**Provost PhD Program Award**

**Request for Proposals**

**Submission Deadline:** Friday, November 1, 2019, 5 pm

**Purpose**
These competitive awards provide supplemental funding to strategically invest in our most promising graduate programs. Specifically, awards will be given to PhD programs with the greatest demonstrated potential to compete with peer institutions in their disciplines. The primary intent of this award is to assist in a program’s efforts to demonstrably strengthen its standing and profile. Applications should provide clear strategies and proposals for growing and strengthening their graduate programs. Possible strategies include (but not limited to): Developing targeted recruitment strategies for improving program’s profile, enhancing student support for recruiting top-tier candidates, investing in gap funding for supporting retention and degree completion, designing new curricular components for aligning programs with employment needs and market demand, and funding student travel for disseminating graduate student work.

**Annual Award Application Categories**
Tier 1: $50,000  
Tier 2: $100,000  
Tier 3: $150,000

Annual awards are renewable for up to three years.

**Budget Restrictions**
Funds cannot be used for faculty stipends, equipment and supplies, and event catering. The goal is that proposals will also receive complementary funding from their respective unit and/or external partners to generate additional support.

**Eligibility**
PhD programs that are currently active or have received SCHEV approval by the proposal submission date are eligible to apply. To be eligible (and to maintain eligibility if selected for funding), programs must be in good standing with the university’s Academic Program Review process.

Each program is allowed to submit only one application in only one of the three tiers.

Collaborative applications across programs are welcome.

**Selection**
A committee will review proposals and make award recommendations to the Provost. This committee will be chaired by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education and include faculty members who represent diverse disciplines and who are familiar with these PhD programs.
Period of the Award
Awards will be announced by December 2, 2019. Award funding will be available by September 1, 2020. Funding will be renewable for up to three years from start date and is contingent upon an annual assessment report submitted by the recipient program addressing progress made toward all program goals, advances, and success markers stated in the initial proposal submission and Memorandum of Understanding (MOA). Yearly progress report guidelines will be sent to each program by May 1, 2020 and reports will be due no later than July 1, 2020.

Review Criteria
Successful program proposals will not exceed **12 single-spaced pages** and should address six key sections:

1. **Background Information.** A profile of the current Mason program (not to exceed **three pages**). The narrative should include any and all markers of success pertinent to the discipline, including but not limited to current and projected:
   - Number of students enrolled in the program
   - Student support, including specific information about the number of students supported by sponsored funding; average level of support
   - Retention rates
   - Time to degree
   - Student success while in the program (e.g., publications, grants, honors, awards, scholarships, academic conference and invited presentations, etc.). Please provide citations and note whether students are currently in the program or recent alumni (up to five years). If available, please include information regarding % of dissertations that result in at least one peer-reviewed publication.
   - Post-graduate placement (up to 10 years)
   - Program rankings

2. **Benchmarking.** A description of a top PhD program (i.e., nationally ranked and/or an aspirational program) in the discipline (not to exceed **one page**).

3. **Proposed Objectives and Plan** (not to exceed **four pages**) specifying:
   - Main objectives
   - Strategies to:
     - Increase the program’s profile (e.g., increase in comparative rankings, national and international reputation, etc.).
     - Enhance graduate student experience at Mason.
     - Improve graduate student yield, retention, and graduate rates.
     - Address identified gaps.
   - Long-term, sustainable plan to support the proposed plan and objectives beyond the funding period
   - Collaborative plan with other programs (if applicable)
   - Discussion of goals in alignment with Mason’s strategic plan

4. **Budget and budget justification.** (not to exceed **two pages**). This section should include a statement with four distinct sections:
   - Amount of graduate support requested annually for up to three years; requests cannot be higher than $150,000 per fiscal year.
• How that money would supplement current funding. Detail all current support that the program receives from the Dean, central administration, external funds, and other sources.
• Specific goals and advances that the program will make with this award after the first, second, and third year of funding.
• A table that shows the graduate assistantship stipend level currently offered to doctoral students as compared to those offered by at least three other competitive schools. Please state the level of stipend needed to recruit competitively.

5. **Support Letter.** A Dean or Director’s letter of support MUST be included (not to exceed **one page**). This letter should address the achievability of the proposed programs gains and the Dean/Director’s commitment to continue to provide graduate support packages at least at the levels awarded throughout the period of the award.

6. **Evaluation Plan and Timeline (One page).**
   • Milestones that will be used to mark the progress made towards the proposed objectives and the overall execution of the proposed plan,
   • Major deliverables and corresponding timeline

**Note:** In addition to the key sections described above, proposals from **programs that previously received funding from the Provost PhD Award** should also include a seventh section (not to exceed **two pages**) containing specific information regarding:

• Major goals proposed in the submission and MOA during the previous three years of funding;
• Accomplishments under these goals in terms of major activities, specific objectives and significant results;
• Metrics on how the first three years of Provost funding has helped strengthen the program; and
• Examples of student scholarly products and creative works, resulting from and/or associated with the previous award’s funding.

**Important notes:**
• Faculty CVs or accomplishments are **NOT** to be included.
• Proposals will be reviewed based on clarity of the plan as stated, achievability of program goals, measurable markers established to assess the program’s progress, and specific strategies and/or program’s ability to sustain its growth and quality post-award.
• Proposals should address how success will be tracked both in terms of the use of awarded funds and the program’s overall plan to raise its long-term profile. Recipients will be required to report annually on these metrics.
• The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning will provide the review committee with program information on degree production, GRE scores, time-to-degree, and completion rates. A copy of this information may be requested from the office of Graduate Education, provgrad@gmu.edu, after 23 September 2019. Copies of previous award-winning proposals may also be requested.

**Award Program Contact:**
Laurence Bray, Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Education, lbray2@gmu.edu or x3-2218.