



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities (RSCA) Grant Program

Deadline: R 11 DEC 2025 @ NOON PST

Background

Cal Poly is committed to the teacher-scholar model in which faculty integrate excellence in teaching with excellence in research, scholarly and creative activities. The teacher-scholar model enables faculty to fulfill Cal Poly's mission as an institution committed to quality undergraduate and graduate education, to the advancement of knowledge through basic and applied research, to the enrichment of society through creative activities in the arts and humanities, and to serving our community. The Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities (RSCA) Grant Program, supported by funds from the CSU Chancellor's Office and the Cal Poly Provost's Office, is intended to help faculty remain engaged in their disciplines beyond the classroom and to contribute new knowledge through robust programs of scholarship focused on strengthening California socially, culturally, and economically. The annual funding from the program is intended to provide internal resources to help faculty pursue a broader array of professional activities.

Who may apply?

All faculty unit employees are eligible to compete for funding, including lecturers, tenure-track, and tenured faculty. Awards are provided only to those who hold a current appointment for the duration of the program (JUL 2026 – JUN 2027); exceptions may be granted but require review by the Office of the Associate Vice Provost of Research and the Dean of the respective college. This funding is intended to provide support to new, early career, tenure-track probationary faculty and lecturers at any stage of their career at Cal Poly. To be eligible to apply as a PI or co-PI, applicants must be faculty (unit 3) employees (i.e. tenure-track, tenured, or lecturer faculty). Non-faculty unit employees (i.e. MPP, staff, etc.) are not eligible to serve as PIs or co-PIs.

Support for temporary personnel: non-unit 3 employees may be compensated as temporary personnel; they must demonstrate that any work on this internally funded program falls outside their regular position duties.

In addition, funding is available to support more senior, tenured faculty to open new scholarly directions. For tenured faculty, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the reviewers with specific information that makes the case that the proposed research is a new scholarly direction for the PI (please see the "New Scholarly Direction" section below for more information). In order to be considered for funding, you must address this or your proposal will be considered ineligible. You may refer to your submitted CV as part of this demonstration.

Please note that these grants are intended to serve as "seed" awards. They are not intended to be utilized as "bridge" or "closure" funding. Furthermore, the same scope of work funded by a Teacher-



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Scholar Mini Grant will not be eligible for RSCA funding. If you have any questions about eligibility requirements, please email research@calpoly.edu.

- Applicants may only submit up to two proposals per year, either 1) one as the PI and one as a Co-PI, or 2) two as a Co-PI; submitting two proposals as PI is not allowed.
- Applicants cannot submit a proposal as a PI if they have received two RSCA awards in the preceding 5 award cycles (2021-22 to 2025-26); i.e. the fiscal year for the original active term of the project, not the fiscal year when the PI received the notification of award. This limit does not apply to submissions as a Co-PI.
- Applicants can only re-submit the same proposed project three times – one original submission and two resubmissions.
- PIs and Co-PIs are not eligible to receive a new grant if they have any past-due progress reports for previous RSCA grants.

What types of projects will be funded?

The program is intended to fund all types of research, scholarly, and creative activities. This includes but is not limited to empirical and theoretical research, applied design and development, scholarship of teaching and learning, writing of books, and the production of art and other creative activities. Proposed projects must be related to the generation of new knowledge, and it is incumbent upon the PI to clarify these potential contributions.

What types of projects will not be funded?

Grants will not be awarded for instructional improvement, course development, or evaluation. If the scholarship is pedagogically focused, which is a fundable research type, it is incumbent upon the applicant to make the research agenda to produce new knowledge clear.

What review criteria will apply?

Proposals will be evaluated according to standardized criteria, including intellectual merit; significance and role in advancing the field or discipline; feasibility; benefits to the candidate's profession and/or students; and the qualifications of the faculty PI and collaborators.

