

## UC Davis STAIR, DIAL and FSI Proof-of-Concept Grant Programs, 2020-21 Cycle Summary

The **Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR™)** grant program, managed by Venture Catalyst, is designed to provide funding to support translational science and innovative research performed by UC Davis researchers. The goal of the program is to demonstrate early proof-of-concept and commercial potential or feasibility for technologies being developed with the intent of commercial translation. Examples of outcomes that might be realized from research results enabled by this funding include development of research or early commercial prototypes, generation of translational data from experiments typically not fundable by traditional research grants, enablement of patent claims, promotion of more competitive licensing opportunities or SBIR/STTR grant applications by subsequent startups benefiting from license rights to the underlying technologies.

The **Data, Informatics and Application Launch (DIAL™)** grant program provides funding to UC Davis researchers with the intent of demonstrating commercial potential, proof-of-concept or other outcomes that improve or clarify the commercialization risk profile for data, information science or software and related applications being developed at UC Davis.

These two proof-of-concept grants are one element of a suite of Venture Catalyst programs designed to stimulate translational research and facilitate early engagement by entrepreneurial researchers with campus programs that support technology commercialization and provide resources needed to successfully form and grow new ventures.

The objectives of the STAIR™ and DIAL™ programs align with major goals of the University to foster a vibrant community of learning and scholarship, drive innovation at the frontiers of knowledge, and nurture a sustainable future and development of an innovative and entrepreneurial culture that extends the benefits of our research activities beyond the boundaries of the university.

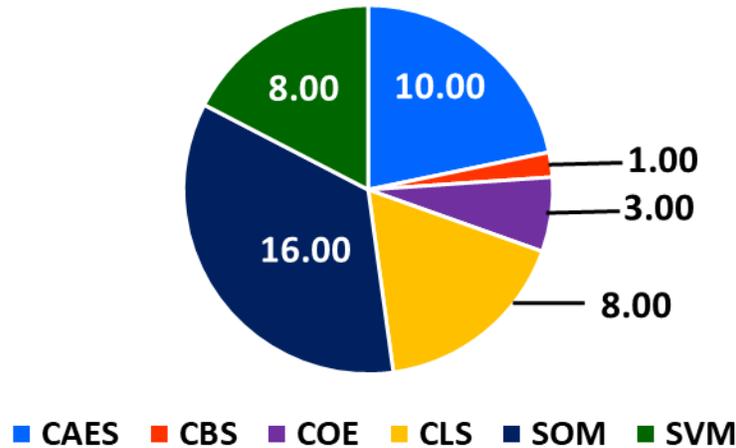
The STAIR™ and DIAL™ Grant application period for the 2020-21 cycle opened on Wednesday, January 19, 2021 through the solicitation of a completed application form and submission of a four-page research proposal (not including biographical sketches, budget justification, milestones, citations and references). The Innovation and Technology Commercialization team conducted seven information sessions on the Davis and Sacramento campuses to raise awareness of the programs and answer questions regarding objectives, eligibility, and process. Applications were due on March 3, 2021. A total of 41 eligible STAIR and 5 DIAL applications were received by the application deadline.

A total of \$385,000 was allocated to the STAIR and DIAL programs this cycle: up to \$290,000 was provided by the Office of Research and up to \$95,000 of supplemental funding committed by campus and external partners. The funding period for STAIR and DIAL grants is one year through July 2022. A total of \$1.921 million was requested through the STAIR and DIAL Grant Programs by principal investigators from over 20 departments, representing a broad range of schools and colleges, reflected in the pie chart below. An average of about 5-6 applications were received each in the categories of AgTech, Foods for Health, Animal Health, Cell Therapy, Medical Technology, Biopharma and Engineering/Software.

Note that in the 2020-21 cycle, Venture Catalyst launched a separate pilot proof-of-concept program in collaboration with the **Innovation Institute for Food & Health (IIFH)**, the **Food Systems Innovation (FSI) Grant**. A similar process was employed to identify a recommended awardee, which was presented to and

approved by the IIFH Faculty Director. All applicants with eligible projects were also advanced for review through the STAIR Grant. The selected FSI awardee was removed from the finalist process in the STAIR Grant.

### Proposals by School and College



Following a rigorous online review process involving external reviewers (investors, industry professionals and experienced entrepreneurs), 16 of the STAIR and 3 DIAL proposals were selected as finalists and moved to the next phase of their review process. Of these, after further reviewer deliberation through a virtual session, evaluation and ranking, 5 STAIR grants and 2 DIAL grants were recommended for award based on their potential for future high-impact discoveries and innovation, as judged by their technical merit, commercial potential, and alignment of budget and milestones with translational enablement.

A proactive mentor engagement plan has been developed, which involves assignment of industry mentors to each of the STAIR and DIAL finalists (which includes mentoring award recipients on commercialization milestones and timelines), and follow-up with all applicants to provide summarized reviewer comments and facilitate access to innovation resources. The mentor engagement process will be facilitated by Venture Catalyst, in collaboration with InnovationAccess. Additionally, the UC Davis Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship is providing support for STAIR/DIAL Grant award recipients through its Entrepreneurship Academies and applicants and awardees will also have access to the NSF I-Corps Immersive Short Course taught by the Bay Area Node and provided through Venture Catalyst.

## Proof of Concept Funding Program Historical Impact

The graphic below provides a summary of the eight cycles of the proof-of-concept grant programs, including outcomes such as technology licenses and follow-on funding for projects and technologies.



## Internal and External Funding Partners

Venture Catalyst engaged several campus and industry partners to make up to \$385,000 of additional potential supplemental funding available to projects through the STAIR and DIAL Grant Programs.

### External Partners

**Elanco Animal Health** continued their engagement from previous cycles and **Bayer Healthcare** and **Bayer Crop Science** joined the program in this cycle, making up to \$50,000 available per proposal for successful STAIR Grant recipients aligning with their specific areas of focus.

### Campus Partners

The UC Davis **School of Medicine** (SOM) has made up to \$60,000 of supplemental funding and the **College of Letters and Science** and the **School of Veterinary Medicine** (SVM) have each made up to \$25,000 and \$10,000, respectively of supplemental funding available per proposal

Campus partner funding is targeted to provide supplemental salary support equating to up to half of the awarded grant amount.

## News Release on 2020-2021 STAIR/DIAL/FSI Awardees:

<https://research.ucdavis.edu/uc-davis-proof-of-concept-grants-advance-innovations-towards-commercialization/>