



**This Message is sent on behalf of the Office of the Vice President for Research.**

The Office of the Vice President for Research has initiated new internal funding mechanisms to advance research and scholarly activities, called **ASPIRE**. There will be 3 major tracks of funding designated ASPIRE-I, ASPIRE-II and ASPIRE-III. Below is a brief description of each of the programs and the rationale for developing these:

**1. ASPIRE-I (Advanced Support Program for Innovative Research Excellence-I):**

This mechanism funds small grant applications from individual investigators through 4 tracks, each tailored towards the unique needs of our faculty.

- **Track I**

Eligibility: funds will be for Junior Faculty (tenure-track Assistant Professors only) and will be awarded to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding or other scholarly pursuits.

Funds: Up to \$15,000/grant

Rationale: Most funding agencies are considering the applications of junior faculty under a separate category so that they do not have to compete against senior, well-established faculty. This is because of their relative lack of experience in writing grant applications and not having had the time to generate preliminary data. Thus, we believe that this category would create a more even playing field for junior faculty.

- **Track II**

Eligibility: Funds will be awarded to research faculty (non-tenure track, Assistant Professor level and above, but not for Post-Doctoral Fellows) to encourage the development of research projects so as to secure extramural funding.

Funds: Up to \$10,000/grant

Rationale: We have a significant number of nontenure-track or research faculty that play a crucial role in sustaining and advancing research at USC. This track would provide some seed funds so that such faculty can advance their career opportunities.

- **Track III**

Eligibility: Funds will be awarded as bridge funds to faculty (tenure-track/tenured or research faculty) who have not been able to renew their recent grants as Principal Investigators.

Funds: Up to \$15,000/grant

Rationale: As everybody knows, extramural funding is getting very competitive and often faculty find it difficult to renew their grants. This mechanism provides bridge funds for faculty to generate some critical data or take steps so that they can get back on track.

Funds: Up to \$15,000/grant

- **Track IV**

Eligibility: Funds will be awarded as innovative and exploratory grants for Senior Faculty (Tenure-Track or Tenured Associate and Full Professors) to expand or re-focus their research.

Funds: Up to \$15,000/grant

Rationale: Often, senior faculty change their focus and/or wish to explore other innovative ideas. This track will support such initiatives.

**2. ASPIRE-II** (Advanced Support Program for **Integration** of Research Excellence-II):

Eligibility: This mechanism will support research involving at least two or more Colleges/Schools. It is aimed to promote interdisciplinary collaborations between at least 3 or more faculty members to develop preliminary data to apply for Program Projects, Centers of Excellence Grants or similar mechanisms of extramural funding.

Funds: Each grant up to \$100,000

Rationale: While USC has outstanding faculty who are excelling in individual investigator-initiated research, it is critical that we pursue collaborative interdisciplinary research so as to develop Program Projects and Centers of Excellence that are nationally and internationally competitive and supported by external agencies.

**3. ASPIRE-III** (Advanced Support Program for **Infrastructure** in Research Excellence-III).

Eligibility: This mechanism will support infrastructure development such as multi-user equipment and cutting edge-technology that is critical to remain competitive in research.

Funds: Each grant up to \$100,000

Rationale: To pursue interdisciplinary research, it is critical that we develop and maintain state-of-the-art technology, laboratories and equipment that can be used to develop Centers of Excellence. This track is aimed at providing support for such ventures. Funds may be used to complement extramural support for purchase of major equipment.

Call for all ASPIRES programs along with details will be released later this week. To receive notification of these calls, please email Beth Herron ([bherron@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:bherron@mailbox.sc.edu)) to sign up for the Research Development listserv. Calls will also be posted on the main page of the Research website, at <http://www.sc.edu/research>. Please note that there will be multiple awards under each category. The number of awards will be based on the quality of applications that we receive. Applications under each category will be reviewed by a Peer Review Committee consisting of faculty experts.