

**UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES**  
**Claude Pepper Older Americans Independence Center (OAIC) at UAMS**  
**Pilot and Exploratory Studies Program**

**PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE SUBMITTING**

**I. Purpose of the Pilot and Exploratory Studies Program**

The principal goal of the OAIC Pilot/Exploratory Studies Core (PESC) is to foster high-quality, innovative, investigator-initiated research consistent with the Center theme, “Translational Research on Cardiac and Skeletal Muscle Dysfunction in Aging and Disease”. Such studies may be designed to prevent and/or treat morbidity and mortality associated with cardiac and skeletal muscle weakness and its sequelae, or to investigate the basic biology underlying such conditions and potentially promoting their prevention and/or treatment. Pilot and exploratory studies will be selected, which have the ***highest potential in terms of generating data in these areas, resulting in influential publications, and culminating in extramural federal funding.*** Such studies are thus deemed likely to advance the careers of promising scientists entering this field. Activities of the PESC will contribute to the overall goals of the Arkansas Older Americans Independence Center (OAIC) by strengthening research programs that focus on aging cardiac and skeletal muscle weakness, with nutritional modification as one of the key interventions. By offering pilot grant support and strong mentoring opportunities, the PESC provides a valuable mechanism for ***junior investigators*** to overcome the initial hurdles to securing research funds and to help propel their careers in research intended to improve outcomes for older adults. It will also help us to attract ***senior investigators*** from other disciplines to the intersection of research on striated muscle (both cardiac and skeletal) and either aging or nutrient supplementation, or both.

**II. General Conditions of Eligibility**

Awards are open to all full-time faculty members (including VA appointments) of UAMS or of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC), at the rank of Instructor or above. ***Although fellows, postdocs, and others in temporary positions are ineligible, they may be co-investigators on proposals with a full-time faculty member as P.I.*** Applicants at the level of Instructor require a letter from their department Chairperson confirming that the position is not temporary and that the department intends to develop that individual as a faculty member. Faculty at other academic/research institutions who are engaged in active collaborations with investigators at the OAIC or Institute on Aging at UAMS are also eligible to apply. Eligible faculty members may submit only one application per deadline on which they are Principal Investigator.

**III. Funding Availability**

**A. Pilot Study Grant**

Grant proposals ranging in budget from \$10,000 – \$20,000 (**direct costs**) per year will be solicited annually. An announcement in May or June of each invitation year (years 1–4 of the parent OAIC grant) will request applications with a deadline approximately one month later, for funding to commence in August/September. Work on funded grants may not begin without proof of completion and approval of all required documents, issued and approved at the institution responsible for research oversight (UAMS, VAMC or OUHSC), including IRB approval for human studies, ACUC approval for animal studies, and the safety committee for studies involving laboratory work or other risks. These forms are required on a “Just In Time” (JIT) basis, but it is recommended that time-consuming application processes (e.g., IRB or ACUC submissions) be initiated as early as possible to minimize delays.

The initial grant may be requested for a period of up to one year. A **no-cost extension form** must be requested and submitted if a longer period is desired to spend funds. Funded proposals may be resubmitted for one renewal of up to one year; the renewal proposal must demonstrate that the requested additional funding period is needed to obtain results that are deemed necessary and likely sufficient for success of an extramural grant application.

The major objective of the Pilot Study program is to provide seed money to initiate a project and acquire the necessary preliminary data for submission of a major extramural grant application to a federal agency or national foundation. Collaborative efforts are encouraged, but the availability of PESC funds to support more than one component of a collaboration is not assured due to very limited resources to be allocated through the PESC. Funds may be requested (with justification) for any valid research purpose, e.g. supplies, animal costs, equipment, salaries or stipends, and/or provision of core services.

## **B. Exploratory Studies**

Well-defined research proposals for one-time support of exploratory studies, requiring up to \$10,000, are encouraged and will be considered for support to the extent that funds are available. These proposals may request essential small pieces of equipment, core services, animal-care costs, or supplies, but would not normally include salaries or stipends.

## **IV. The Application Process**

### **A. Submission**

The next deadline for receipt of completed Pilot Study or Exploratory applications in the Institute on Aging main office (attention Sandra K. Baker, [SKBaker@uams.edu](mailto:SKBaker@uams.edu), or UAMS slot #748) is the close of business on Monday, **June 23, 2014**. Submission may be made by email provided that signatures are included on the scanned face-page; receipt confirmation is recommended. Reviews will normally be completed, and applicants informed of the outcome, within two months following each receipt deadline.

The proposal should comprise a completed Face Page (see below) and PHS 398 Budget Form, a **one-page scientific proposal** (single-spaced, 11-pt font, with half-inch margins), and additional pages as required for references cited and brief budget justifications by category. Committee approvals should be indicated as appropriate on the face page, but need not be provided until after at least conditional approval. It would be advisable to begin committee applications (in particular IRB/human subjects and Animal Care) in advance of approval to minimize delays.

### **B. Guidelines and Priorities.**

Proposals will be evaluated, first and foremost, on the basis of scientific merit. Funding preference, however, will go to studies that (1.) focus on dysfunction and aging (or age-related dysfunction) of skeletal or cardiac muscle; (2.) utilize the Pepper Center core facilities (see below); and (3.) show a clear and achievable pathway to extramural funding. Other, less critical “preference criteria” are (4.) translational collaborations, especially studies linking basic and clinical investigators; (5.) interdisciplinary collaborations, especially between disparate research areas; (6.) studies incorporating new technologies into aging research; (7.) proposals from underrepresented-minority investigators; and (8.) studies that combine funding from multiple sources of support.

