

**ILLINOIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES**

**Report No. 2025.02/4000.01**  
**FY24 Grants and**  
**Contracts Report**

***Introduction***

As a national research university, ISU is committed to making a positive impact in our community through our scholarly and creative activities, student experiential learning, and University outreach. Our students, faculty, and staff engage in research, creative scholarly activities, or other forms of scholarly activities to that end. ISU has a long tradition of strong internal support for scholarship, including through programs like the recent Advancing Research and Creative Scholarship program and the University Research Grant program. In addition to the support we provide internally, external funding sources make substantial contributions to advancing these efforts. The work made possible by such funding supports the university's strategic direction to Elevate Institutional Excellence, as outlined in *Excellence by Design*, which supplanted *Educate. Connect. Elevate* in FY25. External support, and more often the expenditures using that support, is a key factor in several rankings for the University, including our Carnegie Classification as a High Research Activity Doctoral Institution (R2). Support comes through various channels (e.g. grants, contracts, agency dollars, foundation support, etc.) and for several functions (e.g. research, instruction, public service, etc.). This report captures the grants and contracts directed through Illinois State University's restricted accounts managed by Research and Sponsored Programs. This report is not about active research and scholarship activity, per se, nor its impact, nor all aspects of external support – e.g. University Advancement also plays a key part in seeking financial support for the university's work in research and creative scholarship mission.

***Report***

***Proposals***

FY24 marked the second year in a row of more typical pre-COVID application rates and awards for grants and contracts. The absolute number of submitted proposals decreased from FY23, and the amount of dollars requested also decreased. Proposals are the leading indicator of future awards. In FY24, we had 204 proposals submitted from 116 unique investigators. Professors (including Distinguished and University Professors) led the way with 62 proposals, followed by staff (53), but staff sought the most funds at \$26M. The size and complexity of the proposals continue to evolve, with seven awards for over \$1M in FY24 (18 submitted proposals). Most funding requests from ISU investigators are in the \$25-250k range (81) followed by requests for less than \$25k (56) and the \$250k-\$1M range (48). The College of Arts & Sciences led the way in proposals with \$36.6M requested across 95 proposals, with 23 submitted proposals for \$16.6M from Biological Sciences, the University's most active School/Department.

***Awards***

Funding success rates have declined nationally for several federal agencies, and some foundations have even lower success rates, but our documented proposal success rate remains high. Some of this is a product of the long-standing nature of many of our awards with certain state agencies, but the high federal success rate is a point of pride. A total of 111 of the 204 proposals submitted (54%) in FY24 have been funded so far, with a 30% success rate for federal awards (15 of 50) and 90% (51 of 57) for state-funded proposals. We know there is a several-month lag from proposal submission to award. We expect more success in FY25 for those applications that are still pending. The

