GUIDELINES

Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA)

I. Name and Purpose

The name of the program is the Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA). The purpose of the SFSA is to advance the research mission of the University. The fund supports creative activities and research that may not lead to external funding but enhance the scholarly reputation of WMU and the faculty principal investigator. In addition, these funds are given to support:

- Faculty in the organizational phases of establishing their research and creative activity project.
- Faculty entering new areas of research or creative activity.
- Dissemination of original scholarship or work and/or engagement in professional collaborations associated with such work.

The Research Policies Council (RPC) oversees administration of the program and establishes operational procedures regarding application, review, scoring, determination of eligibility, and award processes. The RPC also evaluates all final reports from awardees and assesses the outcomes of the program.

II. Application Procedures


- There are two application deadlines, one in the fall and one in the spring (see https://wmich.edu/research/funding/internal/sfsa for specific dates).

- All proposals shall be written for a non-specialist audience.

III. Award Conditions

A. Awards are for one year. The time period begins at the award date designated for each competition.

B. The maximum amount of an SFSA is $2,000. Award funds must be used within the one-year project period; they cannot be carried forward beyond the award termination date.

C. Within 60 days of the end of the award year, the PI must submit a final report describing the outcomes of the project, including a listing of any papers, presentations, and creative works. The OVPR will provide RPC with an annual report on scholarly activity resulting from the SFSA program.
D. Awarded cannot draw on Faculty Research and Creative Activity Award (FRACAA) and SFSA funds during the same fiscal year. Proposals for consecutive awards (i.e., FRACAA then SFSA or SFSA then FRACAA) must disclose the existing award and include a rationale for the connection if one exists.

IV. Eligibility

Individuals or groups of individuals eligible for awards are restricted to all those holding board-appointed faculty rank who are members of the bargaining unit at the time the SFSA proposals are due and who submitted a satisfactory final report for any previous SFSA or FRACAA award.

A. An applicant whose appointment at WMU terminates prior to or during the year of award implementation may submit an application, but shall not receive an award until he/she has an appointment at WMU covering the year of implementation.

B. Previous SFSA awardees are eligible every second year following the latest award.

C. No SFSA Screening Committee member is eligible to submit a proposal while serving as a member of the committee.

V. SFSA Restrictions

A. SFSA funds may not be used for salary purposes.

B. The SFSA program does not fund projects solely for student research and creative activities.

C. SFSA funds may not be used for student tuition, fees, or travel.

D. SFSA funds may not be used to support conference travel. Travel for the presentation of faculty research results is funded through the Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF).

E. Faculty may not use SFSA funds for the purpose of completing graduate study or professional training.

VI. Budget

The proposed budget may not exceed $2,000 regardless of the number of collaborators. A proposed budget greater than the allowed maximum amount of $2,000 will disqualify the proposal. Such a proposal will not be reviewed.

A detailed budget must be included within the application. Proposed budget items must include a justification for the expense. The SFSA Screening Committee shall have the option of line-item veto regarding the proposed budget.

VII. Organizational Structure

A. The structure for the process of announcing and reviewing proposals includes the following:
1. SFSA Program Coordinator (OVPR staff member)

The Vice President for Research shall designate one professional staff person from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to serve as SFSA program coordinator. The program coordinator shall assist in the determination of eligibility and administer all award activity (including program announcements, correspondence, record keeping, and preparation of the final report) regarding the program. The program coordinator shall attend screening committee meetings in a staff support capacity.

2. SFSA Screening Committee

The SFSA Screening Committee will consist of a subcommittee of the Research Policies Council and will have representation from each of the following colleges: Arts and Sciences, Aviation, Business, Education, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Health and Human Services, and Fine Arts. The subcommittee reports to the chair of the RPC.

The responsibilities of the SFSA Screening Committee include:

a. Electing a subcommittee chairperson to coordinate the subcommittee’s activities and communication;

b. Reviewing proposals to determine merit and contribution to scholarship of WMU and the principal investigator;

c. Ranking proposals for funding;

d. Based upon the pool of funds available, recommending proposals for funding.

