W. M. KECK FOUNDATION

Research Program

Information for Prospective Applicants

Funding Priorities

- High-impact research in basic physical, life, and biomedical sciences, including instrumentation and engineering in service of basic science
- Pioneering, fundamental discoveries in important and emerging research areas
- Novel approaches that are distinctive, innovative, field-expanding, and challenge existing paradigms

High-risk, high-reward proposals are welcome.

What We Look For in Proposals

- Project overview: What are the unique aspects, positioning relative to field, preliminary data, if available
- Methodologies: What is validated, what is new
- Key personnel: Why is this the right team
- Knowledge gap: What is the basic scientific question to be answered
- Impact: What will ~$1M enable
- Innovation: How is this distinctive from existing work, esp. any recent similar awards by Keck, in what ways does it challenge existing norms
- Risk: What features of this project are high-risk

Funding Details

- Typical awards: $1M–$1.3M over 3 years
- Two funding cycles per year via limited submission
- No indirect costs—institution provides in-kind support by waiving IDC

Budget Guidelines

- Faculty salary + benefits: up to 10% annually
- Total PI/Co-PI salaries: up to 20% of total budget
- Tuition + fees: Up to 25k per student annually, not to exceed 10% of the total budget; institution matches any gaps

Eligibility

- PIs must be tenure-track faculty or equivalent (normally eligible to submit proposals without exceptional approvals)
- Past grantees may apply on significantly different projects
- No resubmission of declined proposals
- No follow-on funding for previous awards

Institutional Best Practices

- Utilize an internal committee engaging administrators and senior faculty
- Select proposals focused on fundamental basic science, not applied or translational research
- Provide coaching and feedback to PIs on fit to Keck mission

We Do Not Fund

- Medical devices or bench-to-bedside translational research
- Projects solely focused on engineering equipment, tools, or materials
- Engineering for efficiency, optimization or cost reduction
- Clinical trials, therapies, procedures
- Drug discovery, development, or delivery
- Disease biomarker screening
- Digital twin implementations
- User facilities or equipment for shared facilities
- Supplements, renewals, or follow-on funding
- Conferences or science policy

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