VCU Center for Drug Addiction Research

Pilot Project Grant Program - 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Submit applications here: https://redcap.vcu.edu/surveys/?s=FWFA3PFJRRRAJJTX

Purpose:

The VCU Center for Drug Addiction Research Pilot Projects Core supports the development of projects that expand research in the field of addictive drugs. The Core promotes new research directions by supporting significant, and innovative hypotheses focused on elucidating the biological mechanisms underlying substance use disorders and developing novel therapeutic approaches. This program is intended to enable investigators to generate preliminary data that support grant applications to the National Institute on Drug Abuse and other extramural sponsors.

Funding

VCU faculty may submit applications with budgets up to $50,000 to the Pilot Project grant program (**deadline: January 15, 2027**). We will support established and early-stage investigators in this field, as well as scholars in other research areas to perform research in the drug addiction field. Projects pairing basic and clinical scientists are highly encouraged to apply. Our overall goal is to generate transformative breakthroughs in the prevention and treatment of drug addiction.

Application Requirements

The application must be directed toward increasing understanding of the molecular, cellular, and/or behavioral mechanisms of action of stimulants, opioids, nicotine, psychedelics, cannabinoids or other misused substances, and/or to elucidate the mechanisms of drug tolerance or dependence. Use of one or more of the Center's Research Cores is highly encouraged.

Upload **a single pdf** including:

1. **Title page**: Include PI's name, rank, and department; names, affiliations, and contact information of all collaborators; PI signature and that of PI's department chairperson.
2. **Biosketch of PI and co-I(s)** using NIH format, and statement of current and previous funding
3. **Description of relevant facilities and equipment**
4. **Detailed budget and budget justification** (1 page)
5. **Summary statement** from a recent review of previous federal application (if applicable).
6. **Specific Aims** (1 page)
7. **Research Strategy** (6 pages)
    a. **Background, Significance, and Hypotheses** to be addressed
    b. **Preliminary Data**. Not required but may be included.
    c. **Experimental Approach** (include statistical analyses and interpretations)
    d. **Future Directions (include plans for future extramural funding)**
8. **Bibliography** (no page limit)

Award Requirements

- All regulatory requirements (e.g., IRB or IACUC approval) must be initiated upon notice of the grant award if not already obtained.
- Acknowledge the VCU Center for Drug Addiction Research (P30DA033934) as a source of funding support for all scientific presentations or publications resulting from the work.

- Any major reallocation of funds or changes in scope of work must be approved in advance by the Pilot Core director (Dr. Bettinger).
- Provide a written final report within 3 months of the end of the funding period to include all presentations, publications, grant applications or grant awards that include data produced under the funded project.
- Post Award Seminar: We expect the pilot projects to lead to the generation of important data in the field of drug addiction studies. Award recipients will be expected to present their findings in the P30 seminar series or at the annual P30 retreat.
- Willingness to serve as a reviewer on future pilot grants.

Funding limitations

Pilot funds CAN be used to support:

- Supplies
- Services directly related to the research (Core lab fees, statistical support, etc.)
- Technical support personnel working directly on the project
- Travel for learning technical skills
- Publication fees if directly related to the work done under this award

Pilot funds CANNOT be used for the following:

- Facilities and Administration costs
- Faculty salaries (other than technical support)
- Conference fees

Review Process

All proposals will be judged by a panel of experts following the format of an NIH study section. Each grant will be reviewed, scored, discussed, and ranked by priority for funding. **Criteria that will be considered are Significance, Approach, and likelihood to lead to extramural funding.** Priority will be given to excellent proposals that make use of P30 cores.

Questions

Direct questions to Dr. Jill Bettinger, the Pilot Core Director (jill.bettinger@vcuhealth.org).

At-A-Glance

Due Date	January 15, 2027
Project Duration	One year
Award Ceiling	Up to $50,000
Eligibility requirements	PIs must be full-time VCU faculty members The proposal must address aspects of drug addiction
How to submit	Submit a single pdf to: https://redcap.vcu.edu/surveys/?s=FWFA3PFJRRRAJJTX
Reporting Requirements	A final report is required that specifies achievements and plans for external grant submissions and scholarship (publications and conference presentations).