

The Graduate School (GS) is pleased to announce the **COVID-19 Transdisciplinary Team Grand Challenge** in partnership with the Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Knowledge Enterprise (VPREDKE) for graduate students at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

Goal: With the upheaval due to the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic, researchers across the world are racing to solve problems associated with its impact. These problems cannot be tackled by researchers in individual disciplines, but instead require teams of disciplinary scholars to work together across disciplines to develop the most optimal solutions. *The primary goal of this challenge is to assemble teams of graduate students from different disciplines that will develop proposals for transdisciplinary concept projects to address issues associated with the pandemic.* The projects can come from a myriad of topical areas, including but not limited to:

- social and behavioral aspects
- societal impact
- impact on the economy
- labor market
- the role of the arts and humanities during pandemics including lessons learned from the Bubonic Plague and the 1918 Pandemic Influenza
- scientific approaches towards understanding the biology of the infection
- development of vaccines and treatments
- data science and data collection
- analysis and ethical dissemination of information using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
- cybersecurity
- preservation of civil and human rights
- communication strategies across language and cultures
- policies

The applicant team must clearly and convincingly demonstrate that the proposed project or program is transdisciplinary in nature. *Transdisciplinary Research* is defined as research efforts conducted by investigators from different disciplines working jointly to create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem. Transdisciplinary teams allow members to bring their individual expertise to bear; however, members are expected to work together from the beginning to develop approaches to a problem rather than first developing approaches within their disciplines and then bringing those individual ideas together to formulate a final solution. Teams of between 3-5 students must be formed from different disciplines as described below.

AWARDS

It is anticipated that three teams will be awarded, subject to available resources. Within each of these three teams, each student will receive a \$2,000 scholarship to be awarded in the Fall, 2020 semester and up to \$1,500 towards travel to an approved domestic conference to be used by May 31, 2021.

PROJECT SUBMISSION DETAILS AND TIMELINE

Team formation:

- Teams of 3-5 graduate students from at least two different programs within at least two colleges should form a transdisciplinary team to tackle one of the areas associated with the Grand Challenge topic. [Associate Deans for Research](#) and Associate Deans for Graduate Studies will help students with finding teammates from across UTSA colleges.

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Build or strengthen transdisciplinary collaborations across two or more disciplines
- Have significant merit, including significance, innovation, originality of approach, and technical merit

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be full-time graduate (masters or doctoral) students at the time of application and award.
- An applicant may not participate on more than one proposal to this program.
- Proposals must demonstrate collaboration among 3-5 graduate students from at least two different programs within at least two colleges at UTSA. Projects should, wherever possible, include a community partner (see below for more information).

Letter of Intent due: May 15, 2020

- Teams must file a Letter of Intent (LOI), with pertinent participant information and a brief preliminary description of the concept project. The LOI is non-binding in that the project can be changed from the original description provided in the LOI. The LOI should provide a preliminary descriptive title; brief description if available (500 words maximum); and should list the names, programs, and research areas for all team members. Although the LOI is nonbinding, it will assist in determining how many reviewers will be necessary. The LOI form may be completed online [here](#).

Community partner identified: June 1, 2020

- Projects should, wherever possible, include a community partner who collaborates with the team on developing the conceptual project. Examples of community partners include but are not limited to businesses, non-profit agencies, governmental entities, and so forth. [Associate Deans for Research](#) can help to identify and connect appropriate community partners.

Proposals due: July 15

- See required deliverables described in the Proposal Submission section below.

Awards announced: August 15

- All members of the three teams receiving the highest scores from review panels will receive an award.

Funds awarded: September 15

- Each student in the top three teams will receive \$2,000 scholarship for Fall, 2020 and up to \$1,500 towards travel to an approved domestic conference to be used by May 31, 2021.

LOI and PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

There will be a two-phase submission cycle.

LOI Deadline: Close of business (5:00 P.M. CST) on **May 15, 2020**. Submit LOI at <https://utsa.tfaforms.net/107>.

Proposal deadline: Close of business (5:00 P.M. CST) on **July 15, 2020**. Applicants will complete the cover page online [here](#). The cover page includes the listing of all team members, project title, and project abstract (500 word maximum).

Applicants will email the proposal to Graduate.VPDean@utsa.edu. All proposal elements shall be contained in a single, text-searchable Adobe Acrobat pdf file.

The proposal must include the following, in the order shown below:

1. Project Description: 5 page maximum, single spaced
2. Key References: 1 page maximum
3. Letter of support from community partner (if applicable): 1 page maximum

If any items requested above are not included at the time of submission, the proposal will be deemed non-compliant and will not be reviewed.

1. **PROPOSAL COVER PAGE** – Submit online at <https://utsa.tfaforms.net/109>.
 - The Proposal Cover Page must include a clear executive summary (500 word maximum) that summarizes the essential content of the proposed project, including objectives, benefits, and significance.
2. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION** – (5 PAGE MAXIMUM)

The project description must include, in this order:

- General background; how it relates to UTSA strategic initiatives and institutional priorities;
- Scientific merit and significance of the proposed conceptual project: Address how this project is transdisciplinary in nature and the potential impact it would have on UTSA, if successful;
- Impact of this project on society and areas where this project could be applied;
- Specific goals, objectives and anticipated results;
- Description of methods including anticipated barriers or technical difficulties; and
- Resources that would be needed if this project were to be carried out (equipment, materials, etc.).

The project description must be concise, limited to five typed, single-spaced pages with 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Appendices may be included; however, reviewers are not obligated to read this supplemental material. If two or more appendices are included in a proposal, they should be designated Appendix A, Appendix B, etc. A violation of this format will disqualify the proposal from review.

3. **KEY REFERENCES** – (1 PAGE MAXIMUM)

Key reference page does not count toward the project description limit.

4. **LETTER OF SUPPORT** – (1 PAGE MAXIMUM)

If applicable, include a letter from community partner addressed to the Vice Provost & Dean of the Graduate School confirming that the team worked collaboratively with the partner on the conceptual project.

GRAND CHALLENGE REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by a Grand Challenge Review Committee established by the Graduate School and the office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development & Knowledge Enterprise (VPREDKE). Committee members will be from a variety of academic backgrounds.

As such, *proposals should be clearly written in a way that the goals, rationale and methods of the proposed work can be understood by all reviewers.* Avoid field specific terminology as much as possible.

Applicants will be informed of the Committee's recommendations on or about August 15, 2020. As noted above, awards will be available after September 15, 2020.

Proposals will be evaluated on a 100-point scale. The team is expected to include all required proposal components and to fully and clearly address each criteria.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:	
Are the goals, objectives, and anticipated results stated clearly and aligned with the Grand Challenge?	25
Is the significance and merit of the conceptual project clearly documented?	25
Is the project clearly transdisciplinary in nature, aiming to create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and/or translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem?	25
Are the methods outlined and do they reflect the goals and objectives stated in the proposal?	25

For more information on this opportunity, please contact Rebecca Weston at Rebecca.Weston@utsa.edu.