

**Research Council (Norman)
2025–2026 Report
Submitted by Somik Ghosh, Chair**

History and Membership: The Research Council was approved as a council by the President of the University of Oklahoma upon recommendation of the Faculty Senate and the University of Oklahoma Student Association in December 1972. The Research Council is charged with the promotion and development of research and creative activity throughout the University community. The Council serves as adviser to the President, the Senior Vice President and Provost, the Vice President for Research and Partnerships (VPRP) and Faculty Senate in matters regarding research. The primary function of the Council is to evaluate internal proposals requesting university funds for the support of research and creative activities and to make recommendations concerning the awarding of research professorships.

The Research Council consists of 15 members - five appointed by the Office of the President and 10 by the Faculty Senate - chosen to provide a balanced representation of disciplines across the University by including faculty from each of the following six areas:

1. Engineering, Energy, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, EEMPS (3 members)
2. Social and Behavioral Sciences, SBS (3 members)
3. Life Sciences, LS (2 members)
4. Humanities, HUM (3 members)
5. Education/Professional/Other, EPO (2 members)
6. Fine Arts, FA (2 members)

The faculty members of the FY26 Research Council, their terms and appointments are:

Name	Service Dates	Appointment	Category
Eric Day	August 2024 – May 2027	Faculty Senate	SBS
Somik Ghosh	August 2023 – May 2026	Faculty Senate	EPO
Seth Gordon	August 2023 – May 2026	Faculty Senate	FA
Ellen Greene	Nov 2025 – May 2028	Faculty Senate	HUM
Claudette Grinnell Davis	August 2025 – May 2028	Faculty Senate	SBS
Jonathan Hils	August 2025 – May 2028	Faculty Senate	FA
Jennifer Holland	August 2024 – May 2027	President	HUM
Tyler Johnson	August 2025 – May 2028	President	SBS
Paul Lawson	August 2024 – May 2027	Faculty Senate	LS
Heather McCarthy	August 2025 – May 2028	President	LS
Angela Pharris	Nov 2025 – May 2027	Faculty Senate	EPO
Jessica Ruyle	August 2024 – May 2026	President	EEMPS
Cedric Tolliver	August 2023 – May 2026	Faculty Senate	HUM
Gerilyn Soreghan	Nov 2025 – May 2026	President	EEMPS
Joe Tischler	Nov 2025 – May 2027	Faculty Senate	EEMPS

The 2025-2026 Chair of the Research Council was Dr. Somik Ghosh from the Division of Construction Science. The 2026-2027 Chair of the Research Council will be Dr. Paul Lawson from the School of Biological Sciences. The Research Council was administered through the Office of the VPRP via Rose Filley.

Budget: An annual budget of \$450,000 was split between the Faculty Investment Program (\$300,000) and Junior Faculty Fellowships (\$150,000). In FY26, a total of \$311,922 was awarded through the FIP. The total amount awarded through the JFF was \$147,854.35. Table 1 shows the Research Council budget and FIP and JFF awards from FY19 to FY26. The \$2,146 not spent through the JFF was reallocated to the FIP, and the Council requested and received an additional \$9,776 to fund three FIP proposals in May.

Fiscal Year	FIP Budget Allocation	JFF Budget Allocation	Total VPRP Budget Allocation	FIP Funding Awarded	JFF Funding Awarded	Total VPRP Funding Awarded
FY19	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$286,454	\$116,406	\$402,860
FY20	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$265,294	\$127,946	\$393,240
Fy21	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$260,408	\$159,453	\$419,861
FY22	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$284,537	\$147,782	\$432,319
FY23	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$283,409	\$135,592	\$419,001
FY24	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$266,178	\$143,297	\$409,475
FY25	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$250,755	\$177,847	\$427,847
FY26	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$450,000	\$311,922	\$147,854	\$459,776

Table 1: Research Council budget allocations and disbursements from FY19–FY26.