The following additional criteria will be considered in assigning funding priority. It is incumbent upon the proposer to ensure the applicability to each of these criteria is clearly stated in the proposal:

- Potential of the project to attract future funding
- Support of fields and disciplines with minimal access to external funding
- Involvement of students



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- Benefits to Cal Poly (e.g., contributions to the teacher-scholar model; reputation of the institution)

For more information, please find the rubric and rating definitions on our website.

In order to ensure proposals are equitably reviewed, the committee uses a review model based on full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty across the six colleges, ensuring proposals are reviewed against other proposals in the same college. Each proposal is reviewed by three reviewers from the Academic Senate Grants Review Committee.

Please note that the RSCA funding program is highly competitive due to funding limitations, and it is possible that high quality proposals will not be funded.

Award Data Over Last 3 Years

College	Instructional Faculty FTE 2025-26	2023-24 \$	2023-24 Proposals #	2024-25 \$	2024-25 Proposals #	2025-26 \$	2025-26 Proposals #
CAED	8.4%	\$17,900	1	\$18,000	2	\$18,000	1
CAFES	11%	\$35,960	2	\$17,976	1	\$35,772	2
CENG	19.8%	\$47,500	4	\$99,515	7	\$52,540	3
CLA	28.2%	\$94,012	7	\$77,868	6	\$79,382	5
BCSM	24.6%	\$55,898	4	\$71,900	4	\$69,502	4
OCOB	7.3%	\$17,900	1	\$19,200	1	\$30,500	2
Library	.9%	\$2,114	1	\$8,910	1	\$3,726	1
TOTALS	100%	\$271,284	17*	\$313,369	18*	\$289,422	17*

*Please note, some projects have PIs and Co-PIs from multiple colleges. For these instances, each college involved in a single proposal receives a count in the chart above. The totals in the proposal column reflect the total awards per cycle.

When can projects begin?

Projects may begin on 1 JUL 2026. However, awards are subject to compliance review (e.g., human subjects, animal subjects, export control, conflict of interest) and project work may not begin until compliance requirements have been met. Additional information will be provided to the PI if the proposed project is awarded. Note: exceptions may be made to allow for funding access prior to the



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completion of compliance review to support preparation of compliance materials on a case-by-case basis. Requests should be made to research@calpoly.edu.

For what may funding be used?

All justified and normally allowable expenses will be considered:

- Faculty Compensation. Assigned time must be used during the academic year and additional compensation can be used throughout the term of the grant, upon compliance approval. Please note that compensation for work completed in July will not be received until August 25 at the earliest, as payments are processed from forms submitted to Academic Personnel by the fifth of the month. Co-PI salary should be listed in field “non-PI Faculty in Project (\$)”. Even though you may be equal partners, please select one person as PI and the other(s) will be co-PI/Non-PI.
 - Faculty assigned time. The maximum amount that can be requested is 4 Weighted Teaching Units (WTUs) per project and per person in an award cycle.
 - An individual applicant, whether PI or Co-PI, may only receive up to 4 WTUs per award cycle and no proposal can request more than 4 WTUs. Please use the estimated assigned time rate of \$3,887.
 - Faculty can request up to \$9,000 in added comp plus 2 WTUs.
 - If awarded and unable to take the assigned time as proposed, it can be converted to additional compensation, with approval from your department and the Office of Research. The value of the conversion cannot exceed the value of the assigned time and is capped at \$9,000.
 - Additional compensation. An individual, whether PI or Co-PI, may only receive up to \$9,000 per award cycle and no proposal can request more than \$9,000, which is half of the allowed RSCA project maximum (\$18,000).
 - Specify in the budget template upload if any Co-PI costs are Additional Compensation or Assigned Time.
- Support for student researchers (undergraduate and graduate).
- Support for temporary personnel. This may include consultants and/or collaborators (non-Cal Poly employees).
- Supplies, consumables, services (like printing and publishing), and equipment.



