

# **UAB MEDICINE**

## **O'Neal Cancer Center**

O'Neal Invests  
Cancer Research Support Mechanisms  
for Basic and Population Sciences

Information and Instructions  
August 22, 2025

### **Goal of O'Neal Invests**

Provide support for UAB faculty to generate data needed to advance to applying for a cancer-focused R01 in the basic or population sciences.

### **Who can apply for O'Neal Invests Grants?**

UAB Faculty who are O'Neal Members: The O'Neal is committed to supporting the work of O'Neal members carrying out basic and population science research.

UAB Faculty who are not O'Neal Members: The O'Neal is especially interested in supporting UAB faculty that are not currently working in cancer but wish to apply their expertise to answering important questions in cancer. You do not have to be an O'Neal member to apply for O'Neal Invests funding opportunities. The O'Neal has established advisory groups to help investigators who are not working in cancer formulate their proposals and find cancer-focused collaborators if needed. To be put in touch with an appropriate advisory committee, contact Dr. Susan Ruppert [CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu](mailto:CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu)

### **General Information**

#### **Applicants:**

- All applicant PIs must be UAB faculty at the rank of Assistant Professor or higher.
- All applicant PIs must spend at least 50% of their time conducting research and have their own department-supported independent research space adequate for the proposed studies.
- Applicants must have < \$400,000 in committed institutional support. This includes committed support that has not yet been transferred to the investigator.
- No individual may be a PI or Co-PI on more than one award (Catalyst, Multi-PI-Catalyst, Pre-R01, Multi-PI-Pre-R01, Pre-P01, Pre-SPORE). A single individual can hold one of these awards and a Shared Resource Voucher.
- In a single grant cycle, no individual may apply as a PI or Co-PI through more than one mechanism (Catalyst, Multi-PI-Catalyst, Pre-R01, Multi-PI-Pre-R01, Pre-P01, Pre-SPORE).
- A PI that has received an O'Neal Pre-R01 cannot apply for another Pre-R01 as PI or Co-PI for 3 years from the submission date of the previously funded Pre-R01.
- Applications for a Pre-P01 or Pre-SPORE must have prior approval of the O'Neal Director.
- PIs and Co-PIs will receive research support funding. Collaborators will not receive research funding support.

#### **Process:**

- All pilot grant proposals (except Shared Resource Vouchers) will be reviewed during twice-yearly O'Neal Invests study sections.
- Shared Resource Vouchers can be submitted anytime and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. – **Please note that this program is paused as of August, 2025.**
- All applicants will receive written critiques of their proposals.
- Applications that are not funded may be resubmitted in a subsequent cycle with a response to critiques. There is no limit to the number of resubmissions.

- Successful awardees will be asked to serve on the O'Neal Invests Study Section. This commitment includes participating in four review panels over a 3-year period.

#### **Funding Parameters:**

- All requested funds must be used for research carried out at UAB. Prior approval must be obtained to use funds for services or research provided outside of UAB. Proposals that have budgeted services outside of UAB that do not have prior approval will not be reviewed.
- Funds will be available for laboratory research personnel, supplies or services directly required for the project. **Faculty salaries, indirect costs, publication costs, and travel costs are not allowed.**

#### **Approvals:**

Funding cannot be provided until necessary research approvals (IACUC, IRB) have been obtained and verification of these approvals received by Dr. Susan Ruppert. For IACUC approval, if the experiments proposed are similar to those in an existing, approved IACUC protocol, the O'Neal Invests grant may be added as an additional funding source via an amendment request. Such requests are approved administratively. Funding commitments may be withdrawn for proposals where there is significant PI delay in getting necessary approvals.

#### **Reporting and Closing:**

- Pre-R01 awardees will give a 9-month progress update that will be used to determine if they receive the second year of funding.
- Pre-R01 awardees will give 2-year closeout presentations to the Scientific Review Committee (SRC).
- Catalyst award winners will give 1-year closeout presentations.
- Awardees can carry forward up to 30% of the total amount of the award for one year after the end date of the award with approval from the Cancer Center Director. Any monies remaining after this time will be returned to the O'Neal.

For any questions, please contact Dr. Susan Ruppert ([CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu](mailto:CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu)).

## **Shared Resource Voucher Funding Mechanism**

Please note that this program is paused as of August, 2025.

**Goal:** To support the use of an O'Neal Shared Resource to carry out an analysis that could lead to a new direction in cancer research.

**Support:** Up to \$10,000. If the cost is more than \$10,000, then the source of the balance should be indicated. **Awarded funds must be utilized within 6 months.**

**Application:** Up to two pages that address the following:

- What is the question you wish to answer?
- What is the new area in your lab that this work will nucleate? It can be related to, but not completely overlapping with, ongoing work
- What is the broad hypothesis that the data obtained will provide a premise for?
- Why is this the key work needed to provide the premise?
- What do you expect would be the next phase of work (brief set of aims based on what you expect to find)?
- What will be your next step in supporting this work?

