Seed to Grant Funding Panel

Panel Overview

This panel featured four program leads who host seed grants and two faculty members with successful experience translating internal funding to external grants. The panelists were:

Program Leads:

- **Patrick Beary**, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships, Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability

- **Xingen Lei**, Associate Dean, CALS Office of Research and Innovation and Professor of Molecular Nutrition, Animal Science, Nutritional Sciences

- **Peter Ens**, Robert S. Harrison Director Cornell Center for Social Sciences and Professor of Government and Professor of Public Policy

- **Praveen Sethupathy,** Chair and Professor of Physiological Genomics, Biomedical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

Faculty Members:

- Jamila Michener, Senior Associate Dean of Public Engagement, Brooks and Associate Professor, Dept. of Government and Public Policy

- Yi Athena Ren, Assistant Professor of Reproductive Biology, Animal Science

Seed Grant Programs

1. Atkinson Center Programs

AI & Climate RFP

- **Funding:** $10K-$25K

- **Purpose:** Data collection, strategic planning, workshops, preparation for external funding proposals

- **Due Date:** September 29

- **Requirements:**

    o PI must be Cornell-Atkinson Fellow (easy to become one - contact)

    o Projects must be scalable with big impact potential

    o Proposal must identify specific large external funding opportunities

- o Highly collaborative and interdisciplinary projects
- **Focus:** Projects with scalable, highimpact potential

Innovation for Impact Program

- **Partners:** The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)
- **TNC RFP:** Due November 24th
- **EDF RFP:** Due January 12th (with mid-October workshop)
- **Requirements:**
  - o Co-developed with non-academic partner
  - o Demonstrate plausible real-world impact (12 months - 2 years)
  - o Tangible activities and measurable outcomes
  - o True collaboration where NGO and Cornell co-create and implement
  - o Tools or frameworks ready for partner testing
- **Support:** Can help match applicants with collaborators

2. CALS Moonshot Program

Mission: Fulfill 2050 roadmap, support moonshot objectives, help faculty seek external grants, accelerate discovery to commercialization

Funding Tracks:

- Proposal Development Award: $25K-$50K
- Patent and/or Technology Development Award: $15K
- Product and/or Company Development Award: $25K
- Supporting Community Uses of AI Data Award: $10K-$20K

Details:

- **Application:** 1-2 page narrative with budget (flexible)
- **Restrictions:** No equipment purchases or PI salary
- **Eligibility:** Lead must be CALS faculty, encouraged to have co-PIs across colleges
- **Track Record:**

- - 2023: 16 proposals funded

  - 2024: 23 proposals funded

Success Metrics:

- Submit external funding within one year

- File formal patent application (for patent track)

- Launch company or product (for commercialization track)

- Demonstrate community impact with measurable outcomes

Current Focus Areas: AI, Food as Medicine, Regenerative Agriculture

Upcoming: CALS Innovation Day October 7, 4pm (showcasing all former seed grant awardees)

3. Center for Social Sciences

Programs:

- **Seed Grants:** Up to $12K, due September 15

- **QuIRI Grants:** Qualitative research grants, $2K

- **Grant Preparation Funds:** Due October 15 for center/training type grants major center/training grants (1M-$5M+)

- **Accelerated Research Grants:** Up to $35K (due October 15) for existing grant renewals or resubmissions

- **Rolling Funds:** Grant writer, proofreader, editor support

Evaluation Criteria:

- Must represent social science research (broadly interpreted)

- Demonstrate social implications

- Significant impact potential (policy, field, collaboration venues)

- Appropriate budget

- Methodologically sound

- Likelihood of resulting in external funding

Note: All applicants become part of the reviewer pool

Resource: Monthly newsletter with grant announcements (socialsciences.cornell.edu)

4. Center for Vertebrate Genomics

Faculty Seed Grants:

- **Funding:** varies

- **Timeline:** Call comes out mid-to-late fall

- **Focus:** Genome-scale biology, advancing genomics footprint

- **Eligibility:** Any career stage, active researchers on campus (doesn't need to be tenure track)

- **Preference:** Tends to favor early-stage investigators

- **Application:** Short application emphasizing path to external funding

- **Scope:** Primarily vertebrate research but has funded invertebrate projects

Other Programs:

- **Scholar Award:** For trainees (6-8 awardees), monthly cohort meetings

- **Distinguished Scholar Award**

Faculty Success Stories and Strategies

Key Insights:

- Funding process can be "arbitrary" - success builds on success

- Networking and relationships are crucial

- Used multiple internal sources: Affinito-Stewart Grants, Einhorn Center

- Seed grants develop essential skills for larger projects

- Establish reputation and exposure to program officers

- Non-linear progression - pathways close and open

Strategy:

- Diversify funding portfolio across state, federal, and foundation sources

- Sometimes you can influence funder priorities through relationship building

Success Strategies:

- **Find great collaborators:** Be proactive and lead the process

- **Propose what excites you:** Passion helps with writing quality

- **Tailor proposals:** Match content to specific funder

- **Show big picture:** Demonstrate importance of larger goals and how seed grant enables them

- **Demonstrate feasibility:** Use seed grant to show genuine collaboration works

- **Emphasize relevant aspects:** (e.g., women's health research when applicable)

General Success Principles

Proposal Writing Best Practices

- Write for lay educated readers

- Focus on storytelling

- Ensure alignment with funder priorities

- Make collaborations authentic, not superficial

- Show clear bridge to bigger research agenda

- Demonstrate collaboration has already begun

Program Philosophy

- **Goal:** Support high-impact research across all programs

- **Balance:** Think big and plan while remaining flexible as plans evolve

- **Skill Development:** Learn to articulate fit within bigger concepts and societal importance

- **Failure Perspective:** Use rejection as springboard for success - pay attention to feedback

Resources and Support

- **Grant Fellows Program:** Early career program (OVPRI, CALS and OFDD). More information forthcoming from Research Development teams

- **OVPRI:** Weekly RFP digest. All faculty are automatically subscribed. [More details.](#)

- **Networking:** Programs serve as community-building mechanisms

- [Internal Funding page](#) on Research Services

Upcoming Events

Next Panel: [Lab to Industry](#)

- **Date:** October 1, 1:30-3:00 PM

- **Location:** Atkinson Hall Room 121

[CALS Innovation Day](#)**:** October 7, 4:00 PM

Additional Internal Funding Sources Mentioned

- [Einaudi Center Faculty Seed Grant](#)

- [PCCW Affinito-Stewart Grants](#)

- [Schwartz Research Fund for Life Scientists](#)

- [Center for Study of Inequality](#)

- [Einhorn Center](#)