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- Travel to conduct research. **Conference travel (including conference registration and virtual attendance) is not allowed.** All other travel (including virtual attendance) must contribute to the proposed scope of work (e.g. required workshops, trainings, etc.). Travel reimbursement rates will be based on [Cal Poly travel guidelines](#) and must adhere to any restrictions in place at the time of travel. PI travel field should include co-PI travel, too, if applicable.
- Incentives for research subjects. These must meet CSU and State fiscal requirements. Contact Research Compliance and Integrity (research-compliance@calpoly.edu) in advance of submitting your proposal if your project includes incentives so we can assist you in making sure your use of incentives is compliant.
- All funds awarded must be used for the specific approved purposes and may not be converted to other uses without authorization by the Office of the Associate Vice Provost of Research.

For what may funding not be used?

Additional compensation requests are limited (see the statement above). Monies will not be awarded for the purpose of attending conferences, courses, workshops, or professional meetings unless the applicant is conducting research at these sites.

When must projects be completed?

Projects must be completed by 30 JUN 2027. Extension requests are granted on a very limited basis. Requests are subject to review and will be limited to one year or less in duration.

At what level will the projects be funded?

The award maximum is \$18,000 total.

Is there a specified proposal format?

The proposal should be written for reviewers who are not experts in the applicant's specific field. It is incumbent upon the applicant to write their proposal so that their non-disciplinary colleagues can judge the merit of their proposals. If involving students, please explain how the work is educationally beneficial to students.

Proposals will be submitted through InfoReady. See "Proposal Submission" below for how to access InfoReady. Please refer to the InfoReady template for all application fields. Please note, sections have maximum word limits. If any section exceeds the maximum limit, we will only review up to the maximum amount; the remaining will not be reviewed. We have provided instructions for key aspects of the application below:

- **Proposal Abstract** (250-word limit): Introduce the proposed work.



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- **Expected Major Goals and Outcomes** (1000-word limit): Project Narrative should include goals and objectives, methodology, and theoretical justification. Also indicate here the scholarly significance including the impact on student learning and involvement in research. Measures that can be used to evaluate the success of your project should also be included.
- **New scholarly direction:** For tenured faculty PIs, it is necessary to provide the reviewers specific information that demonstrates the proposed research is a new scholarly direction for you. A new scholarly direction may be appropriate for research areas in which you have never published, received prior funding, and for which scholarship is newly emergent. In order to be considered for funding, your proposal must include a specific description to justify the new scholarly direction, or your proposal will be considered ineligible. You may refer to your submitted CV as part of this demonstration.
- **Project timeline** (250-word limit): The grant period will be 1 JUL 2026 to 30 JUN 2027. Outline a schedule of tasks/milestones, including in which month(s) they will be commenced/completed, and how they connect to your project objectives
- **PI Assigned/Release Time:** Please provide the number of WTUs the PI will use as assigned time. Please note that the assigned time is included in the overall total project budget and is calculated at an estimated rate of \$3,887/WTU. Please check with your department head to confirm if 0.5 or 1 WTU are options.
- **PI Assigned Semester:** Please put the semester you are taking assigned time.
- **Projected PI Summer Salary:** Please put the amount of additional compensation for PI.
- **Projected PI travel costs:** Please input total amount (\$). Travel to conduct research as allowed by any restrictions in place at the time of travel. Conference travel is not allowed. Travel should meet [Cal Poly travel guidelines](#).
- **Number of non-PI faculty:** This is the number of Co-PI faculty involved in your project.
- **Projected Costs for non-PI Faculty:** This is the total amount allocated to Co-PIs (may include additional compensation, assigned time (# of WTUs multiplied by \$3,887), and travel).
- **Support for temporary personnel:** This may include consultants and/or collaborators (non-Cal Poly employees). Provide description of temporary personnel in budget justification.
- **Incentives for Research Participants** (amount): Incentives for research subjects must meet CSU and State fiscal requirements. Contact the Office of Research at



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research@calpoly.edu in advance of submitting your proposal if your project includes incentives so we can assist you in making sure your use of incentives is compliant.