Orientation for the SFSA Screening Committee, as well as for interested faculty at large, shall be provided by the program coordinator, the chair of RPC, and by the Office of the Vice President of Research.

B. The SFSA Screening Committee chair will function as coordinator of the committee's work, assuring that the committee is working according to the guidelines and timelines. Additionally, the committee chair is responsible for other routine administrative duties, such as communication with faculty applicants on behalf of the committee and convening the SFSA Screening Committee for orientation by the vice president for research.

VIII. Procedure for Proposal Review

A. The program coordinator and SFSA Screening Committee chair shall review proposals to determine that the applicants meet all eligibility criteria.

B. Members of the SFSA Screening Committee will be randomly assigned proposals to review and act as a committee of the whole in recommending proposals for funding.

C. Applications not funded will receive a copy of the scoring forms and comments prepared by each reviewer.
IX. Criteria for Evaluating Proposals

SFSA funds are awarded solely on the basis of proposal merit. The following criteria will be used:

A. The proposal provides an adequate description of the project from which to judge its merit;
B. The proposal adequately describes how this work will make a significant contribution to the discipline;
C. The proposal adequately describes how this work will make an original contribution to the discipline;
D. The proposal adequately describes how the dissemination of the project findings, results, or products will occur in a timely manner, individually or as part of a larger project;
E. The proposal adequately describes how this work will enhance the reputation of the faculty member(s) and WMU;
F. The proposed budget is clearly itemized and justified, demonstrating that it is reasonable and adequate in relation to the proposed work.

X. Scoring of Proposals

Each member of the SFSA Screening Committee will be randomly assigned proposals to review. Committee members will submit descriptive comments and scores for each reviewed proposal.

Based upon scores and the recommendation for funding from the Screening Committee, the proposals will be rank ordered. Screening Committee members will have the opportunity to discuss their reviewed proposals for funding. Along with notification of award or declination, each applicant will receive comments and scores from each reviewer.

The SFSA Screening Committee will use the following scale in the review of each proposal: 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good, and 5 = Excellent.

XI. Appeals Procedure on Eligibility Criteria and Restrictions

A. Applicants may not appeal a decision based on the substance of a proposal. All applicants will receive comments and scores from each reviewer and are encouraged to utilize this information to revise and resubmit the proposal in a subsequent competition.

B. Applicants may appeal determinations based on the eligibility criteria or restrictions.

1. Appeals on Eligibility Criteria—If the applicant receives notice stating that he/she has been found ineligible for funding and believes that the basis for the determination of the ineligibility as described in the notice is incorrect, he/she may contact the Office of the Vice President for Research to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter. The program coordinator and screening committee chairperson shall attend the meeting. If the applicant is found to be eligible, the proposal will be sent to the SFSA
Screening Committee and considered for funding. Appeals should be made promptly so that the committee can receive the now-eligible proposal when it receives all other proposals.

2. Appeals on the Restrictions—If the applicant receives notice stating that his/her proposal has been found to violate a restriction and believes that the basis for this determination as described in the notice is incorrect, he/she may contact the Office of the Vice President for Research to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter. If the proposal is found to have not violated a restriction, the proposal will be returned to the SFSA Screening Committee and considered for funding.

XII. Post-Review and Monitoring Procedures

SFSA awardees are required to submit a final report form within 60 days of the end of their award year.

The evaluation phase of the Support for Faculty Scholars Award program shall receive priority attention. The program coordinator shall carefully review each final project report. Materials related to proposals shall be kept in the OVPR for a suitable period of time, no longer than three years.

XIII. Time-Table Overview

Announcements of the application dates for the academic year will be made no later than August by the OVPR.

Fall award notifications will be announced in December, with an award year of Dec. 15 to Dec. 14; spring award notifications will be announced in May, with an award year of June 15-June 14.