

Request for Big Ideas 2021

Saint Louis University has launched an ambitious plan to grow the scale and eminence of our research enterprise, setting SLU on a path to becoming a preeminent Jesuit university. One element of achieving this ambitious goal is to identify and invest in collaborative programs that can establish SLU as a leading destination for research, training, and innovation in particular topics. This Request for Big Ideas launches a process for proposing and selecting University Research Initiatives. A multi-year competition will offer increasing levels of investment for projects that demonstrate broad faculty engagement, strong leadership, and compelling research and business plans. In this initial stage, SLU faculty are invited to propose planning projects to develop ideas more fully in preparation for competing for larger, multi-year investments. Core infrastructure or major instrumentation proposals are acceptable.

University Research Initiatives will likely include internal investments, external funding, new faculty hires, and philanthropic support to set SLU on a path to eminence in an area of scientific and scholarly importance and societal need. A key element of the planning process will be assembling faculty teams that clearly articulate their idea's potential as a university-level initiative. How will multiple colleges and schools benefit from a collaborative undertaking that no single department or college could accomplish on its own?

Successful proposals will also:

- Demonstrate potential to grow into major centers, institutes, or other hubs of substantial research, training, and innovation activity at SLU that achieve eminence in 5-10 years.
- Identify areas of strong faculty interest and expertise where groups of faculty are eager to collaborate
- Leverage the expertise of and extend SLU's relationships with regional or national research, innovation, community, civic, and industry partners
- Enable SLU to attract outstanding faculty and students and substantially increase externally funded research
- Advance the educational and career ambitions of individuals from diverse backgrounds and make SLU a great partner to the communities in which we reside
- Increase SLU's potential for prestigious awards and large-scale funding opportunities
- Align with SLU's mission and identity as a Jesuit research university

Saint Louis University Research Institute

SLU's Big Ideas are funded through the SLU Research Institute, the newest addition to SLU's research enterprise. The SLU Research Institute advances the university's existing research growth ambitions to grow scholarship and research.

Over 10 years, the SLU Research Institute will set the university on the path to becoming a national and international model in promoting teaching, learning and research that exemplify discovery, transformative outcomes and engaged citizenship in a global society – as called for in the university's strategic plan.

The SLU Research Institute will:

1. Achieve and sustain annual research expenditure growth that places SLU among the fastest growing universities in the country
2. Establish eminence in strategic, university-wide research priority areas
3. Raise the profile and reputation of SLU as a world-class research university in the St. Louis area and around the world
4. Recruit and retain world-class research leaders and invest significantly in their work
5. Increase federal, industry, and philanthropic funding for research done at SLU

Big Ideas: Application & Review Process

If you are considering applying for a planning grant, we encourage you to discuss your idea with Jasmin Patel, Assistant Vice President for Research Strategy, as early in the process as possible.

Applications with the most innovative and compelling ideas will receive planning grants of \$50,000, or preliminary planning grants of \$10,000, to develop research and business plans within six months, with staff assistance from the Office of the Vice President for Research. Eighteen [Big Ideas](#) teams have been funded to date. Following the planning grant phase of the 2021 competition, promising projects will be invited to compete for additional investments beginning in Fiscal Year 2022.

Applications should answer the following questions in no more than 3 pages (one inch margins and no smaller than 11-point font.)

Application Components

Title of your team's Big Idea

Leadership Team: Names and departments of 2-5 SLU faculty who will serve as the leadership team to provide diverse perspectives and share the workload. Faculty may participate in multiple projects but may only serve on the leadership team for one Big Ideas proposal.

Overarching Vision:

- What is the Big Idea? Why does it matter?
- Why is this an area of opportunity for SLU?

Moving Forward:

- What are the next steps?
- What questions still need to be answered to assess the viability of your Big Idea?
- What support will be needed to develop a full-fledged research and business plan?

