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Request for Proposals for CSU GUIDE

(Growth in Undergraduate Innovation, Discovery and Engagement)

Objective: Transformative Undergraduate Experiences in a faculty-mentored environment

I. Background and Program Objectives

1. The California State University (CSU) Chancellor's Office is launching a new GUIDE funding initiative to enhance undergraduate student engagement across the system and promote innovative, inter-campus faculty collaboration. This program is designed to foster promising one-year research, scholarly or creative activity (RSCA) projects that can lead directly to the preparation of a proposal for major extramural funding. The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) defines undergraduate research as "a mentored investigation or creative inquiry conducted by undergraduates who seek to make a scholarly or artistic contribution to knowledge." Undergraduate RSCA is one of several high-impact educational practices as faculty-mentored participation is strongly associated with persistence, personal development and gains in critical thinking (Kuh, 2008). Work-based learning, including paid undergraduate research opportunities outside of the classroom, is associated with stronger employment outcomes, graduate or professional school enrollment post-graduation (Strada State Opportunity Index, 2025). There is a significant body of published literature that undergraduate student engagement directly contributes to [student success](#) and is a [high impact practice](#).
2. [CSU Forward](#), the CSU's new systemwide strategic plan, is connected to our broader vision of the Student Success Framework and recognizes faculty and students as the foundation for excellence and success. This new funding initiative will advance this impactful vision and harness the unique networks of scholarly capacity that exists across the CSU system. Together, faculty and students inspire, challenge and shape the future.

Program Goals:

- a. Enhance Student Success: Provide meaningful, hands-on, faculty-mentored RSCA opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
- b. Foster Collaboration: Encourage multi-campus faculty teams to collaborate on shared research challenges or creative endeavors that engage undergraduate students across campuses.
- c. Secure External Funding: Position CSU faculty teams to successfully compete for significant external grants and contracts following the seed funding period.
- d. Advance Interdisciplinary Fields: In addition to supporting high-impact projects across the full range of disciplines offered within the CSU system, this program has the goal of advancing interdisciplinary collaborations.

Proposals will be accepted on three separate tracks:

- Track 1: Collaborative multi-campus. Involves two or more faculty members from different CSU campuses. The proposal should be submitted by the lead Principal Investigator’s (PI) campus (maximum award: \$80,000).
- Track 2: Single campus/faculty members conducting research at their home campus (maximum award: \$40,000).
- Track 3: Mid-career resilience. Specifically for mid-career faculty seeking to re-engage in or pivot their research, scholarly or creative activities (RSCA) (maximum award: \$40,000).

II. General Proposal Information

Detail	Requirement
Funding	CSU Chancellor’s Office Eligibility: Faculty (permanent or temporary) at any CSU campus. The PI must be a CSU tenured or tenure track faculty member.
Student Involvement	Required: All proposals must include a plan for the active participation of undergraduate students both through direct participation and by embedding the contents of the research as an experiential component in the curriculum. A substantial portion of the budget should be devoted to student engagement.
Multi-campus proposals	For multi-campus proposals: The research team must include faculty from at least two different CSU campuses. The purpose of the multi-campus track is to catalyze campus synergies. A faculty member can only be PI on one proposal and a faculty collaborator on up to one Track 1 proposal.
Project Funding and Limits	Up to \$40,000 per annual single campus award (\$80,000 for multi-campus awards). Each campus may submit a total of three proposals (no more than two per track), coordinated by the campus Chief Research Officer (CRO).

Anticipated Awards	Approximately 20 awards will be issued through a competitive selection process. A committee appointed by the Chancellor’s Office will evaluate the proposals.
Indirect Cost Rate	A maximum indirect cost (IDC) rate of 10% will be allowed, calculated on Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC).
Period of Performance	12 months from the date of award (extendable to 18 months).
Key Deliverable	Required: A submission-ready proposal for extramural (non-CSU) funding at the end of the 12-month performance period.
Campus Submission Deadline	Monday, June 1, 2026, 5 p.m. Internal campus deadlines will be earlier than June 1, 2026, and will be determined by the campus CRO.
Campus Submission Method	Proposals (up to three per campus) must be submitted by the campus-sponsored research office using the InfoReady template that will be provided by the Chancellor’s Office. Campuses may establish their own limited submission competition or letter of intent process.

III. Scope of Work and Research Areas

This Request for Proposals is open to proposals in all disciplines in which the CSU offers academic credentials including degrees, minors and certificates. The disciplines include but are not limited to: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, STEM, Business, Education, Health and Human Services, and Applied Sciences, and Library Sciences. Interdisciplinary proposals are encouraged.

Proposals should demonstrate clear potential for:

- Engaging undergraduate students and providing them with experiential opportunities.
- Addressing a significant intellectual question, creative endeavor or real-world problem.
- Generating preliminary data or creative works necessary to leverage future extramural funding (e.g., NSF, NIH, NEH, State/Federal Agencies, major foundations).
- Developing sustainable, long-term research and creative infrastructure and partnerships between the collaborating campuses (for multi-campus proposals).