**Supporting Material:**

- Biosketch
- Other support
- Estimate from Shared Resource for proposed work
- Attestation form signed by Department Chair

**Process:**

- Submit the application material to Dr. Susan Ruppert, [CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu](mailto:CCC-oneal-invests@uab.edu)
- Applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

**Reporting:**

- Recipients will be required to present a brief report of their findings and plans for next steps

## **Pilot Grant Funding Mechanisms**

### **Catalyst**

**Goal:** Supports new avenues of unfunded population or basic science cancer research. The proposed work should be based on a hypothesis that has the potential to move on to form the basis of an R01 application. The results of the proposed experiments should provide clear “go/no-go” information as to whether the investigator should proceed with this line of investigation. Minimal preliminary data is needed for the application. It is expected that if the completed work indicates that this a potentially fruitful line of investigation that the investigator could write a competitive Pre-R01 as a next step. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be supported by this mechanism, but the inclusion of

diagnostic or biomarker association studies related to a therapeutic protocol that are within the budget constraints will be considered.

**Support:** \$50,000 for one year.

#### **Multi-PI Catalyst**

**Goal:** Supports new avenues of unfunded population or basic science cancer research being carried out collaboratively by two or more UAB investigators. The proposed work should be based on a hypothesis that has the potential to move on to form the basis of an R01 application. The results of the proposed experiments should provide clear “go/no-go” information as to whether the investigators should proceed with this line of investigation. Minimal preliminary data is needed for the application. The PIs should contribute significantly to the development of the proposed research project and must have complementary expertise in similar or disparate scientific disciplines clearly need for success of the project. The application should clearly demonstrate that both PIs have equal intellectual input into the design of the project and will devote appropriate levels of effort to the conduct of the project. It is expected that if the completed work indicates that this is a potentially fruitful line of investigation the investigators could write a competitive Multi-PI Pre-R01 as a next step. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be supported by this mechanism, but the inclusion of diagnostic or biomarker association studies related to a therapeutic protocol that are within the budget constraints will be considered.

**Support:** \$50,000 for one year.

#### **Pre-R01**

**Goal:** Supports new avenues of unfunded population or basic science cancer research that is well positioned to be a competitive R01 within 2 years. Experiments should be proposed that will clearly provide a strong premise for the hypothesis for a proposed R01 submission. The proposal should make clear why these studies are key to providing a strong premise for this hypothesis. The work should not have substantial overlap with ongoing extramurally funded research. However, it can have significant, or complete, overlap with pending extramural grants from the investigator. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be supported by this mechanism, but the inclusion of diagnostic or biomarker association studies related to a therapeutic protocol that are within the budget constraints will be considered.

**Support:** \$160,000: \$80,000 for the first year with an additional \$80,000 for a second year based on successful completion of work the first year.

#### **Multi-PI Pre-R01**

**Goal:** Supports new avenues of unfunded population or basic science cancer research being carried out collaboratively by two or more UAB investigators and that is positioned to be a new competitive Multi-PI R01 submission within 2 years. The MPIs should contribute significantly to the development of the proposed research project and must have complementary expertise in similar or disparate scientific disciplines clearly need for success of the project. The application should clearly demonstrate that both MPIs have

equal intellectual input into the design of the project and will devote appropriate levels of effort to the conduct of the project. The proposal should describe experiments that will provide a strong premise for a competitive Multi-PI R01 within two years. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be supported by this mechanism, but the inclusion of diagnostic or biomarker association studies related to a therapeutic protocol that are within the budget constraints will be considered.

**Support:** \$160,000: \$80,000 for the first year with an additional \$80,000 for a second year based on successful completion of work the first year. It is up to the discretion of the MPIs to decide how the monies will be divided based on the work being done by each laboratory.

#### **Pre-P01**

**Goal:** This mechanism will support team thematic science involving a group of well-established investigators that have come together to propose 3-4 independent research projects that are highly scientifically integrated. The group should be within 2 years of submitting a P01, which would mean that the premise for each of the projects is well established with the remaining work focused on integration. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be supported by this mechanism, but the inclusion of diagnostic or biomarker association studies related to a therapeutic protocol that are within the budget constraints will be considered. Investigators interested in applying for this mechanism should discuss their interest with the Cancer Center Director before applying.

**Support:** \$500,000: \$250,000 for the first year with an additional \$250,000 for a second year based on successful completion of work the first year.

#### **Pre-SPORE**

**Goal:** This mechanism will support work that represents team thematic science involving a group of well-established investigators that have come together to propose 3-4 independent research projects that all have a translational component with at least one, and preferably more than one, leading to an investigator initiated clinical trial. The group should clearly be within 2 years of submitting a SPORE, which would mean that considerable work has already been completed and some final key experiments are needed. Therapeutic clinical trials cannot be substantially supported by this mechanism, but IIT support in line with current O'Neal IIT support is possible. Investigators interested in applying for this mechanism should discuss their interest with the Cancer Center Director before applying.

**Support:** \$500,000: \$250,000 for the first year with an additional \$250,000 for a second year based on successful completion of work the first year.

