

Start-Up Funds Request and Approval Process

This process was initiated on July 1, 2011 and is fully implemented for new hires in FY12 and beyond. The annual review portion of this process will begin at the end of FY12 for new hires that started prior to FY12.

Start-up funds are often a critical element in the successful recruitment and launch of a faculty member's academic career. All tenured and tenure-track faculty, regardless of discipline, are eligible to receive start-up funding support. Funds are provided to cover whatever expenses are deemed needed to help the new faculty member achieve a rapid start for their research program. Startup funding periods will normally be for three years. Special requests for periods longer than three years require detailed justification. No startup funds may be used beyond five years. To facilitate this process in a timely fashion the following suggestions and procedures are being implemented.

At the request of the Provost, colleges will prepare a list in the spring of faculty search requests for the following academic year. This list will include the estimated startup costs based on recent experience with an explanation from the unit leader for the startup request as to the likely uses of the startup package and/or benchmarking data. The Provost, Vice Chancellor for Research and Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration will meet to discuss the requests and decide if the university can afford the startup for all requested searches. This discussion will be informed by the historical startup and funding data for each department. If the startup needs for all the positions cannot be funded, they will decide how much startup funding can be approved for each college for the following year. It will be the decision of the college dean how best to use those funds in filling positions or to delay searching any particular position. Startup funds for faculty position searches approved during the academic year to be conducted in that same academic year will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

When negotiating with candidates for faculty positions, department heads should request a plan for the use of the start-up funds being requested by the candidate. The department head must then assess whether the funds being requested and the plan for use of those funds are reasonable and appropriate for the position being filled. A request for start-up funding support after a candidate has accepted a position is not appropriate.

If summer salary is deemed appropriate, the amount should not exceed one month per year from the Office of Research portion of the startup funds. The start-up fund package should not include moving costs or equipment for locations not owned and operated by UT-Knoxville and should not be included as part of the start-up package because they are to be funded from other sources. Renovation requirements must be highlighted and discussed separately. The department head is encouraged to confer with the dean, or associate dean, who will confer with the Office of Research to put together the total start-up package that seems appropriate. Once there is agreement on the start-up funds to be included in the offer, the department head should initiate the request forms (found on the

forms page of the Office of Research website) for approval by the dean and associate vice chancellor for research.

The Office of Research will match on a dollar for dollar basis any combination of department and/or college funds in the start-up package that was approved when the Request to Search was approved. This does not include supplemental funding provided from other sources such as institutes or centers. Start-up packages are typically requested for up to three years, should include annual budgets which will be reviewed annually and should be fully expended each year and by the end of the approved time period (request forms are posted on the Office of Research website). Carryover past the end of the approved number of years may be approved on an exception basis through the Office of Research.

Once the new faculty member arrives on campus, she or he, the department head, and mentor, if a mentor has been appointed, should discuss in some detail the projected expenditure of start-up funds for the first year. Startup budget will be reviewed by the college in consultation with the Office of Research for appropriate annual distributions to minimize carry over. Based on these discussions, the new faculty member must confirm with the Office of Research, within two months after starting, a final first-year line-item budget for the funds allocated for that year. A start-up account will be opened for that faculty member and all committed funds from the department, the college, the Office of Research and other sources for that year will be allocated to the account and the new faculty member will expend funds from this account according to the budget she or he submitted. It is sometimes desirable that start-up expenditures be made prior to the arrival of the new faculty member. In such cases, startup accounts can be established and opened before the new faculty member arrives and funded early by the department. This allows the faculty to begin their academic career and make purchases in a more timely fashion.

Each year of the start-up period is an independent accountable budget. It is the desire of the university that new faculty get started building their research program as soon as possible and start-up funds are allocated to assist with that process. Annual revisions in the budget may be necessitated by the need to redistribute the total start-up commitment over the years for which the commitment was made. These revisions must receive written approval by the department, college, and Office of Research.

Department heads and/or department business officers and the faculty member should manage the start-up accounts carefully to assure that there are no cost overruns and that funds are being expended in a judicious manner. Carryover of start-up funds will not be automatic. As with other accounts, return of carryover from start-up accounts must be approved.

Personnel in the Office of Research are available to assist in preparing budgets using budget forms on the Office of Research website. Please remember that if a new faculty member is using start-up to cover personnel costs, benefits and maintenance fees, tuition waivers, etc., must be budgeted.

Process Summary

- At the request of the Provost, colleges will prepare a list in the spring of faculty search requests for the following academic year including start-up amounts.
- The Provost, Vice Chancellor for Research and Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration will meet to discuss the requests and decide if the university can afford the startup for all requested searches.
- It will be the decision of the college dean how best to use those funds in filling positions or to delay searching any particular position.
- Requests to search should include estimated start-up amounts and will be approved by the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Research. The actual contribution by the Office of Research will not exceed the amount included in the approved request to search.
- Department Head negotiates a start-up package with the potential new faculty member.
- When a Request to Make an Offer form is being submitted, the start-up approval form should be signed by the department head and forwarded to the college dean along with preliminary budgets
- The college signs for the college commitment and forwards the form and budgets to the associate vice chancellor for research.
- The Office of Research will record the information and forward a copy of the approved start-up to the department, college, and Budget and Finance.
- The Provost Office will send the Office of Research a copy of the official offer letter and periodic updates of offer acceptances.
- The Office of Budget and Finance who will set up the account.
- The Office of Budget and Finance will notify the faculty member, department, college and Office of Research of the account number assigned. The department and college will annually transfer funding.
- New faculty will confirm a final first-year line-item budget within two months after starting
- Beginning May 15, the annual review of all start-up accounts will begin.
- Special Start-up Carryover Request forms should be submitted to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research by May 15. Carryover of start-up funds will not be automatic.
- Requests to return any unused funds should be submitted through the college to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research for approval.

If you have questions about this procedure, please do not hesitate to contact Greg Reed directly (gdreed@utk.edu).