Interdisciplinary Trailblazer Fund – Round 3
Guidelines: Call for proposals

Deadline: Monday, March 23, 2020; decisions expected in late April

Interdisciplinary research is a top priority at the University of Waterloo, as it represents one of the best routes to arrive at paradigm-changing discoveries and develop breakthrough technologies and ways of operating likely to have high societal/economic/scientific impact. UW researchers have excelled at such endeavours, with teams of researchers spanning multiple faculties.

Significant opportunities for external interdisciplinary research funding currently exist, including the recently announced Tri-Agency New Frontiers in Research Fund (http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/index-eng.aspx). It is absolutely vital that UW positions itself to take advantage of these initiatives. While many game-changing, world-leading interdisciplinary research projects exist at UW, barriers remain to expanding such initiatives and realizing our full potential for transformative research.

To promote interdisciplinary collaborations, the University of Waterloo has established the Interdisciplinary Trailblazer Fund with the aim of lowering barriers and risk by providing support for complementary HQP teams.

**Competition details**

**Eligibility:** Teams of two or more regular faculty members at any career stage are eligible to apply, where at least two are from different home Departments/Schools, and preferably from different Faculties. The goal of this program is to encourage researchers to reach out to colleagues outside their home department. Therefore, it is mandatory that at least two of the researchers have appointments from different departments. Holding a joint appointment to the same department would not satisfy the requirement for this collaboration. However, someone holding a cross appointment or adjunct appointment would be eligible.

Priority will be given to proposals where the co-PIs have not previously collaborated, as the main aim is to provide seed funding to promising, novel projects that would allow the cross-campus team to initiate joint research, and position them better for external funding opportunities. Funding for existing collaborations will also be considered where a compelling case is made that the new resources will make a significant difference to the research effort and improve their chances for upcoming external funding. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are particularly encouraged to apply. ECRs are defined as individuals within five years of their first academic appointment, not including career interruptions for maternity or parental leave, sick leave, clinical training or family care.

Applicants may request for two years of funding for graduate students; four years for PDFs. However, the maximum total amount that can be requested per application is $80,000. Costs beyond $80k must be covered from other sources.

The total envelope for each funding round is ~$300,000.
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Eligible costs
Graduate students and Postdoctoral Fellows serve as strong bridges between research groups, particularly when they work together in teams, learning the ‘language’ and techniques/approaches of the diverse disciplines involved.

The priority for this competition is to establish interdisciplinary HQP teams. These teams must have at least two HQP at any given time, comprised of any two Graduate Students and/or Postdocs, who are supervised by the team of regular faculty. At least two of the HQP must have different primary supervisors from different Departments/Schools and preferably different Faculties. HQP may be entirely funded by this program, or funded from a mix of sources. The following contributions to research stipends can be requested:

- Masters – $15k/year for up to two years.
- Ph.D. - $15k/year for up to four years.
- Postdoctoral Fellow - $40k/year for up to two years (plus an additional $10k/year match (mandatory) required, for a total of $50k/year per PDF).

Other categories of support may also be funded if a compelling case can be made. Please contact the AVP-Interdisciplinary Research to discuss beforehand.

Adjudication
A committee with representation from all six Faculties, and a minimum of three members from University-level Centres and Institutes, Chaired by the Associate Vice-President, Interdisciplinary Research, will assess the applications and make a recommendation to the Vice President, Research and International. The main elements that will be assessed are:

- Why research involving the different disciplines will be needed to solve the problem of interest
- The novelty of the proposed research, including the degree to which it defies current paradigms
- The potential impact of the proposed research
- The feasibility of the proposed research
- How each supervisor will be engaged and contribute to the project goals
- How the members of the HQP team will work together
- Specific actions to support an inclusive research training environment are clearly defined
- Plans for joint publications and other mechanisms for dissemination of research findings
- Return on investment – how this initial support can lead to sustainability for the team through external funding sources

It is expected that Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) will be integrated into research designs, when appropriate (see http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50836.html for definitions). For multi-year awards, release of annual funding installments will be contingent on satisfactory progress as judged by a progress report and in-person presentation by the interdisciplinary team.