

## Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR™)<sup>1</sup> Grant Program: Request for Proposals (FY 2019-20)

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### ***Program Overview***

The UC Davis Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR) Grant Program, now in its seventh year (FY 2019-20), is funded by the Office of Research and managed by Venture Catalyst.

The objective of the STAIR Grant Program is to provide targeted funding to support translational science and innovative research performed by 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 technologies being developed at UC Davis. Examples of outcomes that might be realized from availability of such research results include, but are not limited to, development of research or commercial prototypes, generation of translational data or research results whose development would not have been funded by traditional research grants, patent claims enablement, and enablement of more competitive SBIR/STTR grant applications by a subsequent startup that benefits from license or other intellectual property rights to the underlying technologies.

One of the keys to achieving this translational impact is the mentoring provided by industry experts to STAIR Grant awardees and finalists. The feedback from these industry experts through the review and mentoring processes has been invaluable to the program and to UC Davis researchers as they design and implement their research plans to help increase the commercialization potential of UC Davis technology.

In addition to enabling outcomes such as those listed above, the program also seeks to indirectly stimulate entrepreneurial activity in Davis and the surrounding region, powered by technological advances made at UC Davis.

### ***Eligibility Requirements***

#### Eligible Projects

Projects eligible for STAIR funding will feature an early-stage technology that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Has advanced beyond the fundamental research stage, but requires early proof-of-concept data to demonstrate commercial potential
- Has demonstrated successful results in the research environment and is poised for commercialization pending a specific, targeted demonstration, test result, or prototype
- Has reached a critical stage of technology development, whereby specific questions pertaining to commercialization feasibility can be answered within the resource constraints of the program

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<sup>1</sup> STAIR is a trademark of The Regents of the University of California.

### Intellectual Property Conditions

- Projects proposed in grant application must address technology with potentially patentable intellectual property (IP)
- All potentially patentable IP developed under a STAIR Grant project will be assigned to the University of California
- Any technology that is the subject of a STAIR Grant proposal that has been optioned or licensed to a company is not eligible to receive STAIR funding; however, technology under a Letter Agreement with a company is eligible

**You are encouraged to contact InnovationAccess concerning IP-related eligibility.**

### Funding Conditions

- The total amount of requested funding support cannot exceed a total of \$50,000, and the project objectives must be achievable with these funds within the grant term (one year from funds disbursement)
- Funds must only be used for eligible expenses (see *Allowable Costs* section below); the awardee's department will be eligible for covering any expenses deemed ineligible
- Achievement of project objectives described in the grant application must not be contingent on funds that do not currently exist or that will not be covered by the allowable budget request

### Eligible Applicants

- Anyone with Principal Investigator (PI) eligibility at UC Davis is eligible to apply as a PI
- Postdoctoral scholars and university staff researchers are eligible to submit applications as Co-PI with an eligible PI
- One or more of the PI, Co-PI and key personnel will have participated in, or will commit to participate in, an upcoming Entrepreneurship Academy administered by the UC Davis Mike and Renee Child Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (IIE) (more information at <http://gsm.ucdavis.edu/entrepreneurship-academies>) or an equivalent structured entrepreneurial training program approved by Venture Catalyst

### ***Grant Terms and Amounts***

Up to \$250,000 is available for the STAIR Grant Program in Fiscal Year 2019-2020. Approved projects may be eligible for up to \$50,000. Grants are for a single 12-month period from the date of grant funds disbursement. All submitted proposals must be limited in scope of work and budget, such that work can be completed within that 12-month period. Funds may be released to an awardee in one or more tranches, based on the work plan of the awardee and at the discretion of the STAIR Grant Review Committee and the Vice Chancellor of Research. The number of STAIR Grants awarded will depend on funds available in the fiscal year, the quality of the proposals received, and the discretion of the Vice Chancellor of Research.