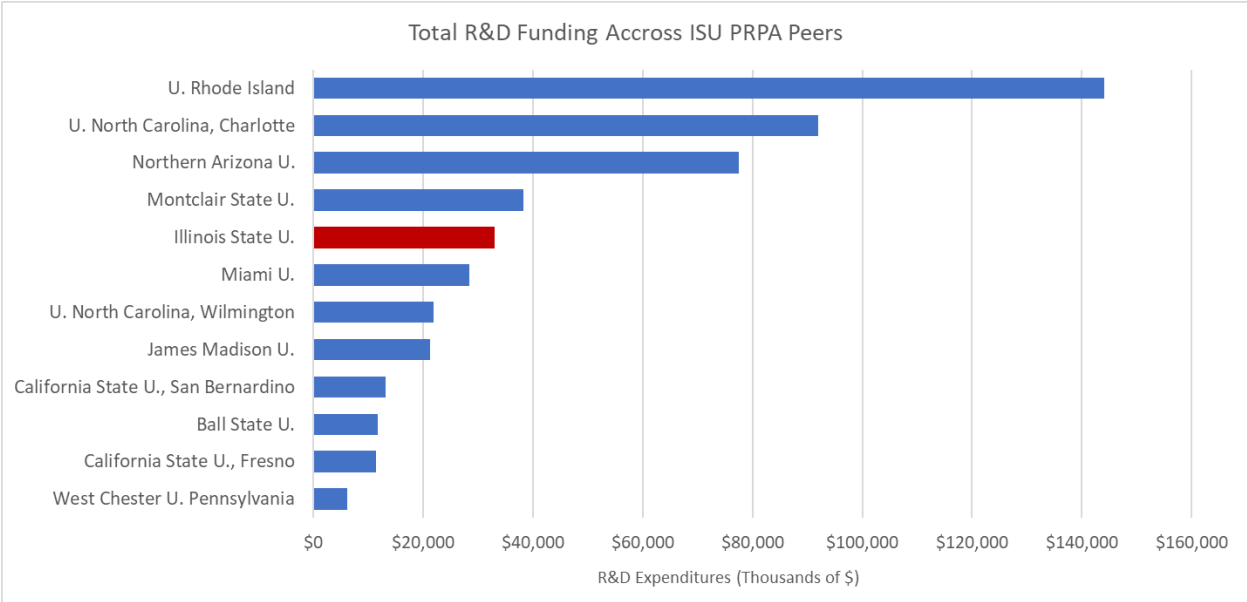
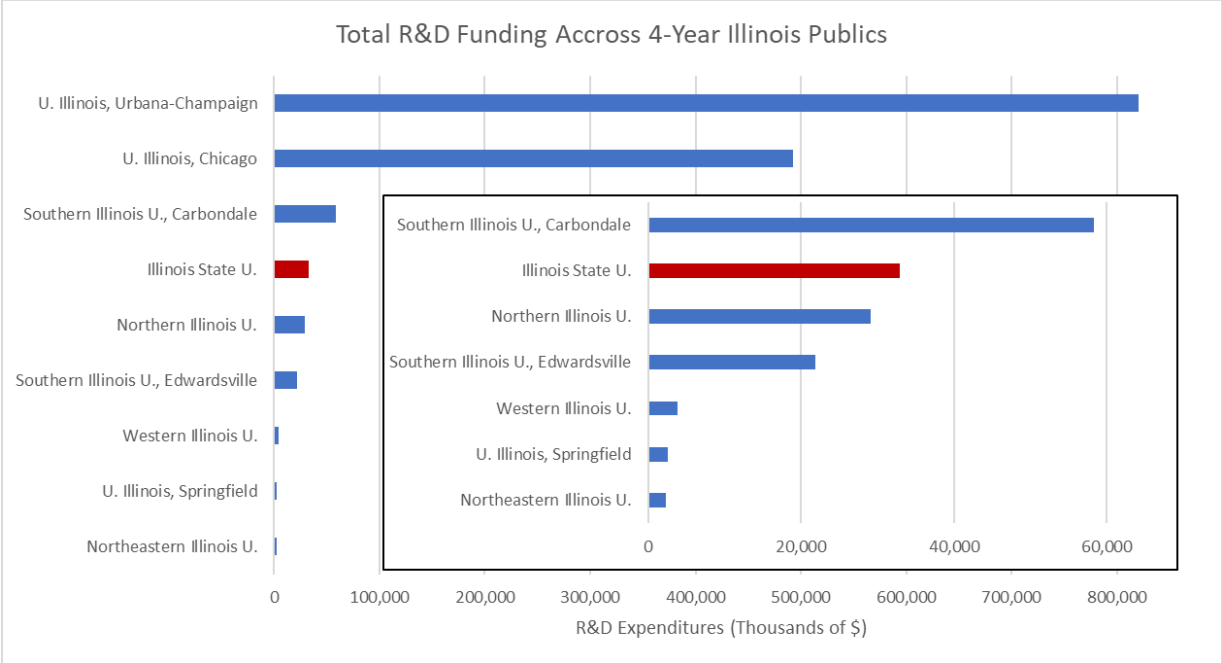
Colleges receiving the most new expected external funding in FY24 were the College of Education (\$16.73 M), the College of Arts and Sciences (\$8.28 M), and Mennonite College of Nursing (\$2.18 M).

One continued feature of awards is the 39 awards for \$0, or 23% of the total number of awards in FY24. This is back up to a higher rate than from FY23, but aligns with previous years, and remains a significant fraction of new “awards”. In FY24 these \$0 awards are a mix of no cost extensions on prior awards and awards where the PIs at ISU do not receive external funds, but we provide in-kind support and participate on the larger project. Although these awards are still positive in allowing the university to utilize previously allocated funds on continuing expenses to do good work, it does not lead to newly awarded funds that might have been received if we had expended the funds at the originally planned rate. Removing these awards, Educational Administration and Foundations was most successful with 15 new awards, followed by Biological Sciences with 13 new awards, then Agriculture with 10 new awards. The largest number of funded awards in FY24 came from the National Science Foundation (18 new awards), the Illinois State Board of Education (17), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (16).

