The College of Health Professions (COHP) at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is dedicated to enhancing the institutional capacity to conduct biomedical, behavioral, clinical, and translational research that is aligned with UTRGV's goal to achieve an emerging research university designation. To that end, the Research Fellows Program is designed to provide participating faculty members with the skills, knowledge, and support to develop and advance their research agendas and to enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding.

The Program

The Research Fellows Program is a three-year program providing informational sessions, funding to generate preliminary data, writing support, review opportunities, and other types of support that culminate in the submission of a competitive grant proposal. While collaborative research is encouraged, the Fellowship is an individual award. Program entry is available in Year 1 and in Year 2. Year 2 entry is available for past research fellows and faculty who demonstrate experience with the grant writing process. A Year 2 Entry application is also required for Year 1 Fellows to continue with the program.

Year 1 Entry		Year 2 Entry	
Structure		**Structure**	
Year 1	**Monthly informational sessions** on grant writing, funding sources, among others.	**Year 1**	-
Year 2	**Pilot project seed funding** **Monthly meetings with writing milestones**	**Year 2**	**Pilot project seed funding** **Monthly meetings with writing milestones**
Year 3	**Grant writing, review, and submission**	**Year 3**	**Grant writing, review, and submission**
Up to **6 fellowship awards** will be granted during the 2022-2023 academic year. Each award may include, depending on demonstrated need: • $1,000 stipend to support small pilot research projects (e.g., supplies, participant incentives) and research dissemination efforts (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations)		Up to **6 pilot project awards** will be granted during the 2022-2023 academic year. Each award may include: • $2,000 seed funding; slightly higher budgets, subject to availability of funds, may be entertained depending on the type of project and with strong justification. *Institutional approvals such as IRB or IACUC must be secured before any funds can be released.* $100 biostatistician stipend to assist with the pilot project application research design and analyses. • Spring course release for strong applications that demonstrate a "High" degree of impact based on review criteria. Release is subject to Chair approval.	
Eligibility • COHP tenured, tenure-track and three-year faculty members, including clinical appointments • Research interest in any of the areas of health and human services represented at COHP		**Eligibility** • COHP tenured, tenure-track and three-year faculty members, including clinical appointments, with demonstrated grant writing experience, OR • Former Research Fellows	

Deliverables *(Attendance is required at all meetings)*		
Year 1	*Year 2*	*Year 3*
1. Individual development plan 2. NIH/NSF biographical sketch 3. Specific aims page 4. Budget and budget justification	1. Approved IRB/IACUC protocol 2. Various writing milestones 3. Data and results 4. Conference presentation 5. Publications plan	1. Grant submission (minimum $50,000 direct costs) 2. 2 original research publications in A- or B-tiered journals

How to Apply	How to Apply
How to Apply: A complete application includes: • A **curriculum vitae** uploaded from the Faculty Portfolio Tool (FPT) • A brief **statement of interest** in participating in the Program (250-350 words)	**How to Apply**: A complete application includes: • An NIH/NSF **biographical sketch** (preferred) or a curriculum vitae of the researcher(s) uploaded from FPT. • **Research proposal** (single-spaced, Arial, size 11) which includes: (1) *abstract* (350-word limit) outlining clearly

Year 1 Entry	Year 2 Entry
• A statement of the applicant's **research and external funding proposal interests** (250-350 words) • **Digital photograph** • **Department Chair endorsement** (see template below)	the specific aims of the study, its significance, and a brief description of the research design and methods that will be used; (2) *specific aims* page per NIH guidelines; (3) proposal *narrative* (up to 5 pages, excluding references) with the following sections: significance, innovation, approach, expected outcomes, and timeline; (4) *future plans* to further develop and fund the project (potential funding agencies, announcements); and (5) *references*. Appendices with additional information may be attached. • A **budget**, using UTRGV's budget template (available [here](#)), and a **budget justification**. Allowable costs include summer stipends for faculty, data collection expenses, wages for UTRGV students, supplies, travel, among others. Budget: $2,000 in **direct** costs. • **Digital photograph** • **Department Chair endorsement** (see template below)

Please combine all your application materials in **one PDF file** (use same sequence under *How to Apply*) and **submit to Dr. Michael Lehker via email** (michael.lehker@utrgv.edu)

Timeline		Timeline	
Information session	**Aug 24 & Sep 7, 2022**	Information session	**Aug 24 & Sep 7, 2022**
Application deadline	**September 23, 2022**	**Application deadline**	**October 14, 2022**
Notifications	September 30, 2022	Notifications	October 31, 2022
Beginning of funding period	October 1, 2022	Beginning of funding period	November 1, 2022
End of funding period	August 31, 2023	End of funding period	August 31, 2023

Information Sessions

An **information session will be held on August 24, 2:00-3:30 pm and on September 7, 12:00-1:30 pm** to go over the application process, with a special focus on the Year 2 pilot projects application, and to address any questions.

Year 1 Entry Review Criteria

A committee will review the applications submitted for funding. Proposals that are incomplete or do not adhere to the submission guidelines will not be considered. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the research proposals:

1. Inclusion of all required documents   5 points
2. Clarity of presentation   3
3. Responsiveness to prompts   2
4. Productivity   2
5. Early career   1

Year 2 Entry (Pilot Projects) Review Criteria

A committee will review the applications submitted for funding. Proposals that are incomplete or do not adhere to the submission guidelines will not be considered. The following criteria[1] will be used to evaluate the research proposals; each area will be assigned a score from 1 to 9, with a score of 1 reflecting exceptional quality and a score of 9 reflecting poor quality:

1. **Overall impact**. Is the project likely to generate solid preliminary data that can support a competitive external grant application?

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[1] Based on review criteria of the [National Institutes of Health](#).

2. **Significance**. Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?

3. **Investigator(s)**. Are the PIs, collaborators, and other research team members well suited to the project? If Early-Stage Investigators or New Investigators, or in the early stages of independent careers, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?

4. **Innovation**. Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?

5. **Approach**. Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility, and will particularly risky aspects be managed?

6. **Sustainability**: Are plans to seek future funding clearly described? Are potential funding agencies, funding mechanisms, and specific announcements identified?

Additional review criteria include adherence to call instructions and inclusion of all application components (biosketch, abstract, references, budget (UTRGV budget template) and budget justification, photo, chair endorsement letter, formatting, and one PDF).

2022-2023 Meetings Schedule

Year 1

All meetings are held from noon to 2 pm. Locations will be announced later.

- Fall 2022: October 7, November 4, December 2
- Spring 2023: January 20, February 17, March 10, April 21, May 9

Year 2

All meetings are held from noon to 2 pm. Locations will be announced later.

- Fall 2022: November 11, December 9
- Spring 2023: January 27, February 24, March 24, April 28, May 19

Year 3

All meetings are held from noon to 2 pm. Locations will be announced later.

- Fall 2022: September 16, October 28, December 7
- Spring 2023: February 10, April 14

Questions

For **questions** regarding this Request for Applications and the Research Fellows Program, please contact Dr. Suad Ghaddar (suad.ghaddar@utrgv.edu).

Department Chair Endorsement Letter

Dear Dr. Lehker,

I, _____, endorse the application of _____ to the Research Fellows Program. I agree that the Fellow's failure to provide the stated deliverables will entail that my department reimburse the Program for the expended funds.

_____

Signature

_____

Date