In addition, Venture Catalyst has engaged several partners to expand potential funding available to particular technologies and projects through the STAIR Grant program. Partners include Elanco, the UC Davis Innovation Institute for Food and Health, UC Davis College of Biological Sciences, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, and UC Davis School of Medicine. Please see the Program Materials section of

the STAIR Grant Program web site for additional details on types of funding and areas of interest:  
<https://research.ucdavis.edu/offices/vc/stair/stair-grant-program-materials>.

### ***Allowable Costs***

Activities that are eligible for STAIR funding include direct costs only. Examples of direct costs that may be included in the grant request are supplies, reagents, and minor (non-capitalized) equipment.

Up to 20% of STAIR Grant funding requested can be used for salary support, for graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and technical research staff employees only, employed with the university in such capacity at the time of application submission. Clear justification must be provided to show why the requested salary support is essential for the proposed project. *If the proposal includes funding for graduate students*, the PI responsible for supervising the education, training, or thesis-directed research or related activities of participating graduate student(s) must certify that participation of the student(s) in the program will not adversely impact the education, training, or thesis-directed activities of the student(s). Additionally, PI will agree to release such student(s) to participate in an Entrepreneurship Academy managed by IIE or an equivalent structured entrepreneurial training program approved by Venture Catalyst. Salary support requests for graduate students may include tuition and fees remission, in accordance with the UC Davis Academic Personnel Manual, Appendix II-B<sup>2</sup>.

As an exception to the 20% cap on salaries, if the proposed project requires software development (either to enable IP being developed by the PI or as an integral part of an IP-supported proof-of-concept proposal), up to \$10,000 may be applied to salaries for project software development personnel. If the requested software development salary support is \$10,000, then the project will not be eligible for any additional salary support.

STAIR Grant funds can be used to hire contractors for certain activities, such as prototype fabrication or medicinal chemistry services. Contact the STAIR Program Manager if you have questions about whether an activity performed by a contractor would be eligible for funding.

STAIR Grant support is **not** to be used for capital equipment (\$5,000 or more)<sup>3</sup>, market research reports, consulting expenses, maintenance agreements, costs associated with attending conferences, etc. Travel costs are generally excluded from eligibility, except in rare cases. Please contact the program manager for more information prior to submitting a proposal at STAIRgrant@ucdavis.edu.

The program is generally not intended to fund research directly involving human subject testing.

Only research activities specifically described in the grant proposal will be funded. Research that has already been performed or expenses that have already been incurred in any manner at the time of grant application or grant award are not eligible for funding.

### ***Timeline***

- Announcement release: Tuesday, January 28, 2020

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<sup>2</sup> This document can be found at <https://aadoocs.ucdavis.edu/policies/apm/ucd-app-ii/appendix-ii-b.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Defined per UC Davis Policy and Procedure Manual, Ch. 350, Section 50:  
<https://ucdavispolicy.ellucid.com/documents/view/489/509/>

- **Application deadline: Tuesday, March 3, 2020**
- Notice of award: Anticipating mid-June, 2020

### ***How to Apply***

Application forms, along with detailed instructions, can be found at the following URL: <http://research.ucdavis.edu/offices/vc/stair/>. Applications can be submitted through Office of Research's InfoReady grant application platform at <https://ucdavis.infoready4.com/> (*Kerberos login required*).

Potential applicants should send an email indicating their interest to [stairgrant@ucdavis.edu](mailto:stairgrant@ucdavis.edu), so that we may contact you to provide updates, special announcements, or other communications (e.g., upcoming information sessions).

