

## Bridge Funding Survey Results

The goal in doing this survey was that it might provide useful guidance for institutions considering the issue of bridge funding for faculty salaries and laboratory costs. This seemed particularly timely in view of the reduced pay lines at NIH and the potential strain on University bridge funding mechanisms. A total of 62 departments responded, 31% of them were private schools. Despite the low funding rates at NIH, 35% of departments reported that currently no faculty members were on bridge funding. However, nearly ½ indicated that 10% or more of their faculty members were on bridge funding.

The following bulleted points are intended as a brief summary of the main results. A detailed summary of responses to each question is included below.

### Brief Summary

The majority of schools (in most cases, the large majority):

- have no written policy regarding bridge funding.
- provide bridge funding for both the faculty member's salary and the laboratory.
- provide bridge funding for 100% of the faculty member's salary.
- rely on the discretion of the Chair and/or Dean to determine the amount and duration of support for salary and the laboratory (i.e., no formula).
- have a minimum salary that is protected regardless of a tenured faculty member's grant funding history and status.
- support faculty salaries for two or more years the laboratory for one year.
- rely upon a combination of the department and dean's office as a source of funds for bridge funding.
- have no expectation that the funds will be paid back.

Many enlightening written comments were also provided. A compilation of these comments is provided at the end of this document.

### Detailed Summary of Results

**(Numbers in parentheses give number of departments responding to each question)**

1. Does your institution/department have a written policy that applies to bridging faculty salaries and research programs when grant funding is interrupted? (61/62)

36% \_\_\_ Yes

63% \_\_\_ No

2. Is bridge funding provided for just the faculty member's salary or is there also support for the laboratory? (54/62)

11% \_\_\_ Faculty member's salary only

67% \_\_\_ Faculty member's salary and support for laboratory

20% \_\_\_ Lab only

2% \_\_\_ Faculty member's salary and lab salaries

3. If bridge funding is provided for the faculty member's salary:

A) Is it for the full salary? (54/62)

55% \_\_\_ Yes

36% \_\_\_ No

9% \_\_\_ Depends on rank and history of grant support

B) Is there a formula to determine the amount and duration of support or is support considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the Chair and/or Dean's office? (47/62)

- 15%\_\_Formula
- 83%\_\_Discretion of Chair/Dean's office
- 2%\_\_Formula but subject to discretion

C) If a formula is used to determine support does it depend on:

- 1/23\_\_Faculty rank
- 0/23\_\_Number of funded years
- 1/23\_\_Total dollars received in funding
- 8/23\_\_Combination of these factors
- 3/23\_\_Other (please specify)

D) How many years does support continue and at what percent? (If a formal policy does not exist, please estimate the average support a full professor with a 15 year history of external funding might receive.)

- 4/34\_\_< 1 year
- 6/34\_\_1 year
- 9/34\_\_2 years
- 4/34\_\_3 years
- 11/34\_\_> 3 years
- (70% indicated 2 years or more)

E) % of full professor salary supported

- 26/39\_\_100% (includes 8 that indicated they have full state support for salary making bridging unnecessary, also includes 2 that indicated it was 100% of base salary, e.g., 100% of the 20<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of AAMC median)
- 3/39\_\_80% (indefinite period of time if tenured)
- 2/39\_\_75-100%
- 2/39\_\_50%
- 1/39\_\_25%
- 1/39\_\_less than 100%
- 2/39\_\_\$25,000
- 1/39\_\_\$50,000
- 1/39\_\_\$100,000

F) Is there a minimum salary for a tenured faculty member that is protected regardless of grant funding status? (53/62)

- 83%\_\_Yes
- 17%\_\_No

If yes, approximately what percent of full salary is the protected amount? (44/62)

- 48%\_\_100% of full salary
- 5%\_\_81-99% of full salary
- 23%\_\_70-89% of full salary
- 5%\_\_60-70% of full salary
- 16%\_\_50% of full salary
- 2%\_\_50% of AAMC
- 2%\_\_35-50%

4. If bridge funding is provided for the faculty member's laboratory:
- A) Is there a formula to determine the length and duration of support or is support considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the Chair and/or Dean's office? (52/62)
    - 15%\_\_Formula
    - 85%\_\_Discretion of Chair/Dean's office
  
  - B) How many years does support continue and at what percent of the laboratory's previous funding level?
    - 4/43\_\_< 1 year
    - 19/43\_\_ 1 year
    - 9/43\_\_ 2 years
    - 5/43\_\_ 3 years
    - 2/43\_\_ > 3 years
    - 4/43\_\_ variable
  
