

**UTRGV Faculty Research Council (FRC)**  
**Yearly Report to Faculty Senate (April 28, 2025)**

**Faculty Research Council Chair:**

Alex Stehn (Philosophy, College of Liberal Arts)

**Faculty Research Council Members:**

Claudia Bigueti (School of Podiatric Medicine)

Nathalie Chacon (Physician Assistant Studies Department, College of Health Professions)

Subhash Chauhan (Immunology and Microbiology, School of Medicine)

Baofeng Feng (School of Mathematical & Statistical Sciences, College of Science)

Michael Guerrero (Bilingual & Literacy Studies, College of Education & P16 Integration)

Susan Hurley-Glowa (School of Music, College of Fine Arts)

Dongchul Kim (Computer Science, College of Engineering & Computer Sciences)

Sibin Wu (Management, RCV College of Business & Entrepreneurship)

Sudershan Pasupuleti (School of Social Work)

**VACANT (School of Nursing)**

**Ex-Officio:**

Robert Dearth (Associate Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs)

**FRC duties as per [HOP ADM 06-304](#):**

Purpose: The purpose of the Faculty Research Council is to recommend faculty research policies and the award of internal research monies.

Responsibilities: The Faculty Research Council has the responsibility to:

- 1) recommend faculty research policies;
- 2) establish criteria and protocols for awarding internal research monies; and
- 3) review applications and make recommendations concerning awards of such internal funds.

**List of FRC meetings:**

1. July 15, 2024: Discussed and established process for reviewing seed grant proposals.
2. July 22, 2024: Calibration session for reviewing seed grant proposals using rubric.
3. August 2, 2024: Final ranking of seed grant proposals sent to Faculty Affairs after adding third reviewer to applications where the two initial reviewers disagreed substantially.
4. No meetings in Fall 2024, but there were many email discussions and failed attempts to meet with Faculty Affairs and/or the Provost to improve communications and process.
5. March 25, 2025: FRC Chair met with VP and AVP of Faculty Affairs; effective communication and solid working relationship re-established.
6. April 9, 2025: Faculty Affairs issues Call for Seed Grant Proposals to faculty after incorporating feedback from the FRC.
7. April 22, 2025: Established process/timeline for reviewing seed grant proposals.
8. April 28, 2025: Sent this report to the Faculty Senate.

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**Status updates and further recommendations:**

- 1) In last year's report (May 2024), the FRC issued the following recommendation about how to improve the Seed Grant program. Below, we provide status updates:
  - a) **Previous Recommendation #1:** A final seed grant funding report should be sent to the FRC just before announcements go out to seed grant applicants. This would help FRC members respond to any complaints and would increase process transparency.
    - i) **Update #1:** The FRC eventually received following report, but only after asking for it repeatedly. Going forward, Faculty Affairs has promised to generate and send the report to the FRC *just before* announcements go out to seed grant applicants.
      - (1) **NOTE:** [Seed Grant Award Data \(2022-2025\).xlsx](#)  
AY 24-25 awarded 123.5k to 21 of 33 applications (64%)  
AY 23-24 awarded 169k to 29 out of 49 applicants (59%)  
AY 22-23 awarded 379k to 55 out of 87 applicants (63%)  
AY 21-22 awarded 330k to 50 out of 85 applicants (59%)
  - b) **Previous Recommendation #2:** Most FRC members are 9-month employees, but the FRC conducts seed grant reviews during the summer. We therefore recommend that FRC members be paid a summer stipend for this work.
    - i) **Update #2:** Faculty Affairs is paying FRC members a \$1,000 stipend this summer.
  - c) **Previous Recommendation #3:** As faculty are pressured to produce more research to move UTRGV toward R1 status, we must ensure a corresponding increase in travel and research funding. The FRC requests information about the levels of travel and internal research funding available at comparable institutions, especially in the UT system.
    - i) **Update #3:** We never received this information. It would still be valuable information for faculty to have, whether at the level of the FRC or Faculty Senate.
- 2) The FRC is pleased to report that we have re-established a good working relationship with Faculty Affairs after their transition to new leadership (Dr. Saavedra and Dr. Dearth). We are confident about the process we've put in place to conduct seed grant reviews this summer.
- 3) Things that should be addressed going forward:
  - a) **Future members of the FRC:** With one exception, the terms of all members of the FRC end on August 31, 2025.
    - i) **Current Recommendation #1:** FRC vacancies should be filled and a new FRC council chair elected in September 2025. We note that FRC vacancies were recently announced to faculty in the Faculty Senate's call for nominations.
    - ii) **Current Recommendation #2:** Change [HOP ADM 06-304](#) to make someone from Faculty Affairs the FRC's ex officio member. The policy states that the "Senior Vice President for Research or designee also serves as an ex officio member of the committee," but no one from this office met with the FRC this year. Faculty Affairs

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made it clear to us that Dr. Robert Dearth (AVP of Faculty Affairs) is our current *ex officio* member, so we recommend this update to both the HOP Policy and to the Faculty Senate website.

- b) Future of the Seed Grant Program:** At town-hall style meetings with various colleges, the Provost announced likely (not finalized) changes to the seed grant program for AY 26-27.
- i) Current Recommendation #2:** Whatever changes are made, they should follow [HOP ADM 06-304](#). Alternatively, the HOP policy can be amended. We note that there have been no conversations between the FRC and the Provost's Office this AY.
- c) Future of [HOP ADM 06-304](#):** "Faculty who serve on this Council and intend to apply for funding through this program shall inform the Council Chair and recuse himself or herself from all Council activities or meetings during that particular award cycle."
- i) Current Recommendation #3:** This policy should be revisited. It's an arduous process to nominate and confirm FRC members, and there is no process in place to establish a backup member for a college should their FRC member decide to apply for seed grant funding. This puts FRC members in a lose-lose situation: either they forgo funding opportunities for their own research for three years or they apply and abandon their colleagues on the FRC for a year. Here are some possible ways to solve this problem:
  - (1)** Alternates for each FRC position—or a streamlined way to appoint one if necessary—should be established.
  - OR**
  - (2)** FRC members should be ineligible to apply for seed grant funding during their three year terms. This would only be reasonable if they continue receiving at least a \$1000 stipend for each year of their three year terms (in which case, they're assured \$3,000 so agreeing not to apply for \$5,000 becomes more reasonable).
  - OR**
  - (3)** The HOP policy could be modified such that the FRC member applying for a seed grant would still participate in the review process but have no access to or influence on the review of their own application.