Creation of the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Grant

Description: This bill establishes the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities (GRCO) grant process as an amendment from the existing Graduate Student Senate Research and Project grants.

WHEREAS GSSB 09-04 Graduate Student Senate Research and Project grants legislation established $12,000 from the Graduate Student Senate Stipend Enhancement Award to be used for research funding in the form of the “Research and Project grants.”

WHEREAS the original legislation (GSSB 09-04) outlined the following proposal need: We [the Graduate Student Senate] propose that a new account be established within the Student Involvement and Leadership Center entitled the “Graduate Student Senate Research Grant Account”, stewarded by the GSS and maintained by the Student Leadership and Involvement Office’s office manager. This account will be used to award grants to graduate students who apply for it. All applications will go through the GSS office (TSC 318) and the award amount requested on the application will be approved, modified, or denied through a majority vote of a standing GSS subcommittee dedicated to that purpose. The details of the application, funding source(s), eligibility, criteria, award process, and maintenance.”

WHEREAS this fund has continually received a substantial interest from graduate students as documented by the consistent amount of applications each year.

WHEREAS the legislation that outlined the application review and awarding process of the Graduate Student Senate Research and Project grants process did not meet the academic standard expected of graduate students at Utah State University.

WHEREAS this lack of academic vigor did not provide graduate students with an educational experience that helped advance students’ academic success.

BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED THAT the Research and Projects grant process to be renamed as the GRCO grant while using the original earmarked $12,000.
BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the GRCO grant application and review process adhere to the process posted at GRCO.USU.EDU and as outlined in the appendix of this legislation.

Tags: Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities grant, GRCO, research

Sponsor: Ty B. Aller, Graduate Studies Senator

Co-Sponsors: Nadir Tekarli, Business Senator; Jacie Rex, CHaSS Senator
ECB 2017-03

Creation of the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Grant

Policy Paper

Committee: Executive Council
In Attendance: President Ashley Waddoups, VP Ryan Bentall, VP Matthew Clewett, VP Blake Lyman, VP Ryan Jensen, VP Todd Brown, VP Rachael Fresh, VP Luis Armenta, Senator Ty Aller, Assistant Hadley Burton, Director Spencer Perry
Absent: NONE

History:
In 2009, the Graduate Student Senate suggested creating a new grant for graduate students called the Graduate Student Senate Research and Projects Grant that was funded via Tier II tuition. This award was approved and provides research funding to approximately 12 students each fiscal year. As recipients of the award completed the process, they explained a general lack of depth in the review and feedback processes initiating a need to amend the current review process. In response, the Graduate Studies Senator began working with the Associate Vice President of Research for Utah State University to create a new grant review process that met the following goals: 1) Improved the quality and timing of reviews of student applications; 2) Improved feedback and mentorship students received.

Purpose:
The purpose of this bill is to amend the Project and Research Grants legislation to the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities (GRCO) grant process. The GRCO process is an improved process that includes blind reviews from faculty researchers and provides detailed feedback on proposals.

Pros:
- It increases the depth of the process and provides applicants with academic scaffolding
- It improves documentation of the grants

Cons:
- It is going to be tedious to read through the procedures
- Amending the bill to change procedures in the future will be tedious

**Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Proposal**

The Utah State University Student Association via the Student Involvement and Leadership Center currently offers support to graduate students through the Research and Projects Grant ($1,000 each) and the Graduate Enhancement Award ($4,000 each). The Research and Projects grant was not established in a way to provide thorough review of applications and feedback to applicants on their research. Due to this, we suggest creating a new grant review process for graduate students called the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Grant.

**Proposal**

We propose that the same account used for the Research and Projects Grant be used for the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Grant stewarded by the Graduate Studies Senator and maintained by the Student Involvement and Leadership Center (SILC). This account will be used to award grants to graduate students who apply for it. All applications will go through the grco.usu.edu website ran through the Office of Research and Graduate Studies in conjunction with the Graduate Studies Senator. The award amount requested on the application will be approved, modified, or denied through a blind review of academic scholars from the applicant’s academic field. The details of the application, funding source(s), eligibility, criteria, award process, and maintenance are set forth below.

**Grant Details**

The Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities grant will be intended for graduate students actively pursuing their graduate degree who can reasonably demonstrate financial need in performing the necessary research or purchasing the necessary materials to complete their degree. It will be available for masters’ and doctoral candidates, with masters’ candidates working towards a thesis or project report. The award total may only be given once per student.
The award amount limit will be $1,000, but may be less if the demonstrated need is of a lesser amount.

After every award cycle is finished, a spreadsheet that is kept on the Graduate Studies Senator Box Account will be updated with the new awardees and then printed off to be filed in the Student Involvement and Leadership Center office as a paper backup. The paper backup for each individual year will be kept on record for 10 years and then shredded.

