

MRL Facilities Seed Funding Initiative

The MRL facilities is fortunate to have exceptionally talented technical staff and the University has world-class faculty interested in materials research. While on occasion there are deep intellectual engagements between the MRL facilities staff and the faculty, there is the potential to do much more. Through this seed funding initiative, the MRL hopes to deepen interactions between MRL facilities staff and research groups on campus, providing opportunities for research groups to perform experiments they otherwise could not perform, and for MRL staff to become intellectually engaged in cutting-edge research projects they otherwise would not have been able to participate in.

The MRL will primarily support this effort by providing funding for MRL staff to use MRL facilities and for staff time to perform data analysis and participate in publication preparation. Anticipated total MRL staff involvement for the first round of the seed program is ~1FTE.

Target audience:

- Materials research groups on campus with research interests that face barriers to using MRL facilities through the conventional access model
- MRL staff interested in focused engagements with on-campus materials research efforts

Goals:

- Advance materials research at the University of Illinois taking advantage of the exceptional faculty, MRL staff, and MRL facilities in a highly effective, efficient, and cost efficient manner
- Enable faculty to carry out research generally outside the capabilities of their research group
- Enhance professional development of staff by providing opportunities to become engaged directly in cutting-edge research
- Increase publication opportunities for staff
- Increase utilization of currently underutilized facilities

Expectations:

- MRL facilities staff will participate in aspects of proposal development
- Projects should be 12 months or less
- Routine work that could otherwise be carried out by regular users from the proposing research group (students, postdocs, etc.) will not be considered.

Guidelines

- Proposals can contain one or multiple staff members and one or multiple faculty members; all teams must contain at least one staff member and one faculty member
- Staff and faculty can concurrently participate in more than project
- Proposals can include use of multiple facilities tools; staff may be trained on tools as part of the proposal
- MRL staff must limit participation to the budgeted time; if additional time is required to complete a project, a new proposal must be submitted
- Goals and scope of the work sufficiently focused to be completed with the requested resources
- Individual staff participation will generally be limited to ~10% of their time on an annual basis thus projects requesting in excess of 200 hours of staff effort (combined on and off instrument time) will be subject to additional scrutiny

- Faculty will be responsible for research costs (e.g., materials and supplies) except in exceptional preapproved cases
- Preference to proposals using instrumentation that is typically under-used
- Proposed work that includes technique development encouraged

Mechanics:

- Requested seed funding should include breakdown of on instrument time broken down by tool and off-instrument staff time
- MRL web page will include a list of MRL staff interested in participating in this seed program and a short summary of their qualifications to help faculty identify the appropriate collaborator(s)
- MRL staff and faculty will co-sign the proposal
- Proposals will be reviewed by a committee selected by the MRL Director; the committee will make funding recommendations to the MRL Director who will select projects in consultation with the Director of Research Facilities; the committee will include Illinois faculty and staff with the appropriate subject matter expertise; committee members will recuse themselves from proposals where they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest
- Semi-annual proposal deadlines. See MRL webpage for deadlines.
- Proposal template provided on the MRL seed proposal web page.