Primary Activities: The primary activity of the Research Council during the 2025-2026 academic year (FY26) was to review proposals and make recommendations to the Vice President for Research and Partnerships (VPRP) pertaining to awards and honors under his administration, specifically:

1. Faculty Investment Program (Up to \$15,000)
2. Junior Faculty Fellowships (\$7,000 + Fringe)
3. George Lynn Cross Research Professorship (recommendation to President)
4. Henry Daniel Rinsland Memorial Award for Excellence in Educational Research

Faculty Investment Program (FIP)

Research Area	Number of Proposals Submitted	Number of Awards	Total Awards (\$)	Average Award (\$)	Funding Rate by Research Area (%)	Percent of Total FIP Budget	Percent of Total Number Awarded
EEMPS	29	4	\$60,000	\$15,000	14%	19%	18%
SBS	12	1	\$13,600	\$13,600	8%	4%	4%
LS	18	7	\$103,616	\$14,802	38%	33%	32%
HUM	17	3	\$32,768	\$10,923	18%	11%	14%
FA	16	6	\$86,939	\$14,490	38%	28%	28%
EPO	7	1	\$14,999	\$15,000	14%	5%	4%
Totals	99	22	\$311,922	\$14,178	~22%	100	100

Table 2: FY26 Faculty Investment Program proposals and awards by research area.

The Faculty Investment Program (FIP) completed its FY26 review cycle in May, having considered 99 proposals across nine monthly review rounds (September through May). Faculty requested a total of \$1,397,192 in support - roughly 4.5 times the program’s available funds. The Council ultimately awarded 22 grants totaling \$311,922, an overall funding rate of ~22% (Table 2).

This year's activity reflects a longer-term trajectory (Figure 1). Award capacity has held steady (between 19 and 22 grants per year since FY19), but submission volume has shifted dramatically. After dipping to a low of 34 proposals in FY21 (during the height of the COVID disruption), submissions have climbed in every subsequent year, nearly tripling to 99 in FY26. As a result, the funding rate has fallen from a FY21 peak of ~59% to the ~22% recorded this cycle, with most of that compression occurring over the past three years.

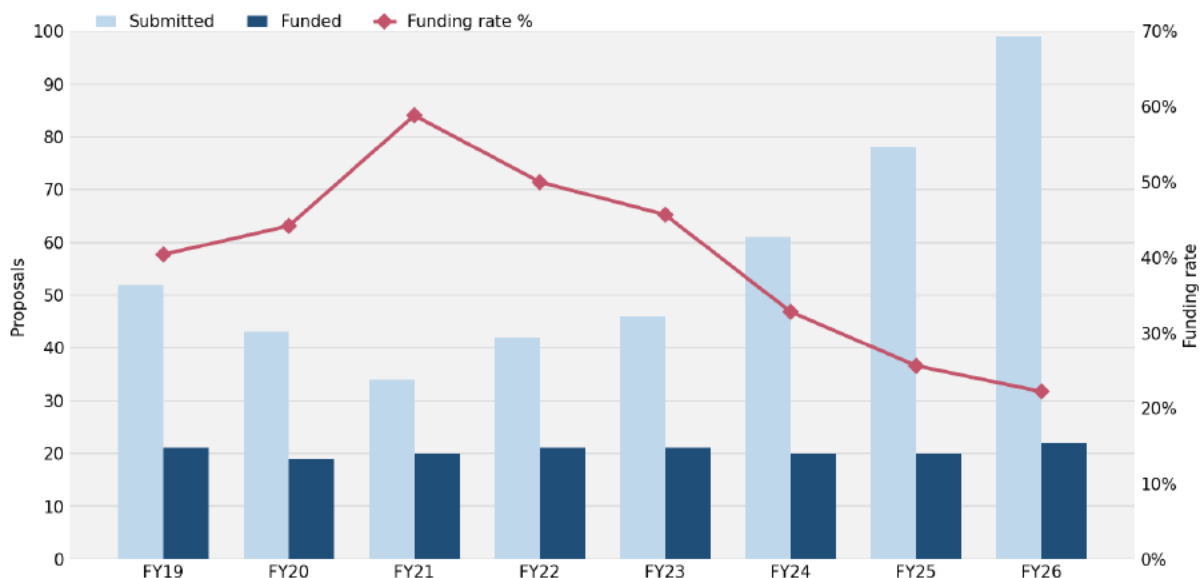


Figure 1: FIP proposal submissions, awards, and funding rate, FY19–FY26. Left axis: submitted and funded proposal counts (bars). Right axis: funding rate (line)