IV. Proposal Content Requirements

Applicants must submit a single document (maximum five pages, excluding two-page CVs and one-page budget) addressing the following sections:

Section	Content Description	Word/Page Limit
1. Project Summary & Goals	Briefly state the overall goal and the single or inter-campus nature of the project.	Approx. 100-400 words

2. Background and Significance	Describe the problem, issue or creative endeavor the project addresses. Explain the current state of knowledge, clearly articulate how this seed funding will expand upon existing work and why the collaboration is essential.	Approx. 500 words
3. Research Questions/Project Objectives	Concisely state the proposed research questions or project objectives for the one-year period.	1-2 sentences
4. Project Plan and Track Rationale	Describe the Project Plan (e.g. creative activity, methodology, data collection, analysis or dissemination). Track 1: Detail the plan for integrating the project activities between the two or more campuses; Track 2: Detail the plan for activities on campus; Track 3: Detail the justification for re-engaging in RSCA or why this is a pivot.	Approx. 750 words
5. Student Engagement Plan	Required: Detail the specific roles, training and activities for undergraduate student participants. Specify how the student experience will be mutually beneficial to both the students and the project. Include assessment and evaluation of the student experience.	Approx. 300 words
6. Extramural Funding Strategy	Required: Clearly identify the target extramural funding mechanism(s) (e.g., specific NSF program, foundation grant) and the amount the team intends to seek. Describe the specific progress this 12-month seed project will make to prepare the full proposal (e.g., preliminary data collection, pilot testing, partnership development).	Approx. 500 words
7. Project Tasks/Timeline	List specific project tasks, milestones and the anticipated 12-month timeline for completion. Milestones should include assessment and evaluation of the student experience. This must include a task for the submission of the final extramural proposal.	List/chart format
8. Research Team Qualifications	Describe the faculty team members' relevant skills and experience. Clearly state the role and responsibilities of each PI/Co-PI and why their collaboration is uniquely qualified to execute the project and secure follow-on funding. Provide a list of member current and pending grants.	Approx. 250 words per
9. Budget and Budget Justification	Provide detailed justification for all direct costs within the budget limit. Clearly justify student support (stipends, wages) and inter-campus coordination costs (travel, communication). The 10% IDC must be calculated and included in the total budget figure.	1 page

V. Items Required for Submission

1. Proposal Document (following the content requirements in Section IV).
2. Project Budget (using the template provided in the submission system).
3. Two-page CVs for all faculty team members (not students). Include current and pending support (i.e. name of external agency/sponsor/foundation; start and end date; award amount). For Track 3: Faculty should submit a one-page write-up explaining why they believe that they qualify for the mid-career track and how these funds would help them ignite their research, scholarship and creative activity efforts.
4. Required: Submission through the PI's campus research and sponsored programs office.

VI. Proposal Review and Evaluation Criteria

A. Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Chancellor's Office whose members have no conflict of interest with the projects being reviewed.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will use the following weighted criteria to evaluate proposals:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
1. Merit and Feasibility	Creative and technical merit and approach. Clarity of project objectives and appropriateness of the proposed methods; achievability of the proposed tasks within the 12-month timeline and budget.	35%
2. Student Engagement	Quality and robustness of the plan for engaging and mentoring undergraduate students; benefit to student learning and professional development. Proposals with a strong undergraduate student engagement component will be prioritized.	35%
3. Potential for Extramural Funding	Clarity and feasibility of the external funding strategy; likelihood that the 12-month seed project will lead directly to a successful proposal preparation, followed by submission.	20%
4. Qualifications & Impact	Qualifications of the PI or team to execute the project; potential for the research/creative work to have systemwide or societal impact across any discipline.	10%
TOTAL		100%

VII. Program Contact

For questions regarding this RFP and proposal submission template, please contact: Dr. Elizabeth Soto, esoto@calstate.edu

Proposals must be submitted using InfoReady and the deadline is Monday, June 1, 2026, at 5 p.m. Pacific Time. Awardees will be announced by July 1, 2026. The performance period will begin on August 15, 2026, for a period of 12 months.

Note: Your campus research/sponsored program office may have an earlier internal deadline than June 1, 2026. A link will be provided to the campus research office in advance of the deadline.