Budget:

- What investments are needed in the planning stages?
- Include a preliminary budget. You will not be held to this budget—OVPR will work with funded proposals to develop a more formal budget.

Potential Revenue Sources:

- What are the three largest external sources of funding in this area?
- How does your Big Idea position SLU to compete for these funding opportunities?
- Are there revenue sources to grow and sustain the idea beyond internal investments?

Key faculty/departments:

- List faculty and departments you have engaged or would engage in moving the Big Idea forward
- Each selected project will work with one or more executive sponsors (dean, provost, vice president). Have you discussed your idea with potential executive sponsors? If so, who? If not, who would you propose as executive sponsor(s)?

Submission:

Applications should be submitted via the Openwater portal. Log in to myslu.slu.edu and click on the Openwater icon in the 'Tools' tab. You can log in using your SLUNet ID. The first time you log in, you will be asked to set up your profile. The Open Water portal will be available by January 31, 2021. Applications are due by 11:59 pm on February 28, 2021.

SLU's [Research Growth Committee](#), composed of senior administrators and faculty leaders representing the diversity of our research portfolio—medicine, life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, humanities—will select proposals to receive planning grants.

Review criteria:

- **How does the idea position SLU to lead in this area?** Big Ideas projects should seek to rigorously assess current SLU assets that can become top-ranked programs within 5 to 10 years, and develop strategies to achieve this goal (faculty recruitment, equipment investment, etc.)
- **Do the leadership team and collaborators bring together unique strengths in a collaborative manner?** A major goal of the initiatives is to strengthen collaboration across disciplines, colleges, and external partners, overcoming internal and external silos and barriers. Particular attention will be given to projects that would be difficult to achieve otherwise due to such barriers.
- **How will the proposal attract external funding to further grow the Big Idea?** Each project should show that it will not need internal support for more than five years. The Research Growth Committee will particularly weigh the likelihood and feasibility of potential revenue sources (external grants, fundraising, licensing revenue, etc.).
- **How does the Big Idea connect to SLU's Jesuit identity and mission?** Each project should address why Saint Louis University is the right home for the Big Idea and how the idea uniquely reflects our Jesuit identity and mission.

FAQ

Should existing Big Ideas teams submit a proposal?

Big Ideas teams who have already received planning grants or preliminary planning grants should not submit a new proposal.

Can the budget include salary support?

Faculty salary recovery may not be included in planning proposal. Future stages may allow salary recovery for faculty. Salary may be requested for students.

Will extensions be available?

Each project will have milestones that must be met in order to continue. An extension will only be provided under extraordinary circumstances.

Can the project include subawards?

Funding can be used to pay individuals outside of SLU for services and consulting.

Do projects have to be multi-disciplinary?

Not necessarily. Projects should be collaborative and benefit multiple departments, colleges and schools, but a successful project could come from a single (broadly defined) discipline.

Why will I need executive sponsors?

In order to be successful, University Research Initiatives will require both faculty leadership and support from SLU's administrative leadership. Executive sponsors will help faculty teams in developing their ideas from a university-wide perspective and support funded projects as they move forward.

How is this different from the President's Research Funding?

The PRF funds high-potential *research projects*. This Request for Big Ideas is for *planning grants* for potential University Research Initiatives and will not fund specific research projects. The Request for Big Ideas is not replacing any other program.

Can you give examples of allowable expenses?

- Travel funding to visit research institutes which are working in similar fields. This would give the investigators an opportunity to learn from peers at other universities, assess the research and funding landscape in an area, form potential collaborations, and assess the competitive landscape.
- Hosting stakeholder and planning meetings with faculty and external partners. Funding may be used to bring external partners and stakeholders to campus.
- Hiring consultants or graduate students to do a literature review and/or research the funding landscape in a field.

Can proposals be submitted for core infrastructure or major instrumentation?

Yes. Planning grant proposals for research infrastructure that will advance SLU's research environment and benefit many researchers from across the campus are welcome.