Proposal volume held steady throughout FY26, averaging about 11 submissions per month. May drew the largest single cohort with 14 proposals, followed by January (13), October (12) and December (12). February was the lightest month at 7 proposals. Across all nine months, faculty requested an average of ~\$14,000 per proposal with most submissions seeking the program's \$15,000 cap.

Reviewers scored each proposal on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is "Highly Meritorious," and 5 is "Not Competitive." The overall average score across all 99 proposals was 2.33, placing the typical FY26 submission in the "Meritorious" to "Needs Minor Revisions" range. The strongest individual proposals scored below 1.5 and several earned near-perfect averages: Emily Warner's Abstraction Unframed (Visual Art) received a flawless 1.00 in November, and proposals from David Miller (Biomedical Engineering, 1.11) in September, Chang Wang (Biomedical Engineering, 1.09) in March and Rupa Haldavnekar (Electrical and Computer Engineering, 1.11) in May rounded out the top tier. The weakest scores, those averaging above a 3.5, were not concentrated in any one research area suggesting that quality variation reflected proposal quality rather than systematic bias toward or against particular fields.

The 22 funded projects represented a wide range of academic disciplines:

- Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences: 9 awards (Biology, Chemistry & Biochemistry, Anthropology, Women's & Gender Studies, Modern Languages, Literatures & Linguistics)
- Gallogly College of Engineering: 6 awards (Biomedical, Aerospace & Mechanical, Electrical & Computer, Sustainable Chemical/Bio/Materials)
- Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts: 6 awards (Visual Arts, Music)
- Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education: 1 award (Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum)

By research area, the funded portfolio leaned toward Life Sciences (7 awards), with Fine Arts (6) and Engineering/Energy/Math/Physical Sciences (4 plus 2 cross-listed) close behind. Humanities received 3 awards, while Social and Behavioral Sciences and Education/Professional/Other each received one. Notably, no awards went to several academic units that submitted strong proposals - including Computer Science, History, Economics, and Drama - primarily because their highest-scoring submissions fell just below the funding cutoff in months with two-award caps.

Of the 22 awards this year, roughly one-third went to resubmitted proposals, suggesting that the program's iterative review structure is working as intended by providing constructive feedback that authors are clearly responding to.

Junior Faculty Fellowship (JFF)

Research Area	Number of Proposals Submitted	Number of Awards	Total Awards (\$)	Average Award (\$)	Funding Rate	Percent of Total Program Budget	Percent of Total Number Awarded
EEMPS	8	0	\$0	N/A	0%	0	0
SBS	13	3	\$23,457.00	\$7,819.00	23%	15%	16%
LS	7	7	\$51,792.77	\$7,400.00	100%	34%	37%
HUM	6	4	\$39,371.20	\$8,552.00	67%	26%	21%
FA	4	2	\$14,000.00	\$7,000.00	50%	9%	10%
EPO	3	3	\$24,397.73	\$8,133.00	100%	16%	16%
Totals	41	19	\$147,854.35	\$7,782.00	46%	100%	100%

Table 3. FY26 Junior Faculty Fellowship proposals and awards by research area.

The funded portfolio of 19 proposals reflected broad disciplinary range (Table 3). Life Sciences accounted for the largest share with 7 awards, followed by Humanities (4), Social and Behavioral Sciences (3), Education, Professional, and Other (3), and Fine Arts (2). Funded projects spanned subjects as varied as Amazonian biodiversity, vascular biology, dance composition, Black cowboy literature, AI-assisted qualitative research, and metabolic responses across the menstrual cycle - reflecting the program's role in supporting early-career scholarly work across the full disciplinary breadth of the university. Engineering, Energy, Mathematics, and Physical Sciences (EEMPS) proposals were less competitive this cycle, reflecting the challenge of communicating highly technical work to a cross-disciplinary review audience.