### ***Expenditures***

A critical component of external awards is actual expenditures because they give a truer sense of trends in grants and contracts. For a variety of reasons, including variations across agency practices, awarded amounts for any given fiscal year may not align with funds available to be used by the institution in that fiscal year. In FY24, for example, one particularly illustrative example of this nuance occurred -- *none* of our Financial Aid awards are included; all those funds were awarded in either FY23 or FY25, yet we still expended ~\$5M in FY24. With that caveat in mind then, we saw a significant increase in expenditures in FY24. The largest area of restricted fund expenditures in FY24 remains in Financial Aid. Of note, seven non-administrative units spent over \$1M in restricted external funds in FY24 -- Education Administration & Foundations (\$6.77M), Biological Sciences (\$3.31M), Teaching and Learning (\$2.12M), Special Education (\$2.09M), Mennonite College of Nursing (\$1.93M), Social Work (\$1.51M), and Chemistry (\$1.24M). As a College, the College of Education spent \$18.1M, largely through the Illinois Tutoring Initiative. The College of Arts and Sciences spent \$8.03M.

Expenditures are the measure of record in surveys such as the Higher Education Research & Development (HERD) survey conducted by the National Science Foundation. The Federal HERD data always lag behind – FY23 was just released in November of 2024 and FY24 data were due on January 31, 2025 – and they are only a portion of the narrative, but these data should show all the research and development spending that we document. Nationally NSF-reported spending was up in FY23 across all sources, at a record high increase for the second year in a row, with the 900 HERD-reporting institutions having spent \$108 B in FY23. Federal spending accounted for over \$59B of that... and, as has been the norm of late, the top 30 institutions spend 42% of that! ISU showed a significant increase in our spending ranking in the FY23 data for research and development expenditures just recently released, and regained our spot as the highest-ranked Illinois 4-year public university without a medical school (4<sup>th</sup> among Illinois publics and 256<sup>th</sup> overall of 914). Our internal support continues to remain very high, with roughly half of our R&D expenditures (\$16.1M, 48.8%) being internal funds. A graphical representation of our comparative HERD expenditures vs Illinois 4-year public universities and our PRPA peers is shown below.



Source: 2023 National Science Foundation Survey of Higher Education Research and Development.

**Awards**

Finally, only actual expenditures lead to recovery of Facilities and Administration costs (aka indirect costs, IDC). IDC rates are especially significant as we continue to wait on the status of our requested non-negotiated extension of our federally-negotiated IDC rate. The rates often last for 4 years or longer (ours expired at the end of FY22, although we expect it shortly as of the writing of this report) and it will be important to have more accurate cost estimates from the new College of Engineering in our *next* rate, which will be negotiated based on our FY25 expenses. It will require a concerted effort across campus to account for our research costs and space usage to be sure our consultant makes an appropriate request. It is not uncommon for the approved federal rate to be below the requested rate, and it is the norm that universities are not able to fully recover their true research costs – it is why IDC costs are known as “partial reimbursement”. With so many of ISU’s awards and expenditures capped at 0%,

8%, and 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) owing to the nature of the awards and a decades-long federal administrative cap of 26% despite increased costs of compliance, it should not be surprising that we are a far cry from recovering our 48% federally negotiated rate. On our new awards for FY24, 89 of 168 awards (53%) or a total of \$22.5M in awards are capped at less than 8% IDC rate and \$10.8M in awards came with a 0% IDC rate. It is not expected we would ever recover the full 48% --only 78 of 168 or 46% of our FY24 awards are classified as “research”, and therefore eligible for using that rate, whereas 19 (11%) are instruction, 29 (17%) are public service, and 25 (15%) are training grants. We also have 7 new awards classified as creative expression (4%), which generally come from agencies and foundations that do not allow application of our full federally-negotiated F&A rates. ISU has shown a dedication to research in self-supporting scholarly work, but lags behind our peers by having such a high percentage of that support being internal support. For FY24, we had a net recovered F&A rate of 7.0% for a total of \$2.79 M, with nearly \$600k of that being recovered from expenses in the College of Arts and Sciences. This matches the effective IDC rate from FY23, which represented a huge increase from FY22 rates (2.5%). Although some of that trend results from the disappearance of so many 0% IDC rate emergency funds, there has been a concerted effort to recover the full university costs (as allowed) when performing work for external sponsors. These recovered IDC funds are reinvested in scholarship and are the main source of our operations for research support units and the sole source for initiatives such as the Office of Student Research. IDC funds allow us to provide additional services in support of research, scholarship, and creative activities, plus they support initiatives designed to increase external funding. Examples of such support in FY24 included, *inter alia*, support for major research instrumentation; equipment; travel; professional development costs; publication, exhibition, and book subvention costs, including open access fees and read and publish agreements; student research grants; and patent costs.

