Externally Funded Grants and Contracts

HHS brought in $10.22 million. (See Figure 1 on page 5 for details.) The dollar amount is higher than any other academic unit on campus. However, this reflects an 11% decrease over the prior record year.

Campus wide, there are 15 academic departments that brought in over $1 million dollars. Four of these are from within HHS.

- Social Work ($1.8 million)
- Kinesiology ($1.37 million)
- Public Health Education ($1.0 million)
- Human Development and Family Studies ($4.9 million; this is the largest amount of external funding for an academic department campus wide.)

HHS Initiatives in 2020-2021

HHS Research Advisory Committee: The HHS Research Advisory Committee (RAC) members advise the Associate Dean for Research about a number of matters including the use of resources, research policies, and researcher needs. They also review internal grant applications and serve as the selection committee for HHS Faculty Research Grants and HHS Top-Off Funding Awards. The committee consists of seven faculty from HHS departments. The 2020-2021 members were: Tanya Coakley (SWK), Ben Hickerson (CTR), Lucía Méndez (CSD), Catherine Scott-Little (HDF), Lenka Shriver (NTR), Amanda Tanner (PHE), and Laurie Wideman (KIN).

Summer Grant Writing Fellows Program (SGWFP): Three faculty fellows participated in the SGW, each with a senior mentor. The fellows were Jessica McNeil (KIN), Judith Leitch (SWK), and Bridget Cheeks (HDF), and their mentors were Jennifer Etnier (KIN), Corey Shdaimah (Univ. of Maryland, Baltimore), and Gabriela Stein (PSY), respectively. Each planned to submit a grant to NIH, NSF, or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by June 2022.

The SGWFP fellows attended a virtual orientation session in which characteristics of good mentor-mentee relationships were discussed, completed a writing and mentoring plan, and attended six (6) workshops; the workshops were (1) Grant Writing for Maximum Impact, (2) NIH Biosketch & Rigor and Reproducibility, (3) Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Dissecting the Critical First Page, (4) Optimizing Grant Content and Style for Success, (5) Specific Aims, and (6) Grant Budgeting 101. We received much assistance from other university offices (the Office of Research and Engagement and the Office of Sponsored Programs) in the facilitation of these workshops and in the collaboration with and advice for the fellows. This program began in summer 2015 and has had 33 participants (3 have since left the university.) Six of the fellows have received awards for the proposals which were submitted as part of the program; the 2020-2021 calculated return on investment (ROI) is $30.02 for every dollar spent. This program will continue into 2021-2022, if funding is available.

The award amounts for the SGWFP offers an option to faculty who are interested in grant proposal preparation allowing them to concentrate solely on a grant proposal versus teaching a summer course
AND working on a grant proposal. The SGWFP offers training to faculty in order to guide them through the proposal preparation process and offers support via an identified faculty mentor and other faculty with grant-writing expertise; also, OOR provides guidance with budget preparation and financially supports the external review of proposals by both a content expert and an editorial expert. These lend to the strength of the program.

**HHS Faculty Research Grants (FRG) and Top-Off Funding Program (TOFP):** Both the Faculty Research Grants and the Top-Off Funding Program began accepting applications in fall 2019. In the spring 2021 cohort, three (3) individual and one (1) multidisciplinary grants were funded. Three applications were received for the FRG funds, and one application was received for the TOFP funds. After review by the HHS Research Advisory Committee and the revision of several of the proposals, all applications were funded. Recipients of the HHS Faculty Research Grants were Jeremy Rinker (PCS), Traci Parry (KIN), and Jeff Milroy (PHE) & David Wyrick (PHE). The recipient of the Top-Off Funding Grant was Kierra Sattler (HDF). A total of $21,210 was awarded for these projects. Funding for these was provided by the Dean’s Initiative funding that was received from the UNCG Office of Research and Engagement (ORE).

