

To: School of Medicine Faculty
From: Katherine L. Nathanson, MD and Scott D. Halpern, MD, PhD
Co-Chairs, PSOM Limited Applications Selection Committee
Re: W. M. Keck Research Program in Medical Research and Science & Engineering
<https://www.wmkeck.org/research-overview/>

The University has been invited to submit one proposal for each of the two W. M. Keck Research Program grant categories for the June 2026 grant cycle: (1) Medical Research and (2) Science & Engineering. The Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR) will oversee the final proposal review and selection process. **Faculty with a primary appointment at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) must apply through CHOP.** The proposal selection is a two-step process:

- **Step #1:** Each School may submit one 1-page concept paper for a project that has been previously reviewed by federal agencies (but not awarded) for each of the two grant categories. **Candidates MUST include the federal agency reviews with the concept paper.**
- **Step #2:** Based on the Keck Foundation's feedback on the concept papers, one proposal for each of the two grant categories will be selected for a Phase I Application due November 1, 2025.

Purpose

The W.M. Keck Foundation Research Program seeks to support pioneering discoveries in Science, Engineering, and Medical Research. The Foundation funds the high-risk and high-impact work of leading researchers to lay the groundwork for new paradigms, technologies, and discoveries that will save lives, provide innovative solutions and add to our understanding of the world.

Keck funded projects are distinctive and novel in their approach, question the prevailing paradigm, or have the potential to break open new territory in their field. The Foundation prioritizes grants that pioneer biological and physical science research and engineering, including the development of promising new technologies, instrumentation or methodologies.

Eligibility

- **Appointment:** The PI must be a full-time Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor
- **Research Focus:** The research must align with the Foundation's funding priorities:
 - High-risk, high-impact projects that are innovative, distinctive, and interdisciplinary.
 - Focus on important and emerging areas of research.
 - Have potential to develop breakthrough technologies, instrumentation, or methodologies.
 - Demonstrate a high level of risk due to unconventional approaches or challenge the prevailing paradigm.
 - Have potential for transformative impact such as the founding of a new field of research, enabling of new observations, or altering perception of a previously intractable problem.
 - Fall outside the mission of public funding agencies.
 - Demonstrate that W. M. Keck Foundation support is essential to the project's success.
- For any sponsored research projects, the applicant must be eligible to serve as Principal Investigator for the project, unless otherwise noted in the LSO. Please see [Penn's PI Eligibility requirements](#) to ensure you are eligible.

Award information

- Grants from the W.M. Keck Foundation typically range from \$1 million to \$5 million. Please see the Foundation's [grant abstracts](#) for examples of funded projects and award amounts.
- Award extensions are not allowed.
- The Foundation prefers projects that are not too clinical or applied, not related to therapeutics, not disease-specific, and not a "logical next step" in research. The Foundation also prefers to fund projects for which federal funding is not readily available.

PSOM review process:

Candidates must submit the following in the order below:

- Cover page: Candidate name, academic rank, department, email address, phone number, title of proposal, and grant category (i.e., Medical Research or Science & Engineering).
- Concept paper (maximum one page): Single-spaced, 12-point font with one-inch margins. References and illustrations may be included on a separate page. Concept papers **MUST** include:
 - An overview of the proposed project emphasizing any unique aspects and pilot studies (indicate area of emphasis for project) and background to put the research into perspective.
 - A description of the methodologies and key personnel.
 - Impact – how will this project be a scientific leap forward? How is this project transformational? What makes this project distinctive?
 - Brief justification of the need for Keck support (demonstrate a federal rejection of the project on the grounds that it is too high risk or early stage and that Keck is the funder of last resort).
 - Describe how this research falls outside the mission of public funding agencies (successful proposals must have been reviewed and declined by NIH, NSF, etc. for being high quality but too risky). **Agency review comments must be included.**
 - Funding amount request along with breakdown – personnel, equipment, supplies, etc. Indicate where matching funds are available.
- Prior Submission Update: If you have submitted for this funding mechanism in the past, please provide on a separate page a brief explanation (1-5 sentences) explaining how the current application differs from prior submissions, highlighting any significant updates or changes to the proposal or your circumstances.

Materials must be submitted in a single pdf file in the following order: Cover page, concept paper, and prior submission update (if applicable).

The pdf document should be titled as follows: Keck_InvestigatorSurname_Investigator first name. For example: Keck_Doe_Jane.pdf.

Proposals must be submitted by **5:00 PM on Friday, May 23, 2025** to Kaitlyn Hagarty at kaitlyn.hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu. If you have any questions, please contact Kaitlyn Hagarty at Kaitlyn.Hagarty@pennmedicine.upenn.edu.