DIAL applications were received by the application deadline.

A total of $375,000 was allocated to the STAIR and DIAL programs in the 2019-20 cycle: up to $290,000 was provided by the Office of Research and up to $85,000 of supplemental funding was committed by campus partners. The funding period for STAIR and DIAL grants is one year through July 2020. A total of $1.824 million was requested through the STAIR and DIAL grant programs by PIs from over 24 different departments, representing a broad range of schools and colleges.

A proactive mentor engagement plan was developed, which involves assignment of industry mentors to each of the 16 STAIR finalists (which includes mentoring award recipients on commercialization milestones and timelines), and follow-up with all applicants to provide summarized reviewer comments and facilitate access to innovation resources. The mentor engagement process will be facilitated by Venture Catalyst, in collaboration with Innovation*Access*. Additionally, the UC Davis Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship is providing support for STAIR grant award recipients through its Entrepreneurship Academies.

All STAIR and DIAL applicants receive a summary of anonymized reviewer comments to help guide technology commercialization for their projects. In addition, all finalists have been assigned one or more mentors from the Review Committee to advise on their projects. All awardees will be required to engage with their mentors on a quarterly basis and receive final approval of their scope of work and budget before funds will be disbursed. Further, to build relevant skills among innovative PIs, all awardees will be required to complete a structured entrepreneurial training program such as an Entrepreneurship Academy organized by the UC Davis Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship or the NSF I-Corps Immersive Short Course offered by Venture Catalyst in collaboration with the Bay Area Node.

Proof of Concept Funding Program Historical Impact

The graphic below provides a summary of the six cycles of the proof-of-concept grant programs, including outcomes such as technology licenses and follow-on funding for projects and technologies.

208
Applications

104
Finalists
(includes Awardees)

2
Research
Collaborations

42
Awardees

21
IP Agreements

15
Startups
Launched

$21 million
in Follow on Funding

- $9.5M in Startup Investment
- $11.6M in Research Funding

News Release on 2019-2020 STAIR/DIAL Awardees:

https://research.ucdavis.edu/uc-davis-awards-grants-to-advance-innovative-solutions-with-commercial-potential/