



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

NSF 16-080

## Dear Colleague Letter: Strengthening Research Capacity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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April 20, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are a vital asset to the Nation. Through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), the National Science Foundation (NSF) is initiating a pilot program in FY 2016 to strengthen the research capacity at HBCUs. There are 100 accredited HBCUs in the United States, ranging from small regional liberal arts colleges to large research-active universities with comprehensive graduate programs. They include community colleges, four-year institutions, and graduate degree-granting institutions, both private and public. HBCUs comprise about 2.2 percent of all institutions of higher education.

A recent report by the Subcommittee on *Advancing Historically Black Colleges and Universities*<sup>1</sup> of the Advisory Committee of NSF's Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) concluded that there are currently three categories of HBCUs in relation to NSF activity: those that have been successful in obtaining funding from the Research and Related Activities (R&RA) directorates, as well as the EHR directorate; those that are in transition to more research-active status, but currently receive the bulk of their funding from EHR, especially the Historically Black Colleges and Universities - Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP); and those that rarely, if at all, apply for NSF funding. Building on NSF's existing investments in HBCUs in research, innovation, education and research facilities, through this DCL, NSF strongly encourages faculty at HBCUs to submit proposals aligned with core research programs in the R&RA directorates.

NSF invites proposers from HBCUs to submit supplemental funding requests to HBCU-UP and other awards that would increase research capacity of faculty and postdoctoral fellows in NSF-supported areas of research. Activities may include, but are not limited to: new directions or appropriate extensions of disciplinary-based research activities; salary support for faculty and postdoctoral fellows; equipment and research supplies; and establishment of research collaborations with national laboratories, NSF-funded centers, industry, or research-intensive institutions. Supplemental requests to HBCU-UP Implementation Projects and Achieving Competitive Excellence (ACE) Implementation projects or other awards should express a vision for how this project will strengthen research capacity that can be sustained at the institution and describe which mechanisms will be put in place to assist faculty in becoming more productive researchers in areas supported by NSF.

Additionally, NSF also invites HBCUs to submit EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals to the HBCU-UP program to explore new directions or appropriate extensions of disciplinary-based research activities.

Proposers are invited to use the following mechanisms of support:

- HBCUs may immediately submit a request for **supplemental funding** for research to any existing Implementation Project, ACE Implementation Project, Targeted Infusion Project or Research Initiation Award made by the HBCU-UP program or any existing HBCU-Research Infrastructure for Science and Engineering (HBCU-RISE) award with an end date beyond FY 2016. Begin the first sentence of the supplemental funding request with: HBCU Supplement. Supplemental funding requests must not exceed 20% of the original award total, including all actual and anticipated increments.
- HBCUs may immediately submit a request for **supplemental funding** to any other existing award that focuses on increasing research capacity of faculty, such as an ADVANCE, Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professorate, Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology, or other research award. Begin the first sentence of the supplement request with: HBCU Supplement. As noted above, supplemental funding requests must not exceed 20% of the original award total, including all actual and anticipated increments.
- Researchers from HBCUs may also immediately submit **EAGER** proposals to the HBCU-UP program. Prefix the title with "HBCU: EAGER".

Additional information about requesting supplemental support is contained in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Part II: *Award and Administration Guide* (AAG), Chapter I.E.4 available at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=aag](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=aag).

EAGER proposals must conform to the guidelines for preparation of such a proposals (including the requirement to discuss the proposal with a program officer prior to submission) as specified in the PAPPG Part I: Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II.D.2 of the above listed document.

This DCL is expected to be in effect through July 1, 2016. All supplemental funding requests and EAGERS should be submitted by **July 1, 2016**.

Proposers are further encouraged to consider the following NSF programs, which have deadlines and other guidance in the links provided:

- Facilitating Research at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions: Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) and Research Opportunity Awards (ROA)  
- [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf14579](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf14579);
- Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (NSF INCLUDES) - [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf16544](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16544); and
- Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER)  
- [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=503214](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503214)

Questions should be addressed to:

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- Victor Santiago at [vsantiag@nsf.gov](mailto:vsantiag@nsf.gov).

The HBCU-UP program will announce dates and times for webinars that will give further information about this Dear Colleague Letter.

Sincerely,

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Geosciences

James Kurose, Assistant Director  
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1 Report to Congress on Advancing Historically Black Colleges and Universities at:  
[https://www.nsf.gov/ehrpubs/HBCU\\_Report\\_Oct\\_2015.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/ehrpubs/HBCU_Report_Oct_2015.pdf).