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New in 2021! Research Development Services Now Available to UTIA Faculty!

Following the reunification of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) with the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT), **UTIA faculty are now able to access [internal funding](#) offered by UT's Office of Research and Engagement, as well as services, programs, and other resources**

RD is a team of eight people dedicated to helping faculty at any stage of their research. This support includes assisting on grant proposals, facilitating collaborations, and providing intensive trainings for faculty at certain points in their careers.

UTIA Faculty Can Access Funds and Proposal Support



Proposal support is the central service offered by RD and can take many forms depending on the needs of the faculty member. Faculty can receive guidance on finding relevant funding opportunities, with program officers, assessing a project's fit and readiness for a particular opportunity, and building a competitive team. RD staff are available to edit and advise on proposals of all sizes. For large proposal opportunities, RD provides comprehensive support that includes project management, strategic direction, team development, writing and editing, graphic design, budget development, document management, and more, all in partnership with UTIA's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP).

While RD frequently works with faculty one-on-one, the team also hosts several events and programs for groups interested in collaborating around specific

(Seeking Partnerships to Advance Research, Knowledge, and Science) are a blend of presentations and discussions, aimed at promoting multidisciplinary conversations around a shared research theme. [Communities of Scholars](#) are formalized groups united on a research topic with specific goals for projects and external funding. All of these opportunities are open to UTIA faculty.

UTIA faculty who are interested in broadening or deepening their research skillsets are welcome to participate in RD's formalized trainings. Early career faculty can join an Initiative for the Future cohort, which provides support for those interested in major fellowships. They may also start a Scholarship Agenda, which is an individualized, strategic research plan developed with an RD staff member. Faculty interested in applying to the NSF CAREER award can enroll in the Proposal Writing Institute, an intensive, multi-week writing program. Expanding Horizons is a year-long program for mid-career faculty interested in developing research-adjacent skills needed to lead large, convergent research projects.

RD is eager to support researchers in bringing their brilliant ideas to fruition. For a comprehensive list of services, please visit the [RD website](#). To discuss accessing internal funding or RD services, please contact [Jennifer Webster](#), Interim Director of Research Development.

RD Staff Help Coordinate Large, Complex Proposals

Society's greatest challenges require large teams that can integrate diverse disciplines to tackle extremely complex problems. RD helps researchers pull together teams, manage proposal development projects, and create

Typically, these projects focus on major multi-million dollar opportunities and special institutional requests. Comprehensive support from the RD team includes representatives from RD staff, the UTIA OSP, and other research administrators. Support often includes project management, content development, external reviews, and team-building activities.

UTIA faculty have often worked on proposals with RD support as Co-PIs. For example, Shih-Lung Shaw in the Department of Geography was the PI on a recent NSF proposal with faculty from the Departments of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries.

“Working together broadens the base of what we can cover,” Shaw says. He says the RD team made the proposal possible by facilitating progress and bringing the team together. “Without their help, I would not go for it. They are very, very important and critical to facilitate a big proposal.”

Art Ragauskas is another PI who has utilized the RD office on a multi-campus proposal. He wears multiple hats as professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering with a complementary appointment in UTIA’s Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries. He also serves in the US Energy and Environmental Sciences Directorate, Biosciences Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Ragauskas contends that scientific research is moving away from the single PI-focused project toward large, integrated groups that address large challenges. His experiences with the RD teams have focused on integrating the effort required for large proposals. “They’re seamless; they go beyond the call of duty. They have knowledge of what is needed to be compliant, and they are

A [recent article](#) in the Office of Research and Engagement's *Catalyst* newsletter focused on two proposals from UTIA faculty and the processes they went through. To explore working with an RD team, contact [Jennifer Webster](#).

Early Career Faculty Benefit from Customized Programs

Early career faculty members at UTIA can now access a variety of resources to secure funding that will support their research. This includes working with RD and UTIA OSP staff to develop and execute a long-term funding strategy, as well as individual consultations on how to set up searches in the Pivot database, find appropriate funding mechanisms, and locate collaborators. The RD office maintains an online collection of funded proposal examples and feedback on proposal drafts, which can be particularly useful to faculty who are applying to a funder for the first time. In addition, several cohort-based programs have been created specifically for early career faculty.

The NSF CAREER Proposal Writing Institute (PWI) consists of five sessions held every other week beginning in May. The prestigious CAREER Award provides five years of support to untenured assistant professors working in a field supported by NSF. The PWI supports the process of writing the CAREER proposal by covering topics such as developing an education plan, broader impacts, and characteristics of successful proposals. It also features a panel presentation by previous CAREER awardees. Past PWI participants have reported that the structure and accountability of the PWI helped keep them on track with their writing goals.

The Initiatives for the Future program focuses on faculty who are interested

competitive, participants in the program receive intensive coaching to maximize their chance for success. The event also helps junior faculty meet potential colleagues outside their own department to help develop interdisciplinary collaborations, especially in fields of emerging significance.

Early-career researchers who would like to explore opportunities are encouraged to contact [Diana Moyer](#).