Over the last 8 years, the JFF program has funded 139 of 279 submissions, an overall funding rate of ~50% (Table 4). Annual awards have remained stable, ranging from 14-21 fellowships per year, while submission volume has varied considerably from a pandemic-era low of 19 in FY21 to a high of 46 in FY24. As a result, the year-to-year funding rate has fluctuated between 39% and 95% without a clear directional trend and FY26's 46% sitting near the program's long-term average.

Fiscal Year	Submissions	Awards	Funding Rate
FY19	35	14	40%
FY20	26	15	58%
FY21	19	18	95%
FY22	35	19	54%
FY23	41	16	39%
FY24	46	17	37%
FY25	36	21	58%
FY26	41	19	46%
Total	279	139	~50%

Table 4. Junior Faculty Fellowship proposal submissions, awards and funding rate, 2019-2026

George Lynn Cross Professorship: The Research Council received four nominations for the 2026 George Lynn Cross Research Professorship. Three nominees were advanced to the stage of requesting external letters. The Council's recommendation for the award was Dr. Yang Hong (Department of Civil Engineering and Environmental Science). Feedback on the nomination packets for those nominees not selected for the award were shared with the Office of the Provost.

Henry Daniel Rinsland Memorial Award: There were two nominations for the 2026 Henry Daniel Rinsland Memorial Award for Excellence in Educational Research. The Council recommended Dr. Kaleb Briscoe Brown (College of Education) for the award. Feedback on the nomination packets for those nominees not selected for the award were shared with the Office of the Provost.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations:

As the Faculty Research Council (FRC) concludes the 2025-2026 academic year, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting OU's Lead On strategic plan and supporting the scholarly and creative endeavors of faculty across OU. A shifting external funding landscape and the need to sustain faculty research productivity make internal support more critical than ever. Internal funding serves a dual purpose of enabling faculty to sustain ongoing scholarly activity and generating the preliminary data necessary to compete successfully for external awards. While the FRC is grateful that the internal funding pool was increased by \$50,000 during this academic year, we recognize that this increment does not get us close to the level needed to support the upward trajectory of faculty research productivity across the university. During 2024-2025, faculty submitted 78 total proposals, of which only 35% were funded. This trend has persisted into 2025-2026, during which the FRC was able to fund only 22% of FIP proposals (99 total submissions) and 46% of JFF proposals (41 total submissions). These numbers underscore the widening gap between faculty demand for internal support and the resources available to meet it.

FRC would request a further increase of at least \$50,000 to the internal funding pool for 2026-2027. Demand for FIP awards remains high, and sustaining meaningful access to these funds is essential for faculty at all career stages and across all disciplines. We are pleased to note that the resubmission pathway has continued to function as an effective and equitable mechanism, offering faculty a substantive opportunity to refine and strengthen their proposals. The disciplinary balance of funded awards across campus also remains strong, reflecting a shared commitment to inclusive support for the full breadth of scholarly and creative work at OU.

In the spirit of collaboration, FRC would like to be engaged in future internal funding initiatives. We recognize that the OVPRP may be considering new programs or funding mechanisms, and we respectfully request that the FRC be meaningfully engaged in such initiatives from an early stage. The Council's expertise in peer review, disciplinary breadth, and faculty perspective represents a resource that can strengthen the quality and credibility of internal funding programs, and we look forward to deepening that partnership in the year ahead.

Finally, FRC also recommends adding one dedicated meeting to the annual calendar specifically for review and discussion of George Lynn Cross Research Professorship (GLCRP) nominations, ensuring this important recognition receives the attention it warrants.

We thank all members of the 2025-2026 FRC for their engagement and commitment to faculty throughout the year, and we extend our sincere appreciation to Dr. Matt Hulver, Dr. Ann West, Ms. Rose Filley, and their colleagues in the OVPRP for their continued partnership and support.