

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Organized Research and Creative Activities
(ORCA) Program

UH-Downtown/PS 06.A.08
Issue No. 3
Effective Date: 6/28/2024
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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This PS provides guidelines for the administration of the Organized Research and Creative Activities (ORCA) program at University of Houston-Downtown (UHD). The ORCA program provides small project grants to support the execution of research, scholarship, and creative activities by tenured and tenure-track faculty at UHD. The funding and assurance of institutional compliance for this program will be managed by the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development (AVP FAFD).

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Creative Activity: Pursuit of endeavors by those in disciplines in the arts, including but not limited to art, music, writing, performing arts, dance, photography, and sculpting. Does not include professional development to broadly enhance creative activity skills or knowledge. A faculty member interested in funds to support professional development of such activity should consult [PS 10.A.24](#), the policy on the Faculty Development Awards Program.
- 2.2 The Execution of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities: The implementation of the plan of activities outlined in the ORCA grant proposal.
- 2.3 Research and Scholarship: Any gathering of facts, data, and information for the advancement of knowledge, confirmation of previous work, or the solving of complex problems. Does not include professional development to broadly enhance research and scholarship. A faculty member interested in funds to support the professional development of such activity should consult [PS 10.A.24](#), the policy on the Faculty Development Awards Program.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 Proposal Requirement: To qualify for internal funding through the ORCA Program, a faculty member must submit a complete proposal that follows the format described in the Format for ORCA Grant Proposal and must provide all of the information required therein, including Exhibit B: ORCA Program Compliance Form.
- 3.2 Criteria for Proposal Evaluation:
 - 3.2.1. To qualify for internal funding through the ORCA Grant Program, the application will focus on execution of research and scholarship or creative activity, as defined in 2.3 of this policy.
 - 3.2.2. The proposed research and scholarship or creative activity must support the goals and/or objectives of the university, college, and/or department and do at least one of the following: (a) contribute to knowledge in the discipline; (b) have the potential to result in patents or licenses for commercial products; (c) have the potential to generate peer-reviewed publications and/or other deliverables commonly accepted for research and scholarship or creative activities in the Faculty Annual Merit process and the Rank and Tenure process, (d) have the potential to attract additional funding from external funding sources.
- 3.3 Eligibility of the Applicant:
 - 3.3.1. For research and scholarship or creative activity to be internally sponsored by the University using ORCA funds, the applicant must hold a tenured or tenure-track appointment at the University at the time the research is proposed.
 - 3.3.2. ORCA grants are discontinued with the termination of a tenured or tenure-track appointment to the University.
 - 3.3.3. Members of the University ORCA Committee are ineligible for funding through the ORCA program during any application cycle in which they serve on the University ORCA Committee.
 - 3.3.4. Applicant must be generally, in good standing with the University at the time of funding.

3.4 Proposal Review

- 3.4.1. Departmental Committees: Each academic department from which an ORCA proposal originates must assemble a Departmental ORCA Committee. The committee is appointed by the department chair. The committee should to the extent possible represent a range of disciplines from which proposals may be submitted. The purpose of the Department ORCA Committee is to: a) engage in a review of proposals to ensure there is a connection between each proposal's activity and the stated objectives of the ORCA program; and b) to offer feedback in time for resubmission to the department committee prior to submission to the University ORCA Committee. The Department ORCA Committee makes a recommendation on a proposal but does not render a decision of whether or not it moves forward for review by the Department Chair, the Dean, and the University ORCA Committee.
- 3.4.2. The Department Chair and Dean: The Department Chair and Dean make a recommendation on a proposal but do not serve to render a decision of whether or not it moves forward for review by the University ORCA Committee. The Department Chair does not serve to render a judgment on whether or not the proposal moves forward to the Dean.
- 3.4.3. University ORCA Committee: The University ORCA Committee consists of one faculty representative from each academic department, appointed by the Department Chairs. Members of the University ORCA Committee will serve two-year staggered terms. The AVP FAFD will convene the committee, provide instructions and an overview of pertinent regulations, establish deadlines, and oversee the election of a committee chair. Review by the University ORCA Committee will be based on the Exhibit D: ORCA Evaluation Rubric.

3.5 Grants and Expenditures of ORCA Funds

- 3.5.1. The University ORCA Committee may suggest that an ORCA grant for research and scholarship or creative activity be greater or less than the original amount requested by the applicant. Under most circumstances, the

University ORCA Committee may not suggest that a grant be increased by more than 10% above the original amount. There are no limits on suggesting a lower grant than originally proposed.

- 3.5.2. Use of ORCA funds must comply with all regulations of the University of Houston System, UHD, the state, and the federal government. Proposed research or creative activities involving human subjects must be approved by the UHD Institutional Review Board. Proposed research or creative activities involving animals must be approved by the UHD Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Recipients of ORCA grants will be required to attend a Time and Effort training session and must submit regular Time and Effort reports to the AVP-FAFD through the proper process.
- 3.5.3. Proposed research and scholarship or creative activities requiring city, state, or federal permits must provide copies of the required permits to the AVP- FAFD before funds will be allocated for the research.
- 3.5.4. Research and scholarship or creative activity funds from the ORCA program may be used, when specified, to cover course instruction replacement cost and/or a summer salary.
- 3.5.5. No single grant may be greater than 10% of the ORCA funds available in that year.
- 3.5.6. Funds granted for designated uses (for example, the purchase of software) may not be re-budgeted into another category unless approved in advance by the AVP-FAFD.
- 3.5.7. All expenditures from faculty ORCA accounts must be approved by the faculty member, the departmental chair, and college dean.
- 3.5.8. All ORCA funds granted to a faculty member must be expended within three long semesters from the date of notification of grant. Unexpended funds at the end of this period will be returned to the ORSP.
- 3.5.9. If the SVPAA/Provost determines any modifications to the recommendations need to be made, they will consult the University ORCA committee.