New Connections Make All the Difference

RD offers a series of programs to strengthen and facilitate new collaborations across all of UT's campuses. These programs seek to meet faculty members' interests and introduce them to others who have similar interests in a variety of disciplines. If you would like to suggest topics or participate in these events, please email AVCRD@utk.edu.



Coffee and Convergence promotes interdisciplinary collaborations and fosters convergent research by bringing faculty together for casual conversations. These brief events support transdisciplinary research, strategic partnerships, and new sources for external research funding. RD staff coordinate these opportunities for faculty from diverse disciplines to interact informally and create

to convergent research initiatives. Previous topics include healthy communities and outcomes, advanced materials and manufacturing, energy science and technology, and conservation and biodiversity.



Seeking Partnerships for Research, Knowledge, and Science (SPARKS)

events help faculty develop new research partnerships. The goal is to bring together both faculty and external collaborators from multiple disciplines to focus on a common interest or opportunity. These events often include facilitated activities, such as speed networking and/or lightning talks. RD staff work with research leaders to identify topics and invitation lists. In addition to fostering introductions between faculty and breaking down disciplinary silos, faculty leave with a list of potential collaborators, their research interests, and contact information. Previous SPARKS topics that included faculty from UTIA focused on natural science research in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, early research on COVID-19, the ORNL Genes to Ecosystems initiative, and remote sensing.



The Communities of Scholars (CoS) Program supports the creation and growth of research affinity groups that cross disciplinary boundaries. Each CoS comprises UT researchers from multiple departments, colleges, and/or units, united by a shared research theme or topic area and organized to share research capabilities, assess collective research strengths, and explore opportunities for collaboration. CoS help faculty build productive research networks and increase competitiveness for external funding by building interdisciplinary teams. Current CoS that include UTIA faculty include Appalachia, Biomembranes, Cancer, and STEM Education Research. For more information, visit cos.utk.edu.

RD Briefs

Finding External Funding – [Pivot](#) is a comprehensive database of funding opportunities and researcher profiles that is searchable by all researchers, staff, and students with a UT NetID. The funding opportunities database includes federal, foundation, and private opportunities, both domestic and international, and represents the full range of academic disciplines and funding types. To learn more about using Pivot and for assistance in setting up your profile, please contact [Hannah Schmidt](#).

developing a plan to manage this portfolio with a goal to pursue new funding opportunities and more collaborations between the two campuses. She welcomes insights and suggestions, especially from UTIA faculty. Please email her at spound@utk.edu to engage.

Virtual SPARKS: Achieving Food Security—Scheduled for Friday, April 23, from 2:00-4:00 p.m., this event will feature more than a dozen lightning talk presentations around the topic of food security. SPARKS is designed to connect faculty from a variety of disciplines to tackle important and strategic research areas. [Register to attend online.](#)

Get to Know the RD Staff

[Jennifer Webster](#) (MA, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is the interim director of RD in UT's Office of Research and Engagement. Her career at UT includes seven years with Research Development and five years with the Office of Sponsored Programs. In her interim role, she manages RD team workflows, administers UT's portfolio of internal investment funds, and interfaces with faculty, staff, and administrators across the UT system to coordinate the strategic and operational needs of the research enterprise. She is also the RD portfolio manager for the National Institutes of Health.



[Kiley Compton](#) (MA, University of Tennessee) joined RD in 2019, following two years in ORE's Office of

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development support for strategic and complex projects and coordinates programming to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

[Emily Mitchell](#) (MSc, University of Edinburgh), has worked at UT for four years. Prior to joining RD in 2020, she worked as a program coordinator in the Office of Undergraduate Research. She supports large-scale proposals, coordinating supplementary documentation and providing graphics support. She also maintains an internal portfolio related to faculty research interests and facilitates new collaborations.



[Diana Moyer](#) (PhD, The Ohio State University) has been at UT for 20 years. She was a faculty member in the Cultural Studies of Education program for eight years and has worked in RD since 2009. She has supported social science and STEM proposals to a wide range of private and federal funders. She serves as the NSF portfolio manager, facilitates the NSF CAREER proposal writing workshop, and coordinates the Community of Scholars program.

[Sharon Pound](#) (BS Communications, University of Tennessee) has worked in proposal development and

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the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from the Project Management Institute in 2017. As RD Manager, she facilitates complex proposal development and team building, the SPARKS series of collaboration-building events, and RD communications.



[Alan Rutenberg](#) (JD, University of Chicago) has been at UT for 18 years, nearly all spent in RD. He supports Fulbright faculty programs as well as selected fellowship applications and faculty development projects. He is especially interested in consulting with UTIA faculty about Fulbright opportunities for faculty: the core US scholar program, the specialist program, and the visiting scholar program.

[Hannah Schmidt](#) (MLitt, University of St Andrews) has been with RD for four years. In her role as RD Coordinator, she distributes funding opportunities, manages limited submission competitions, and supports arts and design faculty in their research. She is available to consult with faculty interested in finding funding for their research or anyone with questions about the internal process for limited submissions.



[Paula Brown](#), RD Administrative Coordinator, rounds out the team. For general information, email [Paula](#) with

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