President's Intramural Research Fund (PIRF)

Amended in Fall 2024

Rationale

Moving our research standing from "sound" to "strong" remains a key strategic objective at LAU. This can be materialized through increasing research allocation in order to promote good academic research. Despite the unfavorable financial conditions in the country, the university has embarked on increasing research support such as funding post-doctoral research fellows and graduate students as well as establishing new graduate programs while revamping existing ones. We propose establishing a new President's Intramural Research Fund (PIRF) to complement existing initiatives and to maintain the quality of scholarly work at LAU across fields of study, particularly in light of the devaluation of local currency. The PIRF should not be considered a substitute for extramural funds; rather it constitutes a venue to support faculty to apply and receive external grants. As such, priority will be given to faculty who have submitted extramural grants.

Modus Operandi

The PIRF Review Committee will receive detailed proposals from faculty members (or groups of faculty members) through the EDMS system, with a call for proposals issued annually. Each submitted proposal will undergo a rigorous peer-review process by external experts in the relevant field, assessed according to rubrics developed by the committee (see Appendix A). This process is designed to ensure fairness across disciplines, considering the diverse research needs and the available infrastructure. Grant applications may request funding for research assistants or postdoctoral fellows, travel to present findings at international conferences indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, as well as for research-related software, consumables, and equipment. Additionally, outsourcing specific measurements may be included if these services are either unavailable at LAU or would be more costly if conducted internally. Following the review, the committee will forward its recommendations to the Provost, who will then make recommendations to the President for a final decision on the research grant applications.

PIRF Review Committee Composition

The PIRF Review Committee and its chair shall be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Council of Deans. Committee members shall be full-time faculty at the Associate Professor or Professor level, possessing strong scholarly and research records. Except for the committee chair, members shall not hold administrative roles. The committee will consist of an odd number of members, including the chair but excluding ex-officio and non-voting members, with a minimum of seven members. The Dean of GSR will serve as ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee. The committee is responsible for streamlining the processes for proposal submission, review, and approval.

Eligibility for Funding

- The Principal Investigator (PI) must be a full-time faculty member, including full-time physicians with professorial ranks, excluding those with Professor of Practice or adjunct titles.
- Faculty members with active PIRF grants (as main investigators) are not eligible to apply for an additional grant.
- **Cycle IV:** If an applicant was previously awarded a PIRF grant, they must meet either of the criteria listed below to be eligible to reapply:
  - Have secured extramural research funding (as PI or Co-PI), potentially including matched funding from an external agency or institution.
  - Have submitted an extramural grant proposal as a PI that has been processed through the LAU internal clearance system (involving the GSR office and the Office of Grants and Contracts).
  - Have at least one paper accepted (as first, last, or corresponding author) in a venue listed in the Shanghai Ranking, FT50, or Nature Index.

- **Starting Cycle V:** Applicants who would have already received two PIRF grants will have to secure extramural research funding (as PI or Co-PI), potentially including matched funding from an external agency or institution, or have at least one paper accepted (as first, last, or corresponding author) in a venue listed in the Shanghai Ranking, FT50, or Nature Index, in order to become eligible for PIRF funding.

Level of funding

A maximum of 37,500 USD* per project per academic year, for a maximum duration of two years per project.

Personnel:

- o Remuneration of post-doctoral fellows ranges between $1,500 and $2,500 per month (see Appendix B for more details).
- o Remuneration of (non-student) full-time research assistant with a master's degree is set at $800-$1,300 per month (see Appendix B for more details).
- o Research Assistant Rates (for LAU students): $4 per hour for undergraduates and $4.5 per hour for graduate students, in accordance with the Student Employment Office rate.
- o Eligible faculty members may apply for a teaching load reduction of up to 6 credits per year. This reduction may be granted as either course release funding ($5,000 per credit) or protected research time for physicians, pending school approval.

When preparing budget requests, Principal Investigators (PIs) should request the following monthly salaries:

- Postdoctoral Researcher: $2,000 per month
- Research Assistant with a Master's degree: $1,050 per month

Others:

- o Conference travel is capped at $3,000/year.
- o Funding for databases and software is set at $6,000/year.
- o Budget for equipment (pending approval of the pertinent school dean), supplies, and editorial services is uncapped.

The number of awarded grants and the amount of each grant is **subject to the availability of funds**.

Appendix A

Example of a Research Proposal Structure

The research proposal must be assembled in the following sequence:

1) Cover Sheet; (include title, PI and Co-PIs)
2) Project Executive Summary;
3) Project Overview and Background;
4) Project Description and Methodology;
5) Project Timetable;
6) Project Deliverables and Expected Outcomes;
7) Bibliography;
8) Budget;
9) CV.

Project Executive Summary

The proposal must contain a one-page executive summary of the proposed activity suitable. It should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader.

Project Overview and Background

The proposal must include a thorough survey of the problem that is to be investigated, and in the case of scientific proposals, a summary of known and previous solution approaches. This should include a survey of literature that demonstrates that the problem has been seriously investigated.