Sample Budget: For a multi-campus proposal. Please refer to your campus for specifics

Category	Description	Amount (\$)
Personnel		
Faculty Time	3-6 WTUs per academic year	~\$20K (for 2 faculty for one AY); refer to your campus backfill or replacement rate.
Faculty Summer Salary	\$5,000 (max)	~\$10K (for 2 faculty)
Student Research Assistant(s)	(20 hr/wk during AY; 40 hr/wk during the summer)	~\$25K
Research Materials/Supplies		
Research Materials/Supplies		~\$10-15K
Software/Data Access		
Other (e.g. core facilities, consultant, services etc.)		
Travel		
Inter-Campus Travel		\$1,500
Other Allowable Costs		
	Indirect (10%)	~\$6,300-6,500
	TOTAL	\$80,000 (not to exceed)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

I. Eligibility and Collaboration

1. What are the different GUIDE tracks available for submission? Proposals may be submitted under one of three specific tracks:

- Track 1: Collaborative multi-campus. Involves two or more faculty members from different CSU campuses. The proposal should be submitted by the lead PI's campus.
- Track 2: Single campus/faculty members conducting research at their home campus.
- Track 3: Mid-career research resilience. Specifically for mid-career faculty seeking to reignite their research, scholarly or creative activities (RSCA). (See IV. Proposal Content Requirements, 4. Project Plan and Track Rationale, for details on the justification of a mid-career research re-engagement or pivot). Eligible mid-career faculty include all tenured associate and full professors who are at least five years post-tenure and are seeking to pivot, expand, or revitalize their research, scholarly, or creative trajectories.
- Faculty may submit only one proposal as a PI.
- Faculty may be a campus collaborator on up to one Track 1 proposal.

2. Is this funding open to lecturers or temporary faculty? Yes. Faculty with both permanent and temporary appointments at any CSU campus are eligible to apply. However, the PI must be a tenured or tenure track faculty member.

3. Can I submit a proposal if I plan to be on sabbatical during the coming year? Yes, you are eligible to apply for this opportunity, which will have a 12-month performance period.

II. Student Engagement Requirements

4. Is undergraduate student involvement mandatory? Yes. Regardless of the track, all proposals must include a plan for the active participation of undergraduate students. Proposals that do not include student funding or a clear mentorship plan will not be considered.

5. Can graduate students participate? Yes, graduate students can be involved. However, the program's primary focus is on undergraduate student engagement. Your Student Engagement Plan should clearly articulate how the experience will be mutually beneficial for undergraduate participants.

III. Funding and Budget

6. What is the maximum award amount? The funding limit depends on the nature of the collaboration:

- \$40,000 for Single PI efforts (Track 2 and Track 3).
- \$80,000 for multi-Campus collaborative efforts (Track 1).

7. How is the 10% IDC rate applied? The IDC is capped at 10% of the MTDC. This must be included within the total budget limit of your respective track.

8. Are there limits on faculty compensation? The sample budget suggests:

- Faculty Release Time: Three to six WTUs per academic year at the replacement or backfill rate.
- Summer Salary: Maximum of \$5,000 per faculty member.

9. Can we use the funds for travel? Yes, provided that the travel is essential for research activities or inter-campus coordination (for Track 1).

IV. Submission and Selection

10. How many proposals can my campus submit? Each CSU campus is limited to three proposals total across all tracks (no more than two per track). The campus selection is coordinated and moved forward by the campus CRO.

11. Does the five-page limit have font-size guidelines, and are references to be included within the five pages? The five-page document should have one-inch margins on all sides and be in Times New Roman, font size 11. The references should fit within the five pages. A two-page CV for each faculty member and the one-page budget do not count toward the five pages. A one-page statement provided by a mid-career faculty member stating why they believe they qualify for this track and how they plan to use these funds to reignite their research does not count toward the five pages.

12. Who will review my application? A committee appointed by the Chancellor's Office whose members have no conflict of interest with the projects being reviewed will evaluate the proposals.

13. What are the primary evaluation criteria? Proposals will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria: See RFP for criteria.

14. What is the key deliverable for this grant? The required deliverable is the preparation of a proposal for submission for extramural (non-CSU) funding (e.g., NSF, NIH, NEH) by the end of the performance period.

15. What is the submission and award timeline? Proposals must be submitted using InfoReady, and the deadline is June 1, 2026, by 5 p.m. Pacific Time. Awardees will be announced by July 1, 2026. The performance period will begin on August 15, 2026, for a period of 12 months.

V. Technical Reporting and Documentation

16. Is there a page limit for the proposal? Yes. The core proposal document is limited to a maximum of five pages. This does not include faculty CVs (two pages each), budget sheet and faculty statement (Track 3).

17. Do I need to submit letters of support? No formal letters of support are required at the time of submission. However, it is the PI's responsibility to ensure that the provost, dean and department chair are fully informed regarding any course releases indicated in the proposal budget.

18. How would the funds be managed for multi-campus awards? Both campuses will be notified of the award and sent their respective shares of the budget to manage.

19. What are the reporting requirements? A final report is required at 12 months, followed by a report at 18 months indicating if any proposals were submitted or awards received.

20. Will mentoring be offered? Awardees will be invited to participate in a virtual mentoring program that will prepare faculty for creating and submitting proposals for extramural funding. The mentoring program will be announced at the start of the program, and all awardees are expected to participate in this program.

21. Are no-cost extensions allowed? An extension for the 12-month effort will be granted for up to 18 months. No further extensions will be allowed.