

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

RIVER STUDIES CENTER



Ron and Jane Rada River Studies Center Margins of Excellence Grant Program

Overview

The Ron and Jane Rada River Studies Center Margins of Excellence Grant Program was created to increase the scholarly capacity of UWL's River Studies Center. This program will help the RSC enhance its *margin of excellence* by not only (1) building upon the base of aquatic science/scholarly knowledge and education of science professionals but also (2) extending further its influence beyond the halls of academia, ultimately informing, educating, and inspiring individuals of all ages in the local community and beyond.

This 5-year grant program should be viewed by the RSC membership, University, and Foundation as only a first step in bringing philanthropic and other extramural resources to the RSC. Through this grant program the RSC will continue to cultivate a culture of passion and vision for making a difference, professionally and societally. The donors, Ron and Jane Rada, encourage the RSC to take time to reflect upon where it has been (including all those faculty/staff, students, and collaborators who were a part of building its tradition), to celebrate the present, and to look forward to the future with even greater aspirations.

The grant program will annually provide extraordinary support (i.e., support for faculty through extra-ordinary payment (EOP) mechanisms). Those areas are (A) curricular and/or experiential learning and (B) research/scholarship. The general scope of all grant proposals must align with the Mission of the UWL River Studies Center - to facilitate and support scholarly endeavors and outreach pertinent to the Upper Mississippi River, its connected ecosystems, and other inland water bodies. The RSC will use this grant program to meet several objective benchmarks.

There are two types of grants possible. The number of grants depend upon the size of the grant requests for both the larger "**Confluence**" and smaller "**Tributary**" grants. A minimum of two "**Confluence**" and two "**Tributary**" projects will be funded annually. If necessary, fringe benefit costs associated with grants used for member development will be covered by the grant funds and RSC base funds.

Grant Types

Confluence Grant Projects – *A confluence is where two different segments of a river merge to form a new, larger segment of river.*

These should aspire to build:

- new external partnerships;
- major extramural research funding initiatives;
- multi-disciplinary, multi-departmental, or multi-institutional curricular design projects (e.g., Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin [FCW] Track 3 proposals).

These projects:

- should be highly collaborative **strategic initiatives** that build new or enhance existing working relationships among the RSC membership.
- are meant to be ambitious, but feasible, and should be designed to potentially yield substantive instructional or research returns for members and their students.

Up to \$5,000 can be awarded for each “Confluence Grant.”

Tributary Grant Projects – *A tributary is a smaller, contributing channel to the mainstem of a river.*

These projects should be designed to be smaller in scope than those supported by a Confluence Grant but still serve as a strategic initiative.

These projects could support:

- rapidly developing opportunities that have some urgency about availability of, or access to data, facilities, or specialized equipment.
- specialized analytical or computational training for RSC members and, provided the training is brought back to share with the lab, their students.

This grant cannot be used to support sending students to meetings to present their research.

A goal of these grants is to maximize information transfer among the membership that increases its technical and/or scholarly capacity.

Up to \$1,750 can be awarded for each “Tributary Grant.”

Guidelines

Eligibility Information:

- *Who May Submit Proposals:*
 - Any RSC member currently employed by UW–La Crosse.
 - Non-RSC co-investigators are not discouraged, but should clearly incorporate separate funding mechanisms for their support (e.g., UWL faculty research grants, FCW grants, etc.) into the project. For example, such investigators could include colleagues from the USGS, USFWS, MVC, and other RSC partners.
- *Who May Serve as PI:*
 - Any RSC member currently employed by the UW–La Crosse.
- *Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:*
 - Only one **Confluence Grant** proposal can be funded per year for each unique combination of collaborating RSC members.
 - Members may have two funded **Confluence Grants** within a 3-year period.
 - Members are expected to serve on the **Confluence Grant** proposal review committee the year after being awarded a Confluence Grant.
 - Members can submit one **Tributary Grant** proposal per funding cycle.

Funding Cycles:

- The funding period for **Confluence** and **Tributary Grants** is 1 year; all funds must be expended within a year of the grant date.
- Grantees requesting extraordinary payments (EOPs) are required to submit approved EOP forms to the UWL Office of Business Services no less than one month prior to initiated work on the project.
- The RSC Director and the Dean of the member's college will provide signatory approval for all EOPs associated with this grant program.

Reporting Requirements:

- The RSC Director and Assistant Director will review each grantee's progress in a face-to-face meeting that will be held within a month after the end of a grant funding cycle.
- This will include a review of progress in completing the specific aims and utilization of funds.
- At the completion of each project, grantees will provide a final report listing all products and an accounting of funds expended.
- Grantees who do not submit timely reports will forfeit the opportunity to apply for subsequent grants for a minimum of two funding cycles.
- For the purposes of grant management, an RSC Grant Code will be provided for all products and presentations generated for grantees to insert in acknowledgement sections.
- Donor support will also be acknowledged in any publication or public presentation resulting from the grant.

Timeline and Process for Proposal Submission and Review:

Confluence Grant proposals:

- There will be three opportunities to submit proposals: no later than noon on the first Tuesday in October, the first Tuesday in February or the first Tuesday in April.
- Time sensitive proposals may be submitted and reviewed between deadlines at the discretion of the RSC director and the Grants and Safety focus team leader.
- Proposals will be reviewed by a 5-member RSC review committee with representatives from as many different disciplines as possible.
- At the start of fall semester, the RSC Director will ask the membership for reviewers.
- Members planning to submit a Confluence proposal for that funding period will be able to serve on the review committee, however they will recuse themselves from review and discussion of their proposal.
- The committee will submit rank-ordered recommendations to the RSC Director who will then make the final award decisions.
- Grant notifications will be announced no later than one month after the submission deadline.

