

Ad Hoc Committee on Bridge Funding: Summary

Academic Staff Research Facts (for 2013-14 fiscal year)

- 304 unique Academic Staff Principal Investigators
- 691 grants awarded to Academic Staff Principal Investigators
- \$80,566,276 awarded to Academic Staff Principal Investigators
- \$86,485,540 award to Academic Staff Principal Investigators, Co-Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators

Conclusions

- We recommend a central location to list the notice of bridge funding programs as has been found at other select universities.
- We suggest that all Academic Staff PIs and independent investigators, including Assistant and Associate Scientists, have access to temporary support funding.
- New and existing bridge funding programs should be expanded to allow for support of PI salary and fringes for Academic Staff PIs.
- We recommend that the University increase funds available for academic staff bridge funding in order to stabilize research programs, retain high-quality academic staff, and prevent further erosion of UW-Madison's research portfolio.

Ad Hoc Committee on Bridge Funding: Documentation and Rationale

The committee has investigated the impact of funding loss on salary support for both Academic Staff PIs and those who have salary support on Faculty grants where funding is lost. Herein, the committee describes: 1) the need for bridge funding for academic staff, and 2) proposed methods for improving accessibility of bridge funding for academic staff.

The need for bridge funding for Academic Staff

For the 2013 - 2014 year, there were 304 unique Academic Staff PIs where there were 1039 unique Faculty PIs. During this year, Academic Staff PIs were funded for 691 grants (\$80,566,276). This indicates an important financial impact on the University with any loss of funding to academic staff. Furthermore, academic staff who have lost their jobs due to loss of grant funding has increased in most years since the fiscal year 2007 – 2008. The number of requests for academic staff layoffs at the University of Wisconsin – Madison went from 88 in year 2007 – 2008 to 157 in 2012-2013. Academic staff that are paid solely through external grants (sponsored funds) have no other source of funding for their salary and fringe benefits when grants are not funded, and are therefore subject to layoff. Although loss of funding greatly affects faculty as well, it is usually the academic staff who lose their positions due to funding loss. These concerns highlight the importance of bridge funding for academic staff, with purpose of bridge funding as stabilization of research programs by enabling ongoing research productivity during times when external funding has been temporarily disrupted.

Other universities comparable to the University of Wisconsin – Madison have bridge funding programs for non-faculty investigators (such as the University of Michigan). The following proposed methods for improving accessibility of bridge funding would bring University of Wisconsin – Madison policies and procedures more in line with many of our peers.

Improving accessibility of bridge funding for Academic Staff.

The committee has summarized its recommendations for criteria related to bridge funding using guidelines set here at the University of Wisconsin – Madison and through searches of web based documents on faculty/non-faculty bridge funding at other institutions. Several universities have established websites announcing their bridge funding programs, eligibility and deadlines such as: Princeton University, Ohio State University, Tulane University, Duke University School of Medicine, Purdue University and the University of Michigan. The criteria vary for participation in bridge funding by university. A few provide criteria only for faculty while others define eligibility for research scholars, senior research scholars and senior professional specialists/researchers with history of successful extramural funding and good prospects for renewal of funding. In contrast, the University of Wisconsin – Madison does not provide a single source of readily available information on bridge funding but information is released either at specific times, such as the FY14 Bridge Funding for Sequestration Effects, or via Departmental needs. **In order to make the notice of bridge funding information readily available to non-faculty, as well as faculty, we recommend a central location to list the notice of a bridge funding program as has been found at other select universities.**

While the University of Wisconsin – Madison does provide bridge funding for some academic staff comparable to faculty, it is not well advertised or clearly stated. Academic staff who hold Permanent PI status have the opportunity to access monies available to faculty such as the Fall Competition, Bridge Funding, etc. However, while early career faculty are given special consideration, early career academic staff do not have these opportunities. **We recommend that all Academic Staff PIs and independent investigators, including Assistant and Associate Scientists, have access to temporary support funding as well.**

The need to lead an independent research program with an established history of funding as one criterion is consistent between all the programs we investigated, regardless of whether the bridge funding is

awarded to a faculty member or a non-faculty investigator. **A key difference in a non-faculty vs. faculty bridge funding program should be the allowance of salary and fringe benefits for non-faculty investigators, who do not have other sources of salary support. With the goal of academic staff job retention during funding crisis, bridge funding programs could be expanded to allow for support of PI salary and fringe.**

Some websites on bridge funding indicated the number of years of service would determine the number of months of salary and benefits available while the scientist or faculty member applied for further external funding. A similar theme throughout most bridge funding programs found by the committee was the requirement of matching funds and/or letters of support at the departmental level. We believe this will be an important criterion in deciding who receives funds.

Since academic staff who received sponsored funding are contributing to the University's institutional overhead, we recommend that the University increase funds available for academic staff bridge funding (e.g., possibly by reinvesting components of overhead money from external grants/contracts) in order to stabilize research programs, retain high-quality academic staff, and prevent further erosion of UW-Madison's research portfolio due to the current funding climate. This will help ensure sustainability of research programs, while maintaining academic staff job security. Not only will this enable academic staff at all levels to retain more jobs, but also increases the likelihood of their research programs regaining extramural funding. As Federal sponsors' budgets continue to decline, such support is crucial to maintaining UW-Madison's research enterprise. Therefore, we suggest awards be given to academic staff who offer the greatest likelihood of return on investment via regaining extramural funds.

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