Data was collected in fall 2018 from previous recipients of the HHS Research Excellence Grants to determine the return on investment; the ROI was $0.79 for every dollar spent. Additionally, as a set, the studies funded by these grants resulted in 27 manuscripts to date (published, under review, or in prep) and 41 conference presentations. The level of dissemination is high given most projects are still ongoing. In addition, results have been shared in media outlets, including the local news, NY Times, and UNCG Research Magazine. These awards have also benefited students, resulting in 5 dissertations, 1 master’s thesis, and 1 undergraduate research project. Twelve of 19 respondents indicated this work would not have been possible without this funding. The remaining 7 respondents indicated that the project would have been reduced in scope or its completion delayed. Conclusion: Preliminary evidence suggests this mechanism is effective in that it is tied to research productivity/dissemination. We must continue to monitor over time given it likely takes several years to complete pilot projects and then seek/obtain external funding, which is one of the primary goals of the mechanism. These mechanisms will continue to be offered in 2021-2022 if funding is available.

**Course Release for Dedicated Time to Write a Grant Proposal:** This supports faculty members’ grant-writing efforts by providing funds to pay an adjunct instructor to teach one of their courses. Dr. Donna Duffy (KIN) and Dr. Tanya Coakley (SWK) were awarded an HHS Course Release to Write a Grant in spring 2021. Partially supported by the Dean’s Initiative funding that was received from the UNCG ORE.

**HHS Faculty Excellence Awards:** The Faculty Excellence Awards winners were Ang Chen (KIN) for the Senior Research Excellence Award, Jigna Dharod (NTR) for the Junior Research Excellence Award, and Paul Davis (KIN) for the Community Engaged Scholar Award.

**Graduate Research Assistantships:** The HHS Office of Research worked in conjunction with the HHS Graduate Office to sponsor a competitive process for funding graduate research assistants; this funding was offered in order to support HHS faculty with active research projects and to fund graduate students in research. HHS Faculty submitted applications outlining their research and the role that the graduate researcher would play in this research. Nine awards were made for a total of $81,000 funded by the School of HHS; these assistantships are for the 2021-22 academic year.
Scientific and Editorial Review of External Proposals: The Office of Research supported the external review of ten proposals involving twelve HHS faculty for a total of $7,700; this was supported by the Dean’s Initiative funding that was received from the UNCG ORE.

Special Projects Initiative: Through the Special Projects Initiative, we were able to provide funding for equipment, supplies, etc. in interdisciplinary labs providing for enhanced collaborative work by the users. Requests may be for internal bridge funding, seminar speakers, research equipment, research supplies, scientific software, or other research-related items. In 2020-2021, five of these ‘Special Projects’ requests were funded; for example, we assisted in purchasing supplies for several small-scale research projects, and we assisted with scientific equipment for a Nutrition research laboratory.

Travel Support for Research-Related Training or Consultation Initiative: No funding was expended for this initiative in 2020-2021; due to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, no travel occurred this fiscal year.

Research Networking and/or Team Building Initiative: No funding was expended for this initiative in 2020-2021; due to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, no travel occurred this fiscal year.

HHS Scholars’ Travel Fund: No funding was expended for this initiative in 2020-2021; due to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, no travel occurred this fiscal year.

HHS International Travel Fund: No funding was expended for this initiative in 2020-2021; due to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, no travel occurred this fiscal year.

Research Space Allocation: HHS maintains, allocates and supports a number of research facilities for faculty. Space in all of UNCG’s buildings is very limited, so priority for the allocation and use of research space is always given to externally funded projects. Needs for space are identified at the time of proposal submission and brought to the attention of the Associate Dean for Research; all investigators are asked to send a formal request when proposals are submitted. When a project is funded, the Associate Dean for Research will work with the investigator to identify space options. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Office of Research worked with ten (10) faculty members to allocate space for use during their research. The use of this research space is re-evaluated each year, and the faculty are asked to re-establish their application for use of the space annually. It is worth noting that the HHS research space is aging and will need updates to furnishings and to facilities (paint, carpeting, etc.) in the near future.

An HHS Research Space Allocation Policy was developed and disseminated in early fall 2019. The new Nursing and Instructional Building came online in early 2021, so the policy will be updated to incorporate the additional research and collaborative spaces in that building which the HHS Office of Research will manage.