- **Support for student researchers:** Please provide the number of undergraduate and graduate students, the amount allocated for each, and a brief description of their activities in the respective fields. The activities of a student researcher may also be described in the budget justification. Please explain how the work is educationally beneficial to students.
- **Projected student travel:** Provide the amount allocated to student travel costs, if any. Travel should meet [Cal Poly travel guidelines](#).
- **Budget Justification:** Please provide brief justifications/descriptions for each budget line item in your application. Line items should be clearly related to the Project Narrative. Line items requiring justification may include: PI Assigned Time; PI additional compensation; Costs for non-PI faculty (may include additional compensation, assigned time [# of WTUs multiplied by \$3,887], and travel) - must clearly describe what these costs are for; PI travel; temporary personnel support; incentives for research subjects; student research assistants; student travel; projected printing/publishing costs; other costs such as research-related hosting/hospitality; etc.
- **Intended Products:** Provide a description of the expected outcomes and how the findings will be used.
- **External Grant/Contract Funding Agencies:** If the proposed project is preliminary to seeking external funding, provide details on potential sources of funding.
- **Project Budget Template:** In addition to filling out the specific budget fields below, applicants are required to submit a project budget template with their InfoReady application. Please use the provided budget template and upload it in the Budget Justification area of the Upload Files section in the InfoReady application.
- **Curriculum Vitae:** Provide a current curriculum vitae for the PI and all Co-PIs. Use NSF style from Science CV, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>. Note: If a collaborator will be unfunded but will play a Co-PI role, please list them as a Co-PI in your application and include their CV. For purposes of RSCA, we define a collaborator as personnel with a designated and specific role and a co-PI as personnel who shares responsibility for the overall direction of the project. PIs, co-PIs and collaborators can be paid or unpaid.
- **Citations & Other Grant Support:**
 - Citations or references.



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- List of former, current, or pending support for this or related work, the sources and amount awarded, scholarly products resulting from the support. If you have been previously supported by a Cal Poly RSCA grant, results and outcomes must be described.
- *Only one document is allowed to be uploaded in this section. Please combine into one PDF or Word document.
- **Supplemental Materials** (2-page limit):
 - Graphs, tables, figures, photographs, etc. that support your application. This upload may not exceed 2 pages. If more than 2 pages are uploaded, only the first 2 pages will be reviewed.

When will I be notified?

Applicants will be notified by the end of finals week in winter quarter whether their proposals have been recommended for an award with funds available 1 JUL 2026.

What are the reporting requirements?

Final project reports are due 30 JUN 2027. Awardees will be notified towards the end of the project to submit the final report via InfoReady.

RSCA Grant Program Support Acknowledgement

RSCA grant recipients must use the following language when recognizing support of their RSCA project: "This material is based upon work supported by the Research, Scholarly & Creative Activities Program awarded by the Cal Poly Office of Research."

Proposal Submission

- Proposals are due R 11 DEC 2025 @ NOON PST. No late submissions will be accepted.
- Submit your proposal via the [Cal Poly InfoReady system](#).
- From the InfoReady homepage, select "Log In" in the upper right-hand corner, and click on the blue "Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Login" button. Use your Cal Poly credentials to log in. Then click on the 2026-2027 Research, Scholarly & Creative Activities Grant Program link at the bottom of the "Applications and Competitions for Research Support Programs" page. You will then be able to submit an application. Please remember that you will be submitting utilizing the InfoReady template as described above (rather than a single PDF proposal).
- Provided word count limits and page limits must be followed. Failure to do so may result in non-review of the submitted proposal.
- Prior to review by the Academic Senate Grants Review Committee, The Office of the Associate Vice Provost of Research will route submitted proposals for approval by the applicant's Department Chair and Dean after these are submitted by the PI via InfoReady.



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Assigned time and additional compensation requests will be approved via this routing. If a proposal is not approved by a Department Chair or Dean, the faculty member will be notified.

- If you have questions regarding this request for proposals, contact research@calpoly.edu or call 805-756-1508. You may also visit our [website](#).