  - C) Level of bridge funding for the faculty members laboratory
    - 1/22\_\_100% of lab costs
    - 1/22\_\_80%
    - 1/22\_\_50-80%
    - 2/22\_\_50%
    - 5/22\_\_30-40%
    - 4/22\_\_5-20%

Level of bridge funding for the faculty members laboratory (continued)

    - 2/22\_\_\$100,000 (competitive in one case)
    - 2/22\_\_\$75,000
    - 2/22\_\_\$50,000
    - 1/22\_\_\$40,000
    - 1/22\_\_\$25,000
5. What is the source of funding for salary/laboratory bridge funding:
- 9/55\_\_Department
  - 13/55\_\_Dean's office
  - 27/55\_\_Combination of Dean's office and Department
  - 6/55\_\_Other (Research incentive, VC for Research, Presidents office, University bridge funds, private funds)
6. For a faculty member who has received bridge funding, are there associated expectations, such as partially paying it back from future funds.
- 10/52\_\_Yes (some payback)
  - 42/52\_\_No
7. What percent of your faculty are currently (or soon to be) bridged? (55/62)
- 35%\_\_0% on bridge funding
  - 15%\_\_3-5% on bridge funding
  - 5%\_\_6-9% on bridge funding
  - 22%\_\_10% on bridge funding
  - 7%\_\_15-19% on bridge funding
  - 11%\_\_20-30% on bridge funding
  - 6%\_\_31-50% on bridge funding
  - (46% reported that 10% or more of their faculty members were on bridge funding)

8. Are faculty/departments contributing to a bridge funding pool?

11/56\_\_Yes

45/56\_\_No

If yes, approximately how much?

Responses were limited and varied.

9. What percent return of indirect costs (F&A costs) does your department receive?

16/56\_\_0%

7/56\_\_1-9%

14/56\_\_10-19%

11/56\_\_20-29%

2/56\_\_30-39%

3/56\_\_40-49%

3/56\_\_50-60%

1/56\_\_100%

10. What percent return of indirect costs do individual faculty members receive?

34/56\_\_0%

7/56\_\_1-9%

6/56\_\_10-19%

6/56\_\_20-30%

3/56\_\_50-70%

### Written Comments

The survey brings to mind one of my chief complaints, the lack of a formula-based plan to return indirect costs. We have to beg every time something comes up.

Our bridging requires the faculty member to submit his/her grant, pink sheets and a letter requesting support including a budget. If the department chair approves it goes on the dean's office and if the dean approves it goes to the VP research office. If all approve then each office (department, dean and VP research office) each give 1/3. Average amounts are around 70,000 to 100,000. Our salaries are not included since faculty salaries are covered by the department.

We have a formal program that provides bridge funding for laboratories. This program requires a competitive application and awards relatively small grants.

Bridging is based primarily on the faculty member submitting proposals (at the NIH R01 level or equivalent) for extramural funding and receiving reasonably strong peer review comments on them. There will be no bridging if a proposal is not submitted. If the scores are close to the funding line (e.g., better than 25%) and show improvement with resubmission, continued bridging is possible, up to 3 years. Each bridge is done on a case-by-case basis each 6 or 12 months in discussions between the Dean, Chair and Assoc VP Research, with the faculty member interviewed by this group as well. While indirect costs do not go directly to the Dept or PI, the annual amount of direct and indirect costs created by Dept faculty is factored into the Dept allocation in the Basic Science Budget Allocation process, so the more the Dept "kills", the more it gets to "eat".

I have described the plan that was put into effect for FY 2008. Before that, there was no formula. It is clear that as the problem becomes more severe, faculty salaries are likely to be cut, as the School has very few reserve funds to use for this purpose. Also, in answer to Question 10, we began this year a program such that faculty raising at least 60% of their salary from outside sources receive a bonus of 6% of their salary, either to their own salary or to their lab funds. The lab funds can be carried over to the new FY.

The Provost has established a bridge fund of \$1 million per year. Faculty compete for "bridge funding", with the amount limited to \$50,000. The department must provide an equivalent match, which is becoming a major problem. According to the official guidelines, faculty are not eligible for bridge funding until they have lost all funding. In practice, the university is a bit more lenient than the rules state. With regard to salaries, we have an A component (state line) and a B component (from grants). The A component is guaranteed. The B component (range 15-30%) of total can be paid from bridge funds, as long as they do not come directly from state funds. In my view, this "bridge funding" is grossly inadequate. Currently, four faculty in my department are not receiving their B component.

