

A Strategy for Funding Research Initiation and Support Research and Public Service – June 2006

Background:

Sustaining research in the modern university setting requires investments in several areas.

Primary among these are:

- Start-up funding for new positions
- Matching funds as required for proposals to agencies and foundations
- Seed funding for new ideas, collaborations and initiatives
- Core analytical facilities that can be shared across campus

[Graduate education is an important part of the research enterprise, both as a central goal of any research university, and as an important part of the research enterprise. The University has recently made a major investment in graduate education which will be discussed separately below.]

Support for investments in research traditionally comes through partnerships between the schools, colleges, and centers, and the central research office. Faculty, Deans and Directors, here and elsewhere, assume some capacity to match offers from their units with similar levels of support from that central office. The purpose of having a central research office, and centralized funds to invest, is to ensure some level of cross-unit or University-wide strategic thinking in the research enterprise. This, in turn, stimulates interdisciplinary effort and “common good” approaches.

The State of Central Research Support at UNH – A Tale of Two Years:

It is instructive to compare FY06 and FY07 in terms of funds available to initiate and support research and scholarship. FY06 represents a high water mark in terms of support. FY07, as currently conceived, will deliver the lowest pool of central money for this purpose since the beginning of RCM.

Over the last 5 years, there have been two primary sources of research support funding in the office of the VP for Research and Public Service (VPRPS): the RISE account and the return of “excess” indirect cost recovery (IDC) at the end of each fiscal year. In FY06, President Hart allocated an additional \$400,000 from the President’s Fund for Excellence to run a competitive grants program strategically designed to increase research partnerships and initiate new collaborations.

RISE - The budget for the RISE account has been relatively flat at about \$500k-\$600K per year. For the last 3 years, \$125K of this has gone to assist the buildout of Kingsbury, and \$100K to sponsor a faculty competition in the area of Outreach Scholarship, leaving about \$300K-\$350K per year for matching and startup. In FY07, the budgeted total for this fund is \$535,000, all of which has already been allocated as follows:

Kingsbury Hall	\$125,000	Organic Dairy	\$100,000
Leitzel Center	\$100,000	Faculty Start-up	\$ 32,000
Matching Funds	\$ 99,000	Faculty Competition	\$100,000
Univ. Press of New England	\$ 15,000		

For FY08, the total already committed is \$430,000.

Excess Indirect Cost Recovery - In FY06, the RISE fund was augmented by ~\$300,000 in “excess” IDC return to the Research Office. This end-of-year allocation occurs if the actual IDC recovery exceeds what was predicted and budgeted at the beginning of the year. Since research revenues have been growing rapidly over the last five years, this excess has been significant in each year. Under the revised RCM rules, the budget flow to the VPRPS Office has been largely separated from IDC flow, including the allocation of the end-of-year excess. As with regular IDC allocations, 82% will not go to the units generating that IDC.

The President’s Excellence Initiative - In FY06, President Hart allocated \$400,000 from the President’s Fund for Excellence to support a one-time faculty research initiation competition. This was combined with the \$300,000 in “excess” IDC described above to fund \$700,000 in innovative faculty research and scholarship. This was a one-time allocation which may or may not be repeated at the discretion of the President.

Summary: The Changing Landscape in Research Investment

In the simplest terms, changes in central funding for research in FY06 and FY07 includes:

	FY06	FY07
RISE Account	\$ 549,000	\$571,000
Excess IDC recovery	\$ 319,000	\$ 50,000 (est.)
President’s Initiative	\$ 400,000	\$ 0
Total	\$1,268,000	\$621,000

Impact of the “3% Solution”

At the end of the RCM review, President Hart directed the VPRPS to bring a faculty group together to discuss the The CBC has effectively approved the allocation of 3% of IDC recovery formally returned to individual faculty for a competitive process to support graduate education. This will provide ~\$675,000 in FY07. These funds will be an important part of the effort to improve recruitment and retention of graduate students at the Ph.D. level, and, indirectly, will improve the climate for research on campus. The proposal for the use of these funds clearly specifies that the program support innovative programs to support graduate education only. These funds will not be available for matching awards, assisting with faculty start-ups, or purchasing equipment.