

THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FUND (REF)

December 10, 2025

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Vice Chancellor for Research

- For more information, including Request for Proposals (RFPs):
<https://www.tamus.edu/research/research-excellence-fund/>
- **December 1, 2025** – All 8 RFPs (FY26) released
- **January 15, 2026** – Pre-Proposal Web Q&A Session
- Questions: Contact E-mail: ref@tamus.edu
- FY26 Investment – **\$35 million**

- **Accelerate Research Growth** – Increase research expenditures, awards, scholarly output, and impact.
- **Foster System-Wide Collaboration** – Leverage the strengths of all A&M System institutions to pursue large, multi-disciplinary initiatives.
- **Recruit and Retain Top Talent** – Secure the next generation of high-impact faculty and graduate students and prepare the future-ready workforce.
- **Enhance Infrastructure** – Equip researchers with world-class facilities, instrumentation, technology, and capabilities.
- **Increase Competitiveness for External Funding** – Position the A&M System as a leader in winning large federal, state, and private research awards.
- **Address Grand Challenges** – Target research toward pressing global, national, and Texas priorities.

1. Collaborative Discovery Grants
2. Graduate Fellowship Program
3. Faculty Hiring and Retention Program
4. Research Equipment Grants
5. Proposal Cost Share Program
6. Early-Stage Research Development Program Grants
7. Strategic Research Initiatives
8. Faculty Fellowship Program

1. Collaborative Discovery Grants

Competitive grants supporting **multi-system member collaboration** on transformative research topics.

Focus will be on projects with strong potential for large-scale follow-on funding from federal, state, and private sponsors.

2. Graduate Fellowship Program

Support for **prestigious graduate fellowships** to recruit and retain exceptional doctoral students in strategic research areas with preference for inter-institutional advising and mentoring.

3. Faculty Hiring and Retention Program

Funds to support start-up funds for **high-profile research-active faculty hires** and to retain leading researchers. Priority will be given to hires who enhance competitiveness for major funding and collaboration.

4. Research Equipment Grants

Competitive program to acquire **cutting-edge research equipment and technology** that will be shared across multiple A&M System institutions.

5. Proposal Cost Share Program

Strategic cost-sharing for high-value, competitive research proposals to federal, state, and private sponsors where matching funds increase likelihood of award and are often mandatory.

6. Early-Stage Research Development Program Grants

Funding for **early-stage idea development**, team formation, and proposal preparation activities for major research opportunities.

7. Strategic Research Initiatives

Targeted funding for system-wide participation in **high-impact research themes** aligned with state and national research priorities.

8. Faculty Fellowship Program

Support for short-term research fellowships for faculty at all A&M System universities to participate in collaborative research projects in laboratories at other A&M System campuses, including Texas A&M-RELLIS and Texas A&M-Fort Worth.

- Competitive merit-based program
- Transparent evaluation criteria
- Annual reporting of funded projects, outcomes, and impacts
- Annual review to assess return on investment (ROI) and strategic alignment

The total annual REF investment along with distribution among the various program components will be re-evaluated annually and are subject to change as determined by the Chancellor and Board of Regents.

- Significant increases in A&M System research expenditures
- Numerous high-values collaborative project initiated
- Numerous graduate fellowships awarded
- Numerous top-tier faculty hires and retentions
- Acquisition of state-of-the-art research infrastructure
- Significant increase in competitive grant success rate
- National recognition of the A&M System as a leader in research
- Ascension of High Research Activity (R2) Institutions to Very High Research Activity (R1) as defined by the Carnegie Classifications of Institutes of Higher Education (CCEIHE)