

Update from the Vice President for Research - January 2018

Dear Colleagues -

It's my pleasure to update you on the progress of Saint Louis University's research growth ambitions. As you know, last year we launched a Five Year Plan to grow the scale and eminence of SLU's research enterprise. Becoming one of the world's leading Jesuit research universities is an ambitious goal that will extend beyond five years; but in our first six months we've made important progress that I'm excited to share with you. As always, I would appreciate your input on whether my colleagues and I in the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) are genuinely enabling you to accomplish your research ambitions and what we might be missing.

BIG IDEAS, RESEARCH GROWTH COMMITTEE

A key element of our plan is defining a set of University Research Initiatives. Last November, we launched a multi-year competition through a Request for Big Ideas. We will award about 10 planning grants of \$50K this Spring. These grants will enable faculty teams to develop ideas more fully and compete for larger, multi-year investments beginning in academic year 2018-2019. The Request for Big Ideas aims to identify collaborative programs that can establish SLU as a leading destination for research, training, and innovation in particular topics. The deadline for applications is January 31 and to date we've received over 70 inquiries.

The ideas selected to move forward will be chosen by the newly formed Research Growth Committee (RGC). The RGC is made up of senior administrators, deans, and faculty representing the breadth of SLU's research. The RGC will internally advise SLU's research growth agenda and oversee investments in university-wide research initiatives, including:

- Monitoring the progress of SLU's Five Year Research Growth Plan and advising the OVPR on strategic directions
- Growing research initiatives that span across the university and have potential to become self-sustaining, eminent research programs
- Allocating institutional and financial resources to research initiatives
- Supporting faculty leaders through advising, mentoring, and making connections for partnerships



RESEARCH COUNCILS, RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD

We are also standing up a series of three Research Councils to facilitate collaborations, enhance SLU's research environment, and advance our faculty's research ambitions. The Research Councils and their Chairs include:

- Science and Engineering Research Council, chaired by Dean Michelle Sabick
- Scholarship Research Council, chaired by Dean Chris Duncan
- Applied Health Research Council (Interim), co-chaired by Dean Mardell Wilson and Professor Chris Jacobs

The three Research Councils will be composed of associate deans for research, department chairs, and faculty leaders from their respective areas and will complement the School of Medicine's Research Planning Committee. Chairs of the Research Councils and the SOM Research Planning Committee will also serve on the Research Growth Committee.

Finally, we have established a Research Advisory Board (RAB) made up of members of SLU's board of trustees that meets quarterly to review and advance our research growth agenda.

RESEARCH GROWTH

Growth in eminence and scale are both essential. In terms of scale, for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2017 sponsored program expenditures at SLU grew by 11% or \$4.3M over 2016. For the first two quarters of this year, we are up just over 8% or \$1.5M compared to December 31, 2016. This growth reflects the ambitions of our faculty and recognition by peers of the impactful work done by faculty and students at SLU.

We are headed in the right direction but this growth will not continue unless we increase the number of grant submissions. My office has numerous programs to help you find sources for funding and write successful applications. I hope that each of you will consider submitting at least one new application for funding to support your research this Spring.

Eminence is of course harder to measure than scale. I could highlight any number of recent eminence accomplishments, such as impressive new scholarly books published through Duke, Oxford, Toronto, and the University of Georgia Presses or faculty whose work puts them at the center of national discussions on just policing and health criminology.



GRANTSMANSHIP WORKSHOPS

To date, almost 100 faculty have taken part in OVPR's workshops. This semester, we will be offering four grantsmanship workshops – General Grantsmanship, Early Career, Review and Revision Intensive, and Grantsmanship for the Humanities and Qualitative Social Sciences. We will also hold a Grantsmanship Workshop in Madrid. Workshops are cohort-style learning environments for faculty to discuss ideas and learn from each other, with the aim to advance their research and scholarship. We are also piloting a Communications Workshop Series for faculty to develop a personal research brand, understand the basics of social media, and develop a website for their professional work.

GO CENTER LAUNCH

Based on the recommendation of a faculty and staff committee, we implemented the first of three Grant Operations (GO) Centers on December 1. The first GO Center supports faculty outside of the School of Medicine and brings together key pre- and post-award staff into a single team to provide hands-on support to faculty applying for and managing their grants. This new infrastructure combines many of the departmental and central research tasks into one cohesive team, and it allows for the submission of applications with fewer steps and better communication while making it faster and easier to receive and manage awards. While this new team has only worked together for a few weeks, their collaboration has already cut steps out of the process of applying for and receiving grants. Come see their new space in Fusz Hall and feel free to bring your research teams over to meet in the conference room as you work on your next collaborative project.

INFOED IMPLEMENTATION

Later this semester, we will replace SLU's grants management system, eRS, with a new system from InfoEd. InfoEd is the same product used by our peers and most of the leading research universities to submit and manage grant applications. Many of you saw the first module this Fall when you submitted your annual outside interest disclosures. We are configuring the grant application and financial tracking modules now and will begin trainings on the new system in February. InfoEd will cost us far less than eRS and I think you will find it to be a significant improvement.

BEER & BIOINFORMATICS AT THE DANFORTH PLANT SCIENCE CENTER - FEBRUARY 9, 2018

Events are an important way that we bring our researchers together, raise our external profile, and recognize our faculty's accomplishments. On February 9, we will host our second annual Beer & Bioinformatics event in partnership with the Danforth Plant Science Center. The event will feature lightning talks from SLU and Danforth faculty and students and will aim to foster collaborative projects and opportunities for student research across the institutions. Last year's event featured almost 20 talks on topics ranging from genetics to computer science to geospatial analysis.



SCHOLARLY WORKS RECOGNITION - MARCH 2, 2018

I hope you will join our second annual Scholarly Works reception on March 2. This is an opportunity to recognize the many ways our faculty generate new knowledge – from peer reviewed books and articles to websites and performances. First, please suggest your colleagues for awards! We have asked deans to submit nominations by February 2. Second, please plan to attend. This is one of those occasions where we stop to celebrate our colleagues' impressive achievements.

SLUSTART

SLUStart is dedicated to supporting research innovation and entrepreneurship in faculty, students, and staff across SLU's campus and beyond. SLUStart focuses on the training of teams in the Lean Startup methodology developed by Stanford University's Steve Blank and is now fully adopted by NSF for its I-Corps (Innovation Corps) programs. The SLUStart program will serve as a stepping stone for SLU to become an NSF I-Corps Site for which we will apply early next month. If approved, the SLU community and partners will have full access to the I-Corps ecosystem and accompanying funding of \$100,000 annually over 5 years. SLUStart and I-Corps will help advance the commercialization of SLU intellectual properties and increase the participation of underrepresented groups. While the NSF I-Corps program focuses strongly on STEM projects, assuming SLU is approved as an I-Corps Site in late 2018 SLUStart itself will continue with an emphasis on non-STEM opportunities.

As I commented in my last update, I could not be more grateful to be on this journey with you. Without downplaying the challenges, I am tremendously optimistic that we can achieve our research ambitions. A set of U.S. universities - Notre Dame, Rice, American, Arizona State are a few examples - have achieved and maintained sustained research growth over years that has been transformative. Together we can achieve this for SLU, and we're off to a good start.

In gratitude,

Ken

