

# **Applied Program Support (APS): An Internal Funding Mechanism for Applied R&D Projects Administered Within CARD**

**Office of the Vice President for Research  
University of Oklahoma**

26 December 2011  
Revised 14 January 2012

## **1. Background and Motivation**

The University of Oklahoma Norman Campus recently established the Center for Applied Research and Development (CARD; see <http://vpr-norman.ou.edu/files/vpr/reports/CARD.pdf>) within the Office of the Vice President for Research. The goal of CARD is to complement existing Norman campus strengths in basic research and outreach via the addition of an organization that focuses on applied research and development across all disciplines. CARD is intended to bring new intellectual opportunities to faculty and students, provide mechanisms for innovating research outcomes into capabilities that serve society, facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, and create new administrative modes of engagement with industry, government agencies, and other stakeholders public and private.

Simultaneous with the creation of CARD is the establishment of a new internal funding program, known as **Applied Program Support (APS)**, designed to provide discretionary resources to support research. By virtue of its focus on research *support*, APS contrasts sharply with SRI, which is intended to function as a research *incentive*. APS applies only to activities associated with CARD, i.e., only to projects that are of an *applied R&D nature and have been approved for inclusion<sup>1</sup> in CARD*.

## **2. Structure of APS**

Following extensive discussion with University leaders and faculty, APS will be computed as a fraction of indirect costs expended on externally supported projects within CARD, with funding distributed as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- 25% directly to the project director/principal investigator (one person)
- 20% to the dean of the project director/principal investigator (or deans if the PI/PD has an official multi-college appointment)
- 10% to the unit administering the project (to be named at the time of infosheet submission)
- 5% to the home academic unit of the principal investigator/project director (if the appointment is officially split, the principal investigator/project director will name the academic unit)
- 40% to CARD/VPR Office for re-investment in research and CARD

---

<sup>1</sup> CARD has devised a matrix containing a number of questions to guide the decision, made by the VPR with input from others as appropriate (e.g., PI, CARD Director, Legal Counsel, ORS, OTD, Export Controls), as to whether a given project is appropriate for administration within CARD. The questions in it concern, for example, the nature of the contract vehicle (e.g., ID/IQ, GSA Schedule, CRADA) and work to be done (e.g., creation of work products using existing knowledge), specification of deliverables, funding source (mission agency, private company), publication restrictions, inclusion of training, etc.

<sup>2</sup> For comparison, the SRI percentages are: 2% to the dean(s), 18% to the department(s) or program(s) in which the investigators are appointed, and 80% to the VPR Office.

### 3. Rationale for the Distribution Model

The rationale for this proposed distribution is as follows:

- Having a broad view of their colleges and the strategic directions of their departments and programs, deans have an important responsibility of investing in research infrastructure (including people) and related activities. The APS model shown here will help provide resources of a meaningful amount for that purpose.
- The project director/principal investigator likewise needs funding to support project activities in ways she or he feels are appropriate – a unique role played by the project director – and to seed new activities that will lead to future projects. Decisions regarding the use of APS dollars can, for projects involving multiple collaborators, be made jointly with those collaborators as the project director sees fit, thus facilitating joint decision making. When decisions about internal funding distributions are made centrally, as occurs with SRI, not only is this leadership opportunity bypassed but the money is spread thinly.
- The academic or research unit administering the project requires financial resources to support its many obligations in processing appointments, arranging for travel and processing vouchers, purchasing equipment, housing personnel, etc.
- The research enterprise is inextricably linked with the academic mission of the University, and it is for this reason that all research unit directors are formally associated with an academic program. Consequently, it is appropriate that a portion of APS be directed toward supporting academic programs.

The proposed strategy leads to a natural question: Will the provision of APS in the manner described minimize the number of collaborators on a project, or conversely, lessen the perceived value in the eyes of potential collaborators of becoming involved in a project? The answer, arguably, is no, principally because the incentive for leading a project, and for collaborating on it, first and foremost are driven by one's intellectual interest in and scholarly impact associated with the project. *APS will empower project directors, and by extension their collaborators, to invest strategically and make decisions jointly for the good of a project.* It also likely will encourage more faculty to assume project leadership roles.

### 4. Other points

- Several units and individuals have special arrangements with regard to their SRI distribution. All such agreements will be excluded from APS, and the distribution model shown in section 2 will be rigorously followed without exception.
- In contrast to SRI, APS will be placed in new, separate University accounts with brief annual reports required by those receiving it so as to demonstrate the purpose and expected value of investments made. The Office of the Vice President for Research reserves the right to suspend or terminate the receipt of APS by any unit failing to generate the report or meet the intended purpose of APS.
- The operation of APS depends upon the availability of funds and may be revised, suspended or terminated at any time by the Office of the Vice President for Research after consultation with deans, chairs and the faculty.
- Because APS is a new program, it will be evaluated after two years of operation to assess its philosophical underpinnings and overall effectiveness. Changes will be implemented as necessary to maximize the value of CARD in meeting the University's mission.