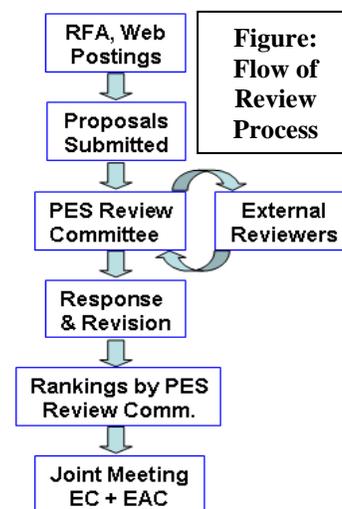
**Pepper Center Core Facilities:** **A. Nutrition, Metabolism and Physiology Core**, including stable-isotope labeling and nutritional modification (**Arnie Ferrando**, Core Leader); **B. Analytical Core**, for performance and analysis of stable-isotope tracer studies to define metabolic parameters, and also supporting microRNA studies (**Robert Wolfe**, C.L.); and **C. Biostatistics and Data Management Core** to ensure that studies have adequate power and appropriate statistical methods applied (**Paula Roberson**, C.L.).

**NB: UTILIZATION OF CORES IS CONSIDERED A HIGH PRIORITY IN PILOT-STUDY EVALUATIONS; YOU ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT CORE LEADERS TO DISCUSS HOW YOU COULD BEST UTILIZE THEIR FACILITIES, PRIOR TO SUBMISSION OF PILOT PROPOSALS.**

**THE P.I. MUST INCLUDE ≥1% OF HIS/HER SALARY AS PER UAMS POLICY FOR GOVERNMENT GRANTS. THESE APPLICATIONS DO NOT NEED TO BE ENTERED INTO “TRACKS”.**

### C. Interactive Review

Initial Scientific Review: The PES C will assign reviewers to critique each PES proposal. Reviewers will be asked to score priority in accordance with guidelines used by NIH study sections, evaluating scientific/translational impact, innovation, approach and significance to OAIC-related research. Other factors to be considered in ranking proposals include a feasible plan to attain extramural funding, synergy with ongoing pilot projects, and translational-research potential. Translational potential considers the proposal's likely impact on moving a field toward clinical utility. Basic-science research proposals are asked to provide a sound rationale for their ultimate clinical relevance, while clinical-research proposals must describe expected effects of planned studies on health-policy decisions, or on adoption of research findings by clinicians and society. Critiques will be discussed by the Review Committee (PRC), and discussion comments appended to critique records.



Opportunity for Rebuttal: At this stage, applicants will be provided with the full written critiques, as well as a summary of key points raised in discussion by the PRC. They will be asked to submit a point-by-point response, in addition to the revised proposal, which will be considered by the Review Committee. Proposals are then ranked on the basis of reviewer scores, effective rebuttal of criticisms, and relevance to the Arkansas OAIC.

Evaluation and Allocation of Funding: The final determination of project funding will be made by the Executive Committee. Applicants not selected for funding will be encouraged to revise their proposals and resubmit to other local funding sources, or in the next PES review cycle (see Figure).

Revision of Accepted Proposals. Prior to award receipt, each selected investigator will be asked to satisfactorily address any concerns raised by reviewers. This procedure is designed to provide timely feedback to investigators and to improve the scientific rigor of proposals.

Availability of Mentoring. OAIC leadership will advise applicants who narrowly miss funding, and especially junior faculty members, to help make their proposals more competitive. Assistance from an appropriate aging-research mentor will be provided if available, for those applicants *requesting* pre-award mentorship. ***During the tenure of a Pilot Study Grant, mentoring by one or more Geriatrics faculty members is both available and strongly encouraged for junior-faculty awardees.***

**Please note that the award of a pilot or exploratory study grant carries with it the obligation to provide us with updates (requested periodically) on your manuscript submissions and publications, and grant submissions and awards.**

**University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences  
Pepper Center – Pilot and Exploratory Studies Grant Proposals**

**Face Page**

Check appropriate program submission:

Pilot Studies

Exploratory Studies

1. Title:

2. Principal Investigator information: UAMS/VA Address:

Name:

Academic Title\*:

Department:

Telephone:

E-mail address:

3. Budget total requested, and duration of funding (one year maximum):

4. Requisite Committee Approvals (need only be provided Just-In-Time, not with proposal):

Animal Use:  Approved  Pending/JIT  Not Applicable

Human Subjects:  Approved  Pending/JIT  Not Applicable

Recombinant DNA:  Approved  Pending/JIT  Not Applicable

Radioisotopes:  Approved  Pending/JIT  Not Applicable

5. Signatures:

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chair/Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposal: Please limit your proposal to 1 page, single-spaced 11-point font, with half-inch margins. References and budget justification are not included in the 1-page limit.**

\*Applicants at the level of Instructor require a letter from the Department Chairperson (see General Conditions of Eligibility).

**END-OF-YEAR REPORT**

**Date:**

**Program:**

**Title:**

**Principal Investigator:**

**Summary (100-150 word describing major results):**

**Extramural Grants originating from this project (indicate whether awarded, submitted, in preparation):**

**Publications originating from this project (include those published, in press, or submitted, but not those in preparation):**