

C A L L F O R A P P L I C A T I O N S

Education Research Program

Generating Evidence to Transform How We Educate

The Office of Research at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia (SOMC) invites applications for the **Education Research Program**, a new internal funding mechanism designed to support hypothesis-driven research that generates evidence to improve education. This program recognizes that meaningful educational improvement requires the same scholarly rigor we apply to biomedical research: clearly stated hypotheses, sound methodology, and measurable outcomes. Funded projects should produce evidence that informs better educational practices and, where applicable, lead to new or improved curricula, assessment tools, or other tangible deliverables that can be adopted across our institution and beyond.

Program Overview

The Education Research Program supports faculty-led, hypothesis-driven projects that test specific claims about how educational interventions, strategies, or tools affect learning outcomes or educational processes. Successful applications will:

- Propose and test a clearly articulated hypothesis about improving educational outcomes, including student learning, satisfaction, and enjoyment; educator efficiency and experience; or any measurable aspect of the teaching and learning process
- Employ a rigorous methodology with a defined evaluation plan to generate evidence for or against the hypothesis
- Produce scholarly deliverables suitable for peer-reviewed publication and/or presentation, as well as practical outputs (e.g., new curricula, assessment instruments, instructional tools, or pedagogical frameworks) that can be implemented to improve education
- Demonstrate potential impact that extends beyond a single course or cohort to inform the broader field of education

The program is open to all educational contexts and is not limited to medical education. Projects may involve learners at any level and may address any discipline represented within SOMC and its affiliated programs. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in educational innovation is encouraged but not required.

Eligibility

- **Who may apply:** All SOMC faculty (professional track or tenure track)
- **Collaboration:** Interdisciplinary and cross-track collaboration is encouraged but not required
- **Teaching experience:** The Principal Investigator must have teaching experience, which will be evaluated as part of project feasibility

Funding Structure

For the inaugural funding cycle, the program anticipates awarding up to **three grants of \$5,000 each**. Grant funds are intended to support project-related costs such as participant incentives, software or technology costs, survey instruments, and publication fees and cannot be used for salary support. Funds must be fully expended within one year of the award date.

Project Expectations & Deliverables

Because the central goal of this program is to generate evidence that improves education, funded projects are expected to articulate their impact and potentially lead to:

Scholarly Evidence

- At least one manuscript submitted for peer-reviewed publication or a presentation at a regional or national conference
- Presentation of project outcomes at an institutional forum (e.g., Discover USC or equivalent)
- Demonstration of scholarly activity appropriate for promotion and tenure consideration

Practical Deliverables

- Tangible products that can be implemented to improve education, such as new or revised curricula, assessment tools, instructional modules, pedagogical frameworks, or training materials
- Pilot data or proof-of-concept evidence that supports future extramural funding applications

Application Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a committee composed of faculty with expertise in education and research and scored based on the following criteria:

1. **Hypothesis & Significance**
 - Clarity and specificity of the hypothesis being tested
 - Potential impact on learners, educators, or educational processes
 - Contribution to the broader field of education beyond the local context
2. **Innovation**

- Novelty of the educational approach, strategy, or tool being investigated
- Creative use of technology, including AI, where applicable
- 3. **Scientific Approach & Rigor**
 - Appropriateness and clarity of the research methodology
 - Strength of the evaluation plan for testing the stated hypothesis
 - Adequacy of data collection and analysis strategies
- 4. **Feasibility**
 - Realistic scope, timeline, and budget
 - Relevant expertise and teaching experience of the project team
- 5. **Project Team**
 - Qualifications and roles of all team members
 - Involvement of learners in the research process, where appropriate
- 6. **Deliverables**
 - Specificity and feasibility of proposed scholarly and practical deliverables
 - Potential for deliverables to be adopted or scaled for broader use

Application Format & Submission Requirements

Applications must be arial font, 11-point or larger, with narrow (0.5') margins.

Required Components

- Abstract with project title and keywords (1 page max)
- Research Plan (4 pages max) including Project Background, Hypothesis, Methodology and Study Design, Data Collection and Analysis Plan (and Statistical Analyses when appropriate)
- Timeline with key milestones, including expected IRB approval if applicable (1 page max)
- Budget Table and Budget Justification (no page limit)
- Description of the research team and roles (no page limit)
- Biosketch or CV for the Principal Investigator and faculty included in the project

To submit application, email required documents above as one pdf to OOR@uscmed.sc.edu.

Timeline

Milestone	Date
Application Deadline	May 31 st , 2026
Award Notification	June 30 th , 2026
Funding Start Date	August 1 st , 2026

Questions

For questions about the Education Research Program, please contact the Office of Research at OOR@uscmcd.sc.edu.