Our faculty enjoy a guaranteed base salary from the State. They are also eligible for a supplement/bonus that is linked (by formula) to their extramural funding. The bonus plan can increase their pay by as much as 20%. When the extramural funding disappears, so does the bonus. The Departments are expected to cover the costs associated with a bridging program for unfunded faculty. Support for the bridge program is derived from a reserve fund created by the accumulation of indirect cost recoveries over the years.

The University fully funds salaries of tenured faculty members who are unsupported. Amount of bridge loans: the investigator requests an amount based on a budget. It is reviewed by an ad hoc committee. The reviewers may modify the budget. Investigators are required to pay partial salary support from the loan. The PI must pay back loan from future overhead earnings. If PI remains unfunded then the Department pays back loan, but only 50% of the amount.

The system here is quite good for covering faculty salary following funding lapses, because there is still quite a bit of institutional money for faculty salaries; less than 40% of salaries are paid by grants. However, we definitely need more funds to keep laboratories going when a grant is not renewed. One topic that the survey did not touch on is a safety net for graduate student stipends that were formerly paid by a grant that is lost. My department is heavily dependent on R01's to support graduate students, and when one is lost, I usually have to scramble to figure out how to pay the student.

At present any form of bridge funding is worked out on an individual basis between the Dean and Chair and also between the Chair and faculty members. There are no written rules or guidelines - a total shambles for any type of future planning for either the faculty member or for the Chair. Grant funding is not contractually required although faculty are encouraged to do scientific, educational or clinical research. Faculty who focus on lab research typically have few teaching hours (usually fewer than 10 the first year). Those who primarily teach typically carry more contact hours (over 250 in one case) and have more involvement with board review, at risk students, community/institutional service, administration and curriculum innovation.

Lucky for us, faculty salaries are hard-line. Sometimes the department will "bridge fund" a soft-money technician salary off of recaptured (indirect cost) salary money held by the department. However, that often lasts no more than a year, as we survive off of relatively small grants. The institution (Office of Research and Sponsored Programs) will assign maybe \$2000-5000 from an intramural research fund to a faculty member who is between funding.

This is not an issue for us because all faculty are on hard money. When salary support replaces hard money then we do receive some indirect costs back to the department.

We currently do not have a bridge funding procedure. Our Associate Dean for Research is developing a plan.

In better times, we have returned ICR to faculty in proportion to what they have earned. All uncommitted ICR is currently going into startup and bridge funding.

A lump sum of funds was made available for medical college bridge funding. This was apportioned in \$55k packets to each qualifying faculty member, with preference for those with graduate students. The funds do not cover faculty salary at all.

The survey above does not cover our bridge funding mechanisms. Full salaries are covered for a minimum of 3 years and longer at the discretion of chair and Dean. 75% salary is currently guaranteed as long as the faculty member retains a comparable level of effort in teaching/research/service activities. We have a competitive bridge grant system for laboratory support funded by the Deans Office. Applications are peer reviewed and scored based on response to an NIH critique, likelihood of obtaining a fundable priority score, and other available funding. Funds provided are limited to \$40K/year and only about half of those seeking this funding receive it. The Chair/Director receives 20% of his/her departments IC cost recovery. Funds are used at the discretion of the Chair/Director to support/bridge/seed individual research programs (supplies and personnel) but cannot be used to support faculty salaries.

All our faculty salaries are state supported at 100% therefore no need to bridge salaries. The faculty's lab receives 65% of any recovered salary. This presently goes to the lab and not the faculty's salary. The school has provided up to \$50,000/yr to a very few faculty to keep a large and productive lab going. Much smaller amounts have been provided to some labs to keep things going for a few months between grants. This money has been provided by the university, school and department on an individual basis. We have a simple policy bridge funding which is 1 year at 100 K with the expectation that the grant is good enough to get funded on the next submission.

We have a compensation plan that allows reduction of faculty salary up to 10% per year to a maximum reduction to a "core" salary of 20th percentile of the AAMC distribution function for basic science faculty. Reductions would not occur until the faculty member has lost significant salary offset for at least 2-3 years. Loss of salary offset would, however, immediately trigger a reassignment of duties to allow capture of the faculty salary as a part of mission-based budgeting.