



Pittsburgh Autoimmunity Center of Excellence in Rheumatology (PACER)

<https://dom.pitt.edu/rheum/centers-institutes/pacer/>

Program summary

The PACER grant program is intended to support pilot studies that will support advancing research and understanding in autoimmunity. Preference will be given to projects that have a high probability of (i) leading to new *intellectual property and commercialization* and (ii) generating key pilot data that will lead to *external funding* in the area of autoimmune disease research.

**** DUE DATE, MONDAY MARCH 23, 2020 ****

PACER Catalytic Proposals (up to \$40,000)

Intended to reduce barriers to making transformational discoveries in the autoimmunity space, PACER Catalytic grants will support exploratory or risky hypothesis-generating lines of investigation that are likely to lead to important insights into autoimmune disease pathogenesis. Examples could include but are by no means limited to:

- performing genetic, proteomic or similar screens
- making novel antibodies or other reagents
- creation of new CRISPR mice (especially those with broad utility and IP potential, such as reporter mice or CRE-strains)
- import of mouse strains from another institution
- generating RNA-Seq (or similar) datasets
- support for specialized equipment or software
- activities that will support new initiatives relevant to autoimmunity research

PACER Innovative Discovery Proposals (up to \$65,000)

Innovator grants are intended to provide support for studies with potential to lead to advances in (i) the basis of or treatment for autoimmune disease *and* (ii) to generate new intellectual property with potential for commercialization. Studies that could lead to new drug or diagnostic targets are strongly encouraged.

Budget restrictions

- Funds will support direct costs only

- Funding cannot be used for office equipment or computers. Travel will also not be supported unless integral to the proposal (e.g., visiting a collaborator to learn a new technique or perform a specialized procedure/experiment)
- Funds cannot be used to cover PI salary support (but effort is required and must be tracked to ensure that individuals do not exceed 100%, per University guidelines)
- Awards are for one year. No-cost extensions should be requested if needed, and are subject to approval by the PACER steering committee.
- All necessary regulatory protocols (IACUC, IRB, etc.) must be approved before project funding commences

Eligibility

- University of Pittsburgh faculty members at all ranks (including Research track faculty) are eligible to apply as principle investigators. Other applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis, if they can (i) demonstrate a track record of research leadership and success, (ii) provide a mentoring plan and commitment of resources from a qualified faculty member at the rank of associate professor or higher.
- Only one award per research group will be awarded at a given time. That is, if there are several research faculty members working under the umbrella and mentorship of a given senior faculty member, only one award may be active within in the entire group. This is subject to the discretion of the PACER steering committee.
- Applications from early-career investigators and those with need for support are encouraged.

Application Guidelines

1. **Proposal:** two (2) pages maximum (excluding Biosketch, Budget and References), Arial size 11 font with 0.5 inch margins. Applications **MUST** include the following sections:
 - a. Title
 - b. Background and Significance
 - c. Specific Aims
 - d. Research Plan – Describe the work to be performed, which should be commensurate with the requested budget. Include relevant preliminary data if appropriate. Detailed methods/protocols are not necessary, but evidence that expertise is in place to accomplish the technical aspects of the project should be included (e.g., is expertise in bioinformatics analysis on hand? Are there collaborators or specialized equipment available who can help accomplish specific techniques?)
 - e. Potential for Intellectual Property Development – Describe how discoveries made in this proposal could have potential for commercialization or intellectual property (IP)/patent protection. **This is an important aspect of the application and decision for funding.**
 - f. Potential for Future Funding – Describe how results obtained in this work may provide a foundation for future funding.
2. List of references (not included in the 2-page limit)

3. NIH-style biosketch (be sure to mention patents or other IP accomplishments), not included in the 2-page limit
4. Budget and Budget Justification (not included in the 2-page limit)
5. Due Date: **March 23, 2020.**
6. Submit grants as a single merged PDF file to PACER@pitt.edu
7. Direct questions to Dr. Sarah Gaffen, sarah.gaffen@pitt.edu