**College of Agricultural Sciences**

**Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program**

**Interdisciplinary Graduate Assistantships**

The Office of Research and Graduate Education’s **Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP)** is offering **Interdisciplinary Graduate Assistantships** grants. The goal of this competition is to strengthen interdisciplinary strategic networks or research initiatives in the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) by supporting cohorts of Ph.D. students to conduct interconnected, innovative research. The program will fund 1 or 2 proposals that emphasize and promote interdisciplinary research across multiple departments or programs with the goal of building interactive graduate student-faculty teams. Research proposals must demonstrate high potential for significant extramural funding. Proposals from research teams established through the SNIP: Collaboration Grants are encouraged, but previous or current SNIP funding is not required. More information on the SNIP program is at <http://agsci.psu.edu/research/snip>.

Awards will provide support for cohorts consisting of a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 newly enrolled Ph.D. students for up to two years from the Fall semester 2018 through Spring semester 2020 (Grade 12, ½ time plus GIA for 2 semesters/year). A plan for summer stipend support and continuation of stipend and tuition funding after the two years for these new graduate students is required.

Proposals should address one of the six CAS cross-cutting thematic areas and clearly present a plan for graduate student activities that will contribute to sustaining the research network. Please, contact Dr. Siela Maximova ([snm104@psu.edu](mailto:snm104@psu.edu)), Strategic Research Initiatives Coordinator, or Dr. Gary Thompson ([gat10@psu.edu](mailto:gat10@psu.edu)) for assistance with development of ideas and background information related to the program.

**CAS Cross-cutting Thematic Areas:**

**Advanced Agricultural and Food Systems –** transforming thinking and practice in agricultural and food systems through research focused on productivity, sustainability, and adaptability.

**Biologically-Based Materials and Products –** discovering novel approaches using genetic systems and biological materials to create value-added commercial and consumer products in a sustainable, profitable manner.

**Community Resilience and Capacity** – helping communities improve their economic resilience, create sustainable infrastructures, and promote their local economy through value-added opportunities and new business development**.**

**Environmental Resilience –** providing innovative research to enhance and protect managed and natural ecosystems, ecosystem services, and human well-being.

**Global Engagement –** advancing global solutions to challenges in agriculture, health, and sustainability that impact the future of an interconnected world.

**Integrated Health Solutions** – improving the health of humans, animals, and communities through research into preventative, corrective, diagnostic, and predictive solutions to the challenges presented by lifestyle, diseases, pests, and toxins.

Proposals must be submitted in PDF form by 5:00pm on **Monday, October 16, 2017** to the Office of Research and Graduate Education ([agresearch@psu.edu](mailto:agresearch@psu.edu)).

**Proposal Contents**

1. Title, Thematic Area, Primary Investigator (PI)
   1. Designate only one PI who will serve as the primary contact for the project.
   2. PI must be a faculty member in the College of Agricultural Sciences
   3. List names and affiliations of co-PIs
2. Summary (200 words maximum)
3. Proposal Narrative (5 pages maximum, not including letters of support)
   1. Overview of the existing strategic network and/or interdisciplinary team:
      1. Describe the strategic network or team research goals.
      2. Describe ongoing research activities related to the project.
      3. Describe the impact of the work on the stature of CAS research.
      4. Describe how the project advances one of the cross-cutting thematic areas.
   2. Project Team:
      1. Identify the team members (must involve multiple CAS departments).
      2. Identify proposed major CAS faculty advisors for the students.
      3. Identify participating graduate programs (students in IGDP programs with CAS advisors are allowed).
   3. Student cohort recruitment plan (this program will only support new Ph.D. students):
      1. Indicate the proposed number of students in the cohort.
      2. Describe the composition of the cohort and efforts to create synergism among students.
      3. Describe the approaches to recruit new students.
   4. Proposed activities:
      1. Describe specific collaborative team activities that will engage students beyond individual laboratory affiliations.
      2. Describe the proposed student research topics and their integration to the long-term goals of the team.
      3. Provide benchmarks of progress toward student success for the funding period.
   5. Sustainability plan:
      1. Identify current sources of funding for summer salary and programmatic needs.
      2. Identify specific extramural sources that will be pursued for stipend/tuition support after the two-year funding period, including applicable extramural funding opportunities (agency, request for proposals, submission deadline, etc.).
      3. Describe a contingency plan if the extramural funding is not secured.
4. Letters of Support
   1. Provide appropriate letters of support from department heads or IGDP directors of graduate programs for the proposed graduate student activities in the network.
   2. Commitments for additional funding from departments are not necessary, unless they are part of the contingency plan.
   3. Programmatic assistance with graduate student recruiting efforts would strengthen the proposal.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria:**

1. Network building and leverage
   1. Promotes interdisciplinary research across multiple CAS programs.
   2. Integrates graduate student activities to promote the network and research initiatives.
   3. Demonstrates innovative approaches to achieve the research goals.
   4. Shows strong potential for significant extramural funding.
2. Relevance to the CAS thematic areas
   1. Advances potentially transformative interdisciplinary research in a thematic area.
   2. Integrates graduate education to enhance research in a thematic area.
   3. Demonstrates potential for sustained national competitiveness in a thematic area.
3. Collaboration Plan
   1. Builds or strengthens productive collaborations among team and network participants.
   2. Demonstrates potential for high impact synergies among disciplines.
   3. Describes a robust, long-term collaborative funding plan for continued student funding.

**Other Guidelines**

Student Enrollment:

* The goal of this program is to recruit **new Ph.D. students** as an interdisciplinary cohort that will strengthen established strategic networks or initiatives to promote innovative research.
* Students must be enrolled and registered full-time in the College of Agricultural Sciences or CAS-affiliated Ph.D. program and be mentored by a CAS faculty member.
* Students must enroll in the semesters requested. Any modifications/deviations from this request must be submitted for prior approval in writing and is dependent on the availability of funds.
* Top-ups provided by other sources to higher grades are permissible. The source of top-up funds should be explained in the body of the proposal and confirmed in accompanying letters.

Reporting:

* Student recruiting report is due June 1, 2018
* Mid-term report is due June 1, 2019
* A final report is due June 1, 2020
* All reports must be submitted in PDF form to the Office of Research and Graduate Education ([agresearch@psu.edu](mailto:agresearch@psu.edu)). Report templates will be provided.