#### Additional notes for FY24:

- After a shift in FY23 where the State of Illinois led the way as our largest funding source, we returned to the U.S. federal government being our chief source of external awards in FY24. This is good news, but the decline in federal appropriations for FY24 (and likely for FY25) does lead to some concern. We have expected awards of ~\$8.1 M from the state (24%) for FY24, whereas ~\$20.1 M in U.S. federal and federal flow-through awards are expected (60%). The U.S. Department of Education (\$9.94 M) is the largest federal funder with the National Science Foundation second, awarding \$3.82 M. On the state side, the largest funding agencies were the Illinois State Board of Education (\$5.36 M), Illinois Board of Higher Education (\$842 k), and Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (\$700 k).
- Six academic units and two Centers all secured over \$1 M each in new funding in FY24. Those units were Department of Educational Administration and Foundations (\$6.27 M), the School of Biological Sciences (\$4.19 M), the Mennonite College of Nursing (\$2.03 M), the Department of Special Education (\$1.95 M), the College of Education (\$1.24 M), the Department of Chemistry (\$1.08 M), the Illinois Tutoring Initiative (\$6.98 M), and the Center for Math, Science, and Technology (\$2.50 M).
- Our impact on education across the nation through our scholarship remains profound, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education in FY24 – scholars like Dr. Natalie Shaheen (Special Education) are making a difference in making science available to more students and Dr. Bekky Darner (Center for Math, Science, and Technology; CeMaST) and her team are attempting to help faculty become better stem educators. Dr. Shaheen is our first National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award winner in over a decade, and Dr. Darner leads two Howard Hughes Medical Institute-funded efforts.
- Efforts are underway to increase corporate partnerships and we expect to see sponsored projects with non-federal entities grow in future years as a result. Federal support as a percentage of research dollars is declining nationally, so it will be important for ISU to also leverage our expertise in this way. In FY24, we saw five industrial contracts in those contracts managed by Research and Sponsored Programs, which accounted for ~3% of new awards. Several awards continue from FY23 as well. This sector is expected to continue to grow with a commitment of staff from Advancement as well as Academic Affairs in this area. In FY24, new contracts and agreements related to research and scholarship collaborations and funding were signed with local partners, including Corteva Agriscience and State Farm Insurance Co.
- Intellectual property (IP) and license arrangements are also an area of expected growth for the future. In FY24, we had three new IP disclosures and two new patent filings. We maintain one large license agreement that covers multiple protected technologies and hold 21 active patents overall. Disclosures, patent filings, and licenses will likely only increase as we lead out community efforts as part of internal priorities, the growing Illinois Innovation Network, and the continued hiring of faculty in our College of Engineering.

- Continued intentional efforts in interdisciplinary grants and professional development, both centrally and within colleges and units, should lead to future success in external funding. Although proposals and awards were both down in FY24 (perhaps still correlated with a year of no new faculty hires during COVID), these efforts should lead to long term dividends.
- Congressionally-directed spending is an area of future growth, with receipt in FY24 by Mennonite College of Nursing of support for the new Simulation Center.

**Data Summary**

The following table details sponsored project expected funding for new awards with the past four fiscal years included for comparison. Dollars are in thousands and are rounded for simplicity. The numbers of awards/submissions for each item are included in parentheses.

	<b>FY24</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY21</b>	<b>FY20</b>
Total Expected Awards	\$33,182 (168)	\$40,802 (178)	\$29,755 (174)	\$90,039 (189)	\$37,002 (141)
Federal Awards	\$9,272 (39)	7,868 (39)	9,822 (39)	78,298 (53)	28,453 (33)
Federal Flow-Through Awards	\$10,823 (34)	8,943 (28)	9,290 (42)	6,700 (47)	4,598 (14)
State Awards	\$8,089 (50)	20,533 (52)	9,189 (30)	3,143 (34)	2,196 (19)
Other	\$4,997 (45)	3,457 (59)	1,455 (63)	1,869 (55)	1,447 (30)
Submissions	\$83,924 (204)	93,201 (236)	92,792 (210)	71,277 (228)	120,053 (196)
Total Expenditures	\$37,524	32,616	73,645	58,111	29,993
Total F&A (Indirect) Costs Recovered	\$2,643	2,297	1,873	1,667	1,749

**Conclusion**

External funding has consistently delivered support to ISU’s research community and enables world-class research to be conducted here in Normal and across the globe. Proposal submissions are a leading indicator, and our high success rates signal future success is on the horizon. Illinois State University is a solid High Research Activity Doctoral Institution that offers all our researchers an opportunity to produce groundbreaking innovations. Our NSF HERD expenditure data were up year over year in the latest release and we are 5<sup>th</sup> in our PRPA peer group and 4<sup>th</sup> among the Illinois 4-year public universities (and 1<sup>st</sup> for those without a medical school). To keep this competitive advantage, we will continue to invest in the scholarly success of our staff, students, and faculty to further strengthen research outcomes. In FY24 the Office of Research and Graduate Studies alone invested over \$1M to advance our scholars, with additional support from the Provost, Colleges, and Departments/Schools. We expect to see a return on that investment through additional external grant and contract success with a goal of continuing to attract the external support to make an impact.