Tributary Grant proposals:

- Will be accepted on a rolling basis as opportunities arise.
- To expedite turn-around time, the RSC Director will ask two members of the proposal review committee to review each Tributary Grant proposal.
- The reviewers will independently provide recommendations to fund or not to fund the proposal (including brief rationales for their decisions) to the RSC Director who will then make the final award decisions.

Funding priority will be given to projects that...

- Specifically address outcomes highlighted in the **Objective Benchmarks** for this Margins of Excellence Grant Program
- Are **strategic initiatives** that increase the capacity to conduct research and other scholarly activities that align with the RSC Mission
- Create **sustainable partnerships** between the RSC, natural resource agencies, industry, and non-governmental organizations that provide experiential learning opportunities for UWL students
- Advance **water-focused**, multi-disciplinary instruction and pedagogy in either a formal or informal setting
- Enhances the **general public's understanding and appreciation** of the important contributions UWL's RSC makes to environmental protection and education of Wisconsin's citizenry (the Wisconsin Idea)
- Address the goals of Inclusive Excellence (i.e., Actions that increase access, equity and inclusion for historically marginalized and systematically under-served populations)
- Provide compelling reasons for donors (alumni, friends, and others) to invest in RSC experiential learning endeavors
- Leverage opportunities for matching donations for initiatives referenced above

Additional considerations:

- Proposals should be well-written and demonstrate attention to detail
- Proposals that are deemed to not have enough impact and/or that require ongoing funding to be successful may not be funded even if the overall proposal is of quality

Application

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

Download the linked **Application word document** – be sure the content appears in the order listed in the document:

1. Cover sheet
2. Proposal narrative (Proposal narratives are limited to 5 double-spaced pages. A minimum font size of 11 (eleven) should be used.)
3. Budget summary & justification

Note: The application must be saved and submitted as a single searchable PDF file (not scanned into a PDF).

Examples/Previous Grants

Types of Developmental Activity

A. Curricular and/or experiential learning development activities

Examples:

- Development of a sustainable and recurring course-embedded undergraduate research or creative activities in an existing course. Examples of novel research or creative projects could include work on a project for a client (the client could be on or off-campus) or help for students to design and implement a project of their own.
- Development of a sustainable and recurring service-learning project for undergraduate and/or graduate students.
- Faculty development for teaching enhancement not normally provided by University resources. This could include participation in seminars, workshops, and short courses that may or may not be associated with conferences, "mini" sabbaticals at collaborating institutions/agencies, etc.
- Funds to support study of teaching and learning (SoTL) projects of instructional or experiential learning programs associated with aquatic science or the scholarship of freshwater. Such projects would lead to peer-reviewed publication(s) in reputable SoTL journals.
- Funds to purchase extra-ordinary instructional instruments, displays, data, or software.
- Academic program enrichment activities for faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and collaborating institutions/agencies/corporations. Activities could include but not be limited to guest speakers/seminars and field trips. Some of these activities could be developed as a series.

B. Research Developmental Activities

Examples:

- Support for grant writing of proposals for multi-year, multi-collaborator research projects requiring extramural funding in excess of \$200,000 for the funding period. Such funding agencies could include calls from the National Science Foundation, Wisconsin Sea Grant, United States Department of Agriculture, etc.
- Resource match support for extramurally funded research opportunities of limited size (< \$100,000) and duration (1 year).
- Faculty development for research enhancement not normally provided by University resources. This could include participation in seminars, workshops, and short courses that may or may not be associated with conferences, "mini" sabbaticals at collaborating institutions/agencies, etc.
- Funds to enhance analytical or scholarly capabilities. These could include specialized instrumentation, data sets, software, or sample analyses.

Previous Grants

- **Confluence Grants:**
 - Adam Driscoll, 2023, Assessing behaviors of trout anglers related to aquatic invasive species in the Upper Mississippi River basin
 - Ross Vander Vorste and David Schumann, 2020, River Studies Center Aquatics Laboratory: experiential learning in aquatic science at UWL

- **Tributary Grants:**
 - Colin Belby, 2023, Mapping sedimentation near Rosebud Island in Lake Onalaska following dredge cuts for habitat rehabilitation in 1989

Program Objective 5-year Benchmarks

UWL's River Studies Center is entering its next 50 years of scholarly activity. To strengthen RSC's role in the development of tomorrow's leaders in aquatic science/scholarship, aspirational benchmarks for the entirety of this 5-year grant program will include:

1. No fewer than 3 peer-reviewed and student co-authored publications.
2. No fewer than 8 professional presentations by RSC affiliated students and their faculty mentors.
3. The submission of at least 2 multi-investigator grant proposals to federal funding agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation, Wisconsin Sea Grant, US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Education) seeking substantive extramural research support (i.e., each requesting \$200,000 or more in direct support).
4. To develop a philanthropic mindset to enhance support of the RSC. Examples of support could include supporting:
 - a. faculty fellowships
 - b. undergraduate or graduate research projects.
 - c. scholarships for RSC-affiliated undergraduate or graduate students.
 - d. the acquisition of major research instrumentation or equipment for the RSC.
 - e. professional travel for RSC members and their research students