Project Description and Methodology

The proposal should have a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include:

- Objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance
- Relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project;
- Relation to the present state of knowledge in the field, to work in progress by the PI under other support and to work in progress elsewhere.
- Indicate how the project will integrate research and education by advancing discovery and understanding while at the same time promoting teaching, training, and learning;

The statement should outline the *general* plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, an adequate description of experimental methods and procedures and, if appropriate, plans for preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections and other related research products.

Project Timetable

The proposed duration for which support is requested should be consistent with the nature and complexity of the proposed activity. Grants are awarded for a maximum of two years.

Deliverables and Expected Outcomes

The proposal should address the deliverables and expected outcomes. In specific:

- Discuss how the project will enhance research or education at LAU;
- Indicate how the results of the project will be disseminated.

Bibliography

The bibliography should be included using a standard citation form.

Budget

The appropriateness of the budget will be considered during the evaluation process. Each item in the budget must be justified as expenditure required by the research plan and not available through other sources. The budget should also indicate current and pending support.

Example of research fund evaluation rubric[1]

PROJECT TITLE:			
PI'S NAME:	EVALUATOR'S NAME:	FUNDING CYCLE:	TOTAL SCORE:

EVALUATION CRITERIA*	UNSATISFACTORY RESPONSE	SATISFACTORY RESPONSE	EXCEPTIONAL RESPONSE	SCORE	COMMENTS
1. **Originality and Significance of the research in promoting scholarly output (20%)** - Creative activity - Background and Rational - Literature review & preliminary results - Applicability & potential benefit to the community - Research significance	☐	☐	☐	%	
2. **Project Description (45%)** - Clarity of goals and objectives - Detailed description of methodologies - Design and methodologies meet objectives	☐	☐	☐	%	

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[1] Adopted with minor changes from previous LAU-GSR Research Fund Evaluation Form

EVALUATION CRITERIA*	UNSATISFACTORY RESPONSE	SATISFACTORY RESPONSE	EXCEPTIONAL RESPONSE	SCORE	COMMENTS
3. Project Management (10%) - Experience and expertise of the team - Adequate resource management including time, facilities, equipment, other resources - Timeframe for completion	☐	☐	☐	%	
4. Funding Utilization (15%) - Results dissemination plan - Research training opportunities i.e. involve LAU students	☐	☐	☐	%	
5. Budget (10%) - Appropriate to achieve objectives - Itemized budget accurate and reasonable - Well-justified	☐	☐	☐	%	
The applicant has submitted extramural grants	☐	☐	☐		

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS:	☐ Do Not Recommend for Funding	☐ Recommend for Funding	☐ Strongly Recommend for Funding
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:			

Criteria for guidance while evaluating the Application
o Level of originality; o Significance - proposed research in promoting scholarly output; o Applicability - the project & potential benefit to the community; o Effectiveness of the research strategies or methods; o Feasibility of completing the research project, given the applicant's publication record & research team's resources & time commitments; o Suitability & expected effectiveness of plans to communicate research results; o Provides the opportunity for research training for LAU students; o Potential contribution of the applicant to LAU Research Metrics; o Appropriateness of the funding requested to achieve the research objectives; o Potential to submit and receive extramural funds.

Appendix B

Procedural Guidelines for Research Assistant (RA) and Postdoctoral (Postdoc) Salaries

I. Research Assistant (RA) with Master's Degrees

A. Determining Salary:

1. **Factors to Consider:**

   o **Experience:** Prior research experience, relevant work experience, and specific skills related to the research project.

   o **Publications:** Number and quality of publications in peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings.

   o **Specific Skills:** Technical skills, software proficiency, data analysis capabilities, and any other specialized skills relevant to the research.

   o **Responsibilities:** Level of responsibility within the research project, including project management, mentorship of junior researchers, or independent research tasks.

   o **Education:** Relevance of master's degree to the research project, academic performance, and any additional certifications or training.

2. **Salary Range:** The monthly salary range for RAs with master's degrees is $800 to $1,300.

3. **Commensurate with Qualifications:** The actual salary offered within the range will be determined by the PI based on the applicant's qualifications and the specific requirements of the research project.

II. Postdoctoral (Postdoc) Salaries

A. Determining Salary:

1. **Factors to Consider:**

   o All factors listed for RAs with master's degrees.

   o **Field of Research:** Salaries may vary depending on the specific field of research due to market demand and funding availability.

   o **Years of Post-Ph.D. Experience:** The number of years of postdoctoral experience since obtaining a Ph.D.

2. **Salary Range:** The monthly salary range for postdocs is $1,500 to $2,500.

3. **School Dean Determination:** The School Dean will determine the actual salary offered within the indicated range, considering the applicant's qualifications and the specific requirements of the research project.

B. Remark:

- **Postdoctoral Training:** Postdoctoral training is more common in Life/Physical/Health Sciences before pursuing faculty or industry roles. This can contribute to salary differences compared to fields like Business, Engineering, or Computer Science, where doctoral graduates may transition directly to industry or faculty positions.

III. Salary Administration

- **Annual Review:** Salaries will be reviewed annually and may be adjusted based on performance, experience, and changes in market conditions.

- **Equity and Fairness:** The university is committed to ensuring that all salaries are fair and equitable, considering the qualifications and experience of the individuals and the nature of their research responsibilities.