

**ILLINOIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES**

**Report No. 2021.02/4000.01**  
**Grant and Contract Activity Report**

***Introduction***

External sources of funding make substantial contributions to the advancement of faculty scholarly activities, student experiential learning, and University outreach. The work made possible by such funding supports the core values of Illinois State University, most directly the values of Learning and Scholarship, Civic Engagement, and Collaboration. Furthermore, the research, creative activities, and educational outreach made possible by such external support are integral parts of the University's Strategic Directions, Objectives, and Actions outlined in *Educate. Connect. Elevate.*

***Summary***

There is little doubt that FY20 was an unusual year in the world. External support for sponsored projects at Illinois State University reflected that with a total of \$37.0 million in newly awarded grants and contracts in FY20, the highest amount on record. A significant percentage of that amount came in the form of CARES Act relief (\$16.1 million) as part of the federal COVID-19 pandemic response. This large year of external support slightly eclipsed the previous high from FY11 (\$36.9 million), when a \$15.3 million grant was awarded to establish the Central Illinois Broadband Network (CIRBN). The \$37.0 million awarded in FY20 represents an increase of 29.8% from FY19, 52.7% from FY18, 93.5% from FY17, and 122.8% from FY16. A lower number of application than typical in FY19 led to fewer awards outside of the CARES Act in FY20; there is usually an 18-month lag in the results. Although FY20 was an outlier in a positive direction, the overall trend is still for significant increases in our external support year to year.

The Colleges awarded the most external funding in FY20 were the College of Education (\$9.5 million), the College of Arts and Sciences (\$6.8 million), and the Mennonite College of Nursing (\$1.2 million).

Additionally, in FY20:

- A total of over \$1.7 million in indirect costs were recovered through University grants and contracts. These funds provide additional services in support of research, scholarship, and creative activities, plus they support initiatives designed to increase external funding.
- One agency provided over half of the total funding, the U.S. Department of Education (\$20.3 million), with additional significant funds coming from the Illinois State Board of Education (\$4.7 million), and the National Science Foundation (\$4.1 million).
- The CARES Act funding led to the Administration being the largest area for new FY20 funding (\$17.8 million).
- An additional award of \$5.4 million to Financial Aid from AIM High is not included in these totals.
- The three academic units receiving the highest amount of external funding in FY20 were the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations (\$8.7 million), the School of Biological Sciences (\$3.5 million), and the Department of Special Education (\$2.2 million).

### **Data Summary**

The following table details sponsored project funding for new awards in FY20 and FY19. The numbers of awards/submissions for each item are included in parentheses.

	<b>FY20</b>	<b>FY19</b>
Total Awards	\$37,002,463 (141)	\$28,536,306 (143)
Federal Awards	28,452,615 (33)	17,754,982 (53)
Federal Flow-Through	4,597,716 (14)	6,929,681 (31)
State Awards	2,196,335 (19)	2,252,484 (21)
Other	1,447,287 (30)	1,599,159 (38)
Submissions	\$120,053,470 (196)	\$44,856,650 (171)
Total Indirect Costs Recovered*	\$1,748,720	\$1,973,432

\*Questions often arise about indirect costs because they are not always aligned with awards. Awards are recorded in the fiscal year they are awarded (even on multi-year grants) and indirect cost accumulation is based on actual expenditures, only in certain categories, and can vary greatly by agency and award type. Many factors, such as a large equipment grant, many awards from the State of Illinois, funding such as that from that CARES Act (with \$0 indirect costs), or even uneven spending rates can all skew the correlation of award amounts with indirect cost recovery.

### **Current Initiatives**

The Office of Research and Graduate Studies strives to provide resources and administrative support for faculty, staff, and students involved in research and other grant-supported activities. Each of these initiatives is aligned with *Educate. Connect. Elevate.* and the Strategic Plan for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Expression.

- **Increased Administrative Support for Research.** Improved processes and software interfaces are being implemented to allow easier finding of grant opportunities and collaborations. The new software package utilizes a sophisticated algorithm system which identifies funding opportunities that researchers find more relevant to their research. It will integrate with our current proposal submission software system (in a future upgrade) to simplify the proposal submission process for both researchers and the research staff. Additional modules of the software to assist with compliance and financial management of grants and grant proposals are underway and should be in place by late 2021.
- **Research Lecture Series.** The Office of Research and Graduate Studies is sponsoring the inaugural lecture series of research talks. The theme of this year's series is water research. This theme was proposed, and is being organized, by ISU's Center for a Sustainable Water Future. Now in a virtual format, the series has already hosted two prominent water scholars, with two more scheduled for spring.

### **Additional Ongoing Activities:**

- **Expanding the Office of Student Research.** The Office of Student Research (OSR), formally launched in the fall semester of 2019, organizes and coordinates efforts to promote, support, and publicize student research and innovation. In its inaugural year, OSR provided research fellowships for undergraduates, sponsored an *Image of Research* competition for undergraduate and graduate students, and equipped a Virtual Reality/Extended Reality lab in Julian Hall. The latest round of those competitions is currently underway. With one year under its belt, the Office will also work with faculty and students to create research opportunities for current and prospective students, as opportunities to engage with faculty on in-depth research projects, which are known to enhance learning and improve student retention.
- **Increased Funding for University Research Grants.** The Office of Research and Graduate Studies continues to provide funding for research that will lead to new external grant applications. In the round of University Research Grants that were submitted in FY20, the Office added nearly \$50,000 from its share of recovered indirect costs, bringing the total funding for University Research Grants to \$390,000. These added funds are earmarked for research that will strengthen grant applications submitted to external agencies, which should lead to improved funding rates and additional external support for faculty, student, and staff research efforts.

- **Formation of the Illinois State University Hub of the Illinois Innovation Network.** In the spring of 2019, ISU joined with the other public universities to create the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN), which was part of a kick-off announced in February of 2020. The ISU Hub, still under development, will leverage faculty, student, and community expertise to develop a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development. Work continues toward the goal of creating a startup incubator to be located in the upcoming Trail East building in Uptown Normal, and a community makerspace/educational center in partnership with the Center for Mathematics, Science, and Technology (CeMaST).
- **Redbird Scholar.** This biannual publication, focused on research and creative expression, is funded by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and produced by University Marketing and Communications. *Redbird Scholar* serves as one of the primary channels for raising public awareness of the outstanding research and creative activities occurring at ISU. The publication is typically available on campus and in the community. For the spring 2020 edition, it was also mailed to a limited distribution list that included faculty and administrators.
- **Faculty Publication/Exhibit Support and Book Subvention Program.** The Office of Research and Graduate Studies provides matching funds in support of publication charges, open access fees, exhibition costs, and book subvention costs for publications/exhibits and books resulting from faculty research and creative activities. In FY20 a total of \$7,093 in matching funds was used support to 33 faculty through these programs.