## **Instructions and Formatting Guidelines for Single PI and Multi-PI Catalyst and Pre-R01 Applications**

**Important:** Applications must conform to formatting instructions and include all required components or they will not be reviewed. There will not be an opportunity to edit submitted applications after the submission deadline.

### **General Application formatting:**

- All four margins  $\geq 0.5$ "
- Arial 11 pt. or Times New Roman 12 pt. with  $\geq 8$  pt. font for tables and figure legends.
- Submit your application as a single document in Microsoft Word or PDF format with the sections compiled in the order below.
- Cover sheet: Please use the cover sheet provided and obtain the signature of your Department Chair.

### **Sections to be assembled in the following order:**

I. Lay abstract: (30 lines) Please provide a brief description of your project in lay terms. This is to inform non-scientists at potential funding sources of the importance of the proposed work.

II. Scientific Abstract: (30 lines) State your hypothesis and its relevance, significance and innovation in scientific terms. State why the work is critical work to providing a strong premise for your hypothesis. Do not include figures or diagrams.

III. Response to prior critiques: (1 page) Resubmissions should include a response to prior critiques. Proposals being resubmitted that are switching from one award type (Catalyst or Pre-R01) to the other should include a response to prior critiques and the reasoning for switching award types. If it is a new proposal write N/A.

IV. Relevance to catchment area: (30 lines) Please identify how your project will address specific cancer needs of our catchment area (State of Alabama). For information on specific cancer burdens and cancer disparities in the catchment area that your work may impact, please contact Dr. Timiya Nolan ([tsnolan@uabmc.edu](mailto:tsnolan@uabmc.edu)), Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement (COE).

V. Relevance to specific cancers: (30 lines) If the proposal is not focused on a specific cancer, please indicate its relevance to one or more cancer types. If it is clear, then write N/A for this section.

VI. Complementary expertise and strengths of the Co-investigative team: (30 lines) Provide a description of the unique strengths and complementary expertise of the research team that makes it clear why both investigators are needed to complete the work. A listing of any prior evidence of collaboration, such as grants and co-authored publications, should be included and is not a part of the page limit.

VII. Specific Aims: (1 page) State your broader hypothesis for the work and the specific aims for the pilot grant.

- Catalyst awards: State why the experiments described are “go – no go” experiments for a new area of research in your lab. The results of the experiments should be telling as to whether you proceed to work on the hypothesis or not.
- Pre-R01 awards: State why the experiments will provide a strong premise for your hypothesis in an R01 submission.

VIII. Approach and Preliminary Data (3 pages) Provide background, and any key data needed to support your hypothesis. Describe the approach you will use to carry out the specific aims. Discuss your expected results and at least one alternate result, and how you may alter your approach if this result is achieved. Discuss at least one potential technical challenge and how you would approach it.

- Catalyst awards: Strengthen the discussion of why the results of the experiments are “go/no-go” and will lead to the continuation or termination of this line of investigation in the lab.
- Pre-R01 awards: Strengthen the discussion of how completing the proposed studies will provide a strong premise for your hypotheses in an R01 submission.

XI. Nine-month deliverables: (30 lines) List 3 key specific scientific deliverables from experiments you proposed that you expect to complete by 9 months. For Pre-R01 only. For Catalyst, write N/A.

X. Readiness: (30 lines) List key elements (reagents, approaches, animal models etc.) for the proposed work that are already in place that will allow you to initiate the proposed studies without delay. Also, indicate the current lab personnel and their current or planned % effort on this project.

XI. Next Steps: (30 lines) Explain what you plan to do next after completing this pilot grant from a standpoint of next step grant applications and what the aims of these applications may be.

XII. Outcomes: (30 lines) If you have previously received any O’Neal Invests funding, please list grant applications resulting from the work done and the status of these applications. If you have not received O’Neal Invests funding, write N/A.

XIII. Bibliography: No page limit. Use a format that includes article titles and all authors.

XIV. Biosketch: Include NIH biosketches for PIs and Multi-PIs only.



XV. Other and Pending Support: For PI and Multi-PIs only. Include all (extramural and intramural) current active other support with name of PI, your role on project, project title, funding agency, grant number, total amount of funding, funding duration. Also list any pending extramural support.

XVI. Budget: Please indicate how funds will be allocated. List all personnel with % effort. List budgets for supplies, animal costs, etc. that are needed to complete the project.

- Not allowed: PI or other faculty salaries. Travel costs to meetings. Publication charges. Costs for work done at other institutions or private companies (Southern Research excluded) unless approved by the Cancer Center Director prior to submitting the proposal.
- Multi-PI proposals: Each PI should submit their own budget with the combined PI budgets totaling up to \$80,000 per year for Pre-R01s and \$50,000 for Catalyst Awards.

XVII. Budget Justification: Provide a justification for the budget, making sure that the budget is applied to all the important components (personnel, supplies, animals, etc.) needed to complete the project. For Multi-PI proposals, each PI should provide a justification for their individual part of the budget.