### ***Program Details***

#### Program Overview

University projects seeking to establish technology development or commercialization proof of concept, though typically very early in the product development continuum, are generally not eligible for early-stage research grant funding from traditional funding sources. This funding gap creates a gulf between exciting, early, innovative research and the generation of data necessary to demonstrate commercial potential and feasibility. Projects that fall within this funding gap may be associated with the following:

- Faculty/campus researchers who intend to start up a company based wholly, or in part, on the technology that is the subject of the STAIR Grant application
- Faculty/campus researchers who have not yet received STAIR or other funding to move the technology towards commercialization
- Faculty/campus researchers who are in the early stages of developing or enabling a patent portfolio around the STAIR Grant technology and have a need for funding to enable broader or more defensible patent claims

Early-stage proof-of-concept projects not eligible for grant support from traditional funding sources (NSF, NIH, etc.) or without existing funding or support will be given priority over projects with other forms of support (e.g., angel or venture capital funding, government grants, and other proof-of-concept grants). Leveraging other forms of support – as long as there is no overlap in funded projects under a project plan – is encouraged. In such cases, it will be important to identify an IP management plan in conjunction with InnovationAccess.

#### Program Administration

UC Davis Venture Catalyst – in collaboration with InnovationAccess – is responsible for the administration and implementation of the STAIR Program. These activities include developing program documentation (program announcements, proposal solicitations, policies, application forms, etc.), managing the application process, establishing the STAIR Grant Review Committee, establishing and administering a grant application review and awardee selection process, facilitating the review and

decision process, administering the awards process in conjunction with the Office of Research Budget & Finance department, and facilitating the mentor engagement process with finalists and awardees.

### Intellectual Property (IP)

Projects proposed in grant applications must address technology with potentially patentable IP. If the technology is not covered by a patent or patent application or has not been disclosed to UC Davis' technology transfer office, InnovationAccess, via the Record of Invention (ROI) process, by January 24, 2020, then the applicant must participate in a Pre-Application Meeting with InnovationAccess before the STAIR Grant proposal deadline. The purpose of the Pre-Application Meeting will be to assess whether the proposed project covers potentially patentable IP and provide input on alignment with STAIR Grant technology commercialization objectives.

You can sign up for a Pre-Application Meeting by selecting a designated time slot through the following site: <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5426218/STAIR-pre-application-signup>. Applicants that require a Pre-Application Meeting are encouraged to sign up early to ensure availability before the deadline.

All potentially patentable IP developed under a STAIR Grant project will be assigned to the University of California. Any technology that is the subject of a STAIR Grant proposal that has been optioned or licensed to a company is not eligible to receive STAIR funding; however, technology under a Letter Agreement with a company is eligible.

You are encouraged to contact InnovationAccess (<https://research.ucdavis.edu/industry/ia/>) concerning IP-related eligibility and technology commercialization.

### Conflict-of-Interest Review

Prior to a final funding decision, the Office of Research may undertake a conflict of interest review of the proposed project.

## **Review Process**

### Overview

Venture Catalyst staff will perform an initial review of all proposals for any errors in completion or other non-substantive issues. Proposals will then be provided electronically to the STAIR Grant Review Committee for assessment and scoring. The STAIR Grant Review Committee will score proposals on review criteria identified below. Based on quality of proposals received and the total budget request, the STAIR Grant Review Committee will recommend a number of applications (expected to be approximately 5, though the number may be higher or lower) for approval by the UC Davis Vice Chancellor of Research.

### STAIR Grant Review Committee Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis by the STAIR Grant Review Committee. This committee will be composed of a core group of reviewers (Standing Committee) and may be supplemented with *ad hoc* members where additional domain expertise is required. The Standing Committee will include industry experts representing corporate, investor, and entrepreneurial expertise, Office of Research staff, and campus knowledge experts qualified to evaluate a combination of business

and scientific translational merits of the proposals received may act as advisors to the Standing Committee.

Reviewers will be obligated to protect the confidentiality of proposals and will be expected to disqualify themselves in cases of conflict of interest. Venture Catalyst anticipates providing summarized anonymized reviewer comments to all applicants.