**Funding Sources**

The Utah State University Student Association, specifically the Graduate Studies Senator, receives $12,000 from Tier II tuition to fund the Research and Project grant. This funding typically funds 12 projects a year and will be used to fund the Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities grant.

**Grant Criteria**

To be considered eligible for the grant, the student must meet the following criteria/provide the following (also found at grco.usu.edu):

- Be a fully matriculated graduate student (as evidenced by transcript);
- Have a program of study on file at the Graduate School as proof of progress being made towards their degree;
- Have their committee form on file at the Graduate School;
- Complete a grant proposal and submit it at grco.usu.edu.

**Grant Proposal:**

Projects will be evaluated by both faculty members and graduate students from their respective fields of study. Excellent proposals will be concise, clear, descriptive, persuasive, and easy to follow. The grants are awarded to high quality projects. An excellent proposal describes and
justifies a project. A proposal narrative describes the project and provides a rationale for conducting the work. Although a lengthy literature review is not required, previous scholarly work should be emphasized as justification of the project. The narrative should also include what the student hopes to accomplish and how this project will contribute to the field.

In the sciences and in engineering, excellent proposals will: (a) orient reviewers to the greater body of relevant literature and convey why the project is important and significant, (b) present the objectives or hypotheses for the project that are related to the previous literature, (c) include a clear and descriptive methodology section that directly shows how the project objectives and/or hypotheses will be achieved, and (d) detail expected results and their significance.

In the arts and humanities, excellent proposals contain a description of the idea or question that the student will be exploring, the planned approach or line of thought, and the significance of the proposed work and the contribution that it will make to the arts and/or humanities.

The narrative portion of the proposal must not exceed 2,500 words (5 single-spaced pages, with 12-point font and 1” margins, excluding references).

The full set of proposal documents includes the following:

*Timeline*- A detailed timeline for the project should include all critical project events:
IRB/IACUC review (if necessary); A month-by-month proposal of work, a reporting date, and; A target date and location for presentation of the work.

*Budget*- A GRCO proposal can include a request for equipment, supplies, and research-related travel. All proposals must include a detailed budget covering where the money will be spent. All GRCO awards are a maximum of $1,000.

*Curriculum Vitae (CV)*- All proposals must include an up-to-date CV in order to be reviewed. CV should include academic achievements that demonstrate a student’s potential success at completing the project.
Faculty Letter of Support- A letter of support from the applicant’s faculty mentor must accompany each GRCO proposal. We will contact the faculty mentor after receiving the proposal. The letter should: 1) Outline the qualifications of the applicant to complete the project; 2) Outline the nature of the project as “an inquiry or investigation conducted by a graduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.”; and 3) Provide a statement of support for the project, its feasibility, timeline, and potential educational outcomes.

Grant Timeline

There will be one deadline for applying to this grant. The deadline will be on June 15th with the application opening on June 1st. The decision must be made by the final Friday of August. There is no obligation on the side of the Graduate Studies Senator to grant all of the money. If the Graduate Studies Senator deems it inappropriate to award all of the money available in the account, they may award fewer grants and leave the remaining balance to carry over to the next year’s round of decisions.

The recipients will have until May 1st to submit receipts totaling the award amount and completing the reporting process outlined previously. If the student’s research/project can only be done in the summer months, that student must formally request an extension of time to show proof of expenses to the Graduate Studies Senator and the SILC Adviser.

Should receipts not be submitted, or not total the award amount, by the deadline specified, the student’s transcript will be frozen until appropriate receipts are submitted or the remaining amount unspent is returned. Receipts may be rejected if it appears the student was spending to exhaust the grant instead of meeting a research/project necessity.

Award Process
The student initiates the award process with the submittal of the application along with all the necessary supplemental materials. The application will not be considered complete until all materials are compiled, and it will be the responsibility of the student to ensure all materials are received, including the letter of recommendation for all applications. The student will be notified of the status of their application following the last Friday in August.

The money will be awarded to the recipient(s) department as a reimbursement from P-Card purchases after the student attends one of the required funding meetings hosted by the Graduate Studies Senator and their Student Involvement and Leadership Center adviser. This process will be documented by the “Graduate Research and Collaborative Opportunities Grant Recipient Contract” found in the appendix of this document.

All applications will be kept for ten years and then shredded to ensure there are not difficulties with the IRS.

**Reporting**

There are three pieces to GRCO reporting: (1) Final financial reports (delineating expenditures, including all receipts). (Note that any unused GRCO funds must be returned to GRCO.) (2) Final report that is approximately 2–4 pages summarizing what was done and the results. Please also include an impact statement: what did the GRCO Grant do for the student researcher professionally and/or personally; and 3) Complete the GRCO Recipient Qualtrics survey distributed by the Graduate Studies Senator.