REDCap: With the increased need for data management, a greater focus is being placed on helping researchers with management of their research data. Through Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), a secure web application designed for online database construction and management, HHS is able to provide HHS researchers with tools for efficient electronic data capture and management, improved data quality and security, and a ready-made solution for inter-departmental or multi-site research efforts; this application is used in support of work with/by HHS researchers and students and extends the research-related offerings of the office. At the end of 2020-2021, 174 research projects were using the REDCap application to manage the associated research data of various projects. The number of account holders increased from 150 to 200 which indicates that the application has been well received and
is heavily used by researchers and their staff; REDCap has been readily accepted and has been easily adopted by researchers. REDCap has been a success and is planned to become a university-wide application.

**Projects in 2020-2021**

This year, OOR began an Equity Audit of the services/initiatives/programs offered by the office.

**Goals of Audit:**

1. To determine if there are racial, ethnic, and/or gender inequities in the financial and other support provided by the HHS OOR to HHS faculty to successfully engage in research.
2. To begin to identify factors that may contribute to any such inequities.

**Planned Phases:**

1. Information Gathering/Analysis - AY 2020-21 through Summer 2021
2. Dissemination and feedback/commentary from HHS faculty and administrators - early Fall 2021
3. Identify priorities, set goals, generate strategies – Fall 2021
4. Implement strategies – Spring 2022 and on
5. Evaluation - on going with formal report in 2 to 5 years (will seek feedback on ideal timing)

Guidelines were developed to help determine the HHS’ statistician’s effort on grants. Our full-time statistician/methodologist, Dr. Jeff Labban, is a key resource in HHS, and faculty are increasingly turning to Dr Labban for assistance with grant writing; more and more, Dr. Labban is being written into grants as the data manager/methodologist/statistician. The *Policy for HHS OOR Methodologist Effort on External Proposals* was finalized in January 2021 and is posted on the HHS OOR website.
HHS External Funding Trends Over Time 2021

Comparison with Other Academic Units

Awards: HHS brought in $10.22 million. The dollar amount is higher than any other academic unit on campus. However, this reflects an 11% decrease over the prior record year. The below graph (Figure 1) illustrates patterns of external funding over time, by academic unit. The gap between HHS and A&S has shrunk to less than $100,000. Other units are experiencing growth in the dollar amount of awards, and it is anticipated that they will continue to rise given the ADVANCE grant targets STEM; additionally, A&S and Education have implemented some of HHS’ programs/initiatives to support their research faculty.

Applications: The number of applications HHS submitted grew (83 vs. 76). Though, the dollar value of these requests (see Figure 2) slightly decreased this year compared to last year ($31.15 million vs. $32.62 million.) JSNN, Education, and Bryan School enjoyed significant increases in the dollar value of applications submitted, $6.5 million increase, $14.3 million increase, and $3.1 million increase, respectively. The gap in applications between HHS and A&S increased this year and is larger than desired. To remain in the position as the top academic unit regarding external funding, HHS will need to ensure submissions are strong in the coming year(s). From looking at these data, it seems two record years of submissions are required to see a big increase in awards. The HHS Office of Research will continue to encourage the pursuit of diversity and administrative supplements on existing NIH awards as one possibility, but other ideas will be necessary to maintain a high level of applications. Creative suggestions to develop faculty-grant writing talent and increase faculty submissions are being sought.
**Departmental data:** The graphs on the following page illustrate the same data by departments within HHS.

**Awards:** Awards are up compared to last year in CSD and PHE (Figure 3). CSD increased by over $458,274.

**Applications:** Five departments demonstrated an increase in the dollar amount of applications (Figure 4). CSD almost quadrupled their applications, NTR almost doubled their applications, CTR increased their applications by $46,081, PCS increased their applications by $316,934, and SWK increased their applications by $1.3 million. Each department chair received a graph displaying their own departments’ trends in submissions and awards over time; the chairs are encouraged to meet with the Associate Dean for Research in the fall to discuss these data and to strategize ways to increase faculty submissions and awards in the future.
Fig. 3
Awards by Department

Fig. 4
Applications by Department