Review Criteria: Specific Elements

Applications will be scored on a scale of “1” (lowest) to “9” (highest). Review criteria fall into four broad categories: Fit with Program; Technical Merit; Commercial Potential; and Budget, Milestones, and Proof-of-Concept. Applicants should be prepared to answer the following questions in their proposal:

- Program Fit
  - Does the proposal fit with program objectives and eligibility?
    - The STAIR Grant is designed for early proof-of-concept experiments unlikely to be eligible for existing federal or other grant funding; the technology or project is at a stage where proof-of-concept funding will substantially enable next steps towards technology commercialization; and the project reflects a gap in early technology development with potential for commercial impact.
- Technical Merit
  - Does the project team have scientific or technological expertise required by the proposal?
  - How clearly does the proposal describe the proposed research and the anticipated results?
  - Does the proposal clearly describe and provide sufficient prior proof-of-concept or enabling research results to support the work proposed?
- Budget and Timelines
  - Is there a reasonable likelihood of achieving project objectives, given the available financial and technical resources identified or anticipated?
  - How appropriate is the timeline presented for achieving the proposal’s objectives?
- Milestones and Commercial Potential
  - Does the proposal indicate clear recognition of the steps, challenges, and value-generating milestones that would enable commercial feasibility for the technology?
  - Does the proposal effectively describe the product or service that would be enabled by the proposed work and end-user served? How well the proposal identifies a market need and product fit within the competitive landscape?
  - How effectively does the proposal present the current intellectual property and intellectual property strategy?

### ***Award Process and Post-Award Administration***

Prior to award disbursement, Venture Catalyst will verify that the awardee is still eligible, based on criteria established in the RFP. (For example, IP must not be licensed or optioned at the time of the award; proposed research has not received alternative funding; etc.)

The amount of requested funding support cannot exceed a total of \$50,000. The Office of Research reserves the right to reduce the final amount of funding approved, including salary requests, when making a final determination of grant award. The STAIR Grant Review Committee will conduct a final review of 1) proposed milestones, and 2) fit with the requested budget, prior to a final funding decision. Funds must only be used for eligible expenses (see *Allowable Costs* section above); the awardee's department will be eligible for covering any expenses deemed ineligible.

Funds will be disbursed only after the first meeting (facilitated by Venture Catalyst staff) with the assigned mentors, and subsequent sign-off by the mentors and researcher on the proposed project milestones. Funds awarded are to be expended within 12 months of release of funding from Office of Research to the PI's department. On a case-by-case basis, upon submission of reasonable justification by the PI and at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor of Research, a single no-cost extension of not more than 6 months may be provided.

Awardees will be expected to engage with STAIR Grant mentors on a regular basis and submit reports indicating progress towards or achievement of project milestones. Mentors will be assigned to each awardee project by the Venture Catalyst team, based on factors such as alignment of mentor background and expertise with the project, and on mentor participation in the proposal review process. Progress report content and timelines will be discussed and agreed upon prior to release of funds, and at a minimum will include quarterly accounting and mid-year progress and final reports.

As a condition of the award, awardees will be expected to:

- Meet quarterly (in person or by telephone) with mentor(s)
- Provide quarterly accounting to indicate use of funds on the project in the achievement of project milestones
- Submit a mid-year progress report that includes milestone tracking and a clear accounting of the use of granted funds in the furtherance of the project and achievement of proposed project milestones
- Submit a final project report that summarizes technical achievements and discusses commercial next steps
- PI/co-PI and key personnel (including any graduate students involved in the project) participate in an Entrepreneurship Academy run by the Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship or an equivalent structured entrepreneurial training program approved by Venture Catalyst
- Participate in a mini-symposium in 2021 to present project results to-date and commercialization-related outcomes

At its discretion (or that of the Vice Chancellor of Research), and based on review of the proposal and related budget and timelines, the STAIR Grant Review Committee may determine that funding is to be provided in tranches aligned with the proposed proof-of-concept milestones submitted.

***Contact Information***

For any questions related to the STAIR Grant process, please send an email to [stairgrant@ucdavis.edu](mailto:stairgrant@ucdavis.edu).