3.6 Required ORCA Reports

- 3.6.1. Within 18 months of the end of the semester in which the ORCA grant is received, the recipient will submit a final report summarizing the results of the research, scholarship, or creative activities funded by the grant to the Provost and AVP-FAFD using the format described in Exhibit C: Format For ORCA Grant Final Report.
- 3.6.2. In the report, grant recipients are required to describe the product of the project funded by the ORCA grant.
 - 3.6.2.A Faculty may choose to disseminate the findings of the grant via outcomes that involve peer review (e.g., an off-campus exhibition or performance, chapter in a book, conference presentation, or journal publication).
 - 3.6.2.B Grant proposals to external agencies that result from the grant also area acceptable as the product of an ORCA grant.
 - 3.6.2.C Acceptance for conference presentation, publication, exhibition, performance, or external funding as a result of the ORCA grant is desired, but it is not required. However, evidence of efforts to seek such acceptance is an essential element. Failure to demonstrate productivity described in the original grant proposal may render the applicant ineligible for future ORCA grants.
- 3.6.3. The AVP-FAFD will archive all final reports of ORCA grants and will make them available to the University community.
- 3.6.4. The recipient of an ORCA grant will be required to acknowledge the support received from an ORCA grant in any publication, exhibition announcement or other appropriate external or internal outlet. The recipient of an ORCA grant also will furnish two copies of any published work, exhibition announcement, or presentation program resulting from any amount of ORCA funding to the AVP-FAFD. One copy will be archived in the ORSP office, and one copy will be sent to the University Archive.

- 3.6.5. The recipient of an ORCA grant also may be required to present the findings or products of this project to the university community at a forum to be determined by the Provost.
- 3.6.6. If a recipient fails to submit a final report within 18 months, that individual is ineligible for future ORCA funds. The AVP-FAFD will notify the individual and the ORCA committee of this ineligibility. The eligibility restriction remains in effect until such time as the recipient submits a report.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 For proposal submission and review process and timeline see the “Procedures and Timeline” table:

By the First Monday of March	The AVP-FAFD will distribute a call for ORCA grant proposal submissions with reference to the proposal guidelines. The call for proposals will also contain the link to the online proposal form and the deadline for proposal submissions.
By the First Monday of May	Each academic department will have formed their Department ORCA Committee and will have selected and announced the name of the individual who will serve as chair of the committee. The Senate will follow Faculty Senate procedures to complete the elections for each department’s representative to the University ORCA Committee; the Senate will send the names to the AVP-FAFAD and the Senior VPAA/Provost.
By the Second Monday of September	Applicant submits proposal to the Department ORCA Committee. The University ORCA Committee should have met and elected a chair
By the Third Monday of September	Department ORCA Committee provides written feedback to the applicant.
By the Last Thursday of September	The applicant resubmits the proposal to the Department ORCA Committee either addressing the feedback the Committee provided or providing a written statement attached to the proposal on why the feedback was not addressed.
By the First Monday of October	Applicant submits final proposal via the online proposal form. The proposal then goes to the chair of the Department ORCA Committee.

By the following Thursday	The Department ORCA Committee makes a recommendation and has the option of providing comments. The committee chair records it in the online system. The proposal is forwarded to the AVP-FAFD
By the Second Monday in October	The AVP-FAFD ensures that the proposed project meets the regulatory requirements for funding given in section 3.5. If so, the AVP-FAFD approves the proposal to move forward to the Department Chair. If not, the proposal is rejected.
By the Third Monday in October	The department chair gives their recommendation and has the option of providing comments on the proposal via the online system. The proposal is forwarded to the Dean.
By the Fourth Monday in October	The Dean provides their recommendation and has the option to provide comments on the proposal via the online system. The proposal is forwarded to the AVP-FAFD who makes all of the proposals, recommendations, and comments available to the University ORCA Committee.
By the Last Monday in November	The University ORCA Committee sends its funding recommendations to the AVP-FAFD with a cover letter from the committee chair and spreadsheet in which each proposal is listed in rank order from highest priority for funding (top) to lowest priority for funding.
By the First Monday in December	The Provost will notify each applicant, the Chair of the University ORCA Committee, all department chairs, and all college deans of funding decisions. The AVP-FAFD will provide reviewer feedback as requested by the participant.
By the Second Monday in December	The Provost will announce the names and project titles of all ORCA grant recipients to the UHD community.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Vice President for Faculty Affairs & Faculty Development

Review Period: Every five years on or before May 1, and as necessary.

Signed original on file.

President

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 08/17/15

Issue #2: 07/14/21

Issue #3: 06/28/24 (this issue)

7. REFERENCES

[PS 10.A.24 Faculty Development Awards Policy](#)

8. EXHIBITS

- A. Format For ORCA Grant Proposal
- B. ORCA Program Compliance Form
- C. Format For ORCA Grant Final Report.
- D. ORCA Evaluation Rubric