The Armstrong Fund for Science

The Armstrong Fund for Science was established to encourage faculty at UMass Amherst to pursue research that has a significant likelihood of major science or engineering impact. Made possible through the generosity of John and Elizabeth Armstrong, this fund was created in 2006 with the belief that major scientific advances in society can be achieved by supporting researchers with bold vision, documented credentials, and a passion for results. The Armstrong Fund for Science seeks to support researchers willing to challenge conventions in their field. Grants will be made from this fund, administered by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, on an annual basis.

Purpose and Allowable Use of Funds

The Armstrong Fund for Science is intended for faculty members with aggressive research visions. Grants from this program should be used to strategically expand their programs by positioning their research for large, extramural grants or key industrial partnerships. The research should represent a new initiative: either a bold, new line of research, or the application of prior research to a field that has no precedent for it. Junior faculty and women faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines are encouraged to apply. Proposals from senior faculty will also be considered if they represent a new and somewhat risky direction for the faculty member’s research program. Team proposals are encouraged. Only projects that support priority initiatives of the campus, as determined by the Deans and approved by the Provost, will be funded.

The Armstrong Fund for Science is intended to:

- Enhance faculty members’ ability to develop significant sponsored activities in areas of strategic relevance to the campus;
- Permit faculty members to pursue adventurous ideas;
- Build tangible, working relationships with industry;
- Raise the campus’s national profile as a source of scientific innovation.

These funds may be used for:

- Graduate students and expenses, including as a recruiting tool for exceptional graduate student candidates;
- Support for grant development and writing, e.g., release time;
- Travel in connection with building the research program;
- Honoraria and expenses related to bringing to campus key people that can help the research have the desired impact;
- Facilities to enable the research program;
- Expenses related to pilot studies;
- Dependent care expenses incurred by professional travel.

These funds may not be used for:

- The writing and preparation of manuscripts intended to be used as standard textbooks;
- The preparation of lectures, demonstrations, syllabi or other course related materials;
- The remedy of budgetary deficiency in other research contracts or grants;
- Travel to sabbatical research sites;
- Reprint costs or library fees;
- Publication costs for individuals or department/disciplinary monographs or series.
Selection Criteria

The Selection Committee will consist of representatives appointed by the Deans of the various colleges. The Committee may also solicit external perspectives and input, and the donors may request additional representation on the Committee.

The criteria that will be considered include:

- Preference will be given to unconventional ideas in the STEM disciplines.
- Research must support priority initiatives as determined by the Deans and approved by the Provost, related to a specific program or a professorship involved in the highest quality work in STEM disciplines.
- Projects should focus on research that has a significant likelihood of major scientific or engineering impact.
- Connections to society and industry should be well articulated.
- Projects should be short term, no longer than 2 years, not to exceed $40,000. There are no match requirements but potential for external (i.e., industry) engagement will be viewed favorably.

Description of Grant Application Process

Grants from the Armstrong Fund for Science will be awarded annually. Applications will be due to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement on February 1, or the first business day after the 1st. Awards will be announced by March 20 to enable faculty to use the funds as a recruiting tool for exceptional graduate students, if desired. Funds will be disbursed in July or August of each year of funding.

Applicants will learn about the Armstrong Fund for Science by:

- An e-mailing to all STEM Deans and departments by Dec 1;
- Information posted on the website for the Office of the Vice Chancellor, Research and Engagement at https://www.umass.edu/research/armstrong-fund-science;
- Significant coverage in early career workshops;
- Promotion to the Deans at the bi-monthly Deans’ Research Meetings facilitated by the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement;
- A press release on April 15, when the new Armstrong Fund for Science awards are announced.

Applications should follow the detailed submission instructions and use the forms available at the program website https://www.umass.edu/research/armstrong-fund-science. Complete applications will include an application form and short CV from each Principal Investigator, a three-page proposal narrative, a references list, and a budget and budget justification. The Dean(s) signatures on the application form(s) will served to affirm the strategic importance of the applicant(s)’s research to the college.

Awardees will be required to provide a final report at the end of the project. A public lecture or other means of public dissemination describing the results of the research is encouraged.

For Further Information

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