



Launching Research Faculty Leadership Development Programs

The Six-Step Guide to Designing Research-Specific
Leadership Initiatives

University Research Forum

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This publication is only the beginning of our work to assist partners in advancing their research enterprise. Recognizing that ideas seldom speak for themselves, our ambition is to work actively with partners of the University Research Forum to decide which practices are most relevant for your organization, to accelerate consensus among key constituencies, and to save implementation time.

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Executive Summary

The Case for Investing in Research Leadership Training

Chief Research Officers (CROs) have traditionally relied on recommendations from faculty and deans—as well as personal networks—to identify the best candidates to lead research teams. As competition for sponsored research projects continues to grow, leadership has become an increasingly significant factor in team success. As a result, CROs have learned that strong research abilities do not always translate into strong leadership.

The lack of strong research leadership is in large part due to faculty never having been formally trained to lead research teams, either in their graduate training or professional careers. Although general faculty leadership trainings exist, few are designed to specifically address the competencies required to lead large and complex research projects.

Existing Faculty Development Programs



Faculty Orientation

Early-career faculty

- ✘ Primarily focuses on creating new faculty citizens rather than research leaders



Department Chair Training

Mid-career faculty

- ✘ Does not teach management skills in context of a lab



Generic Leadership Development Training

All faculty

- ✘ Does not cover lab management or research development

How to Launch a Research Faculty Leadership Program

This publication helps CROs launch a research faculty leadership program. The first section provides deeper context into the evolution of research leadership and the need for specific training. The second section details a six-step process to launch a program and highlights institutional case profiles.

Six Steps to Launching Research Faculty Leadership Development Programs

- 1. Define scope of competency areas**
Skills and competencies your program address
- 2. Assess institutional networks and resources**
Campus resources, expertise, and networks that support your programming efforts
- 3. Build program agenda**
Specific topics and activities that align with the defined program competency areas
- 4. Design application process**
Transparent and equitable selection process with clearly defined eligibility criteria
- 5. Select program participants**
Participants that reflect a broad array of academic disciplines and research terrains
- 6. Evaluate and report**
Participant feedback and metrics that measure program effectiveness

Introduction

Case for Research Leadership

As sponsored research funding has become increasingly more competitive, there is a growing recognition that strong faculty leadership is a critical factor for the success of research teams. Chief Research Officers have traditionally relied on recommendations to identify the best researchers for leadership roles. But the growing demands on these individuals has exposed that strong research abilities do not always translate into strong leadership and that their traditional means of leader identification seldom yield a qualified candidate.

Lack of Leadership Training

In a survey of 3,200 scientists around the world, faculty researchers of all ranks identified “leadership skills” as a critical factor in the management of large research teams and the quality of science produced by that team. According to the data, there is a gap in the perception of leadership between junior and senior researchers, where the former feel unsupported in their development as scientists while the latter are not sure how to manage mentoring relationships in addition to conducting the scientific work.

Principal investigators (PIs) have described feeling overwhelmed and underprepared to lead scientific research teams. When asked how institutions could best support their leadership development, nearly half of PIs identified a need for research-specific leadership training. The study concluded that a lack of research leadership training is a strong contributor to poor research productivity, unhealthy faculty relationships, and subpar lab culture.



47%

Percent of principal investigators who report wanting management training



70%

Percent of junior researchers who seek better-trained PIs

“Institutions need to step up their provisions of effective resources for lab leaders and professional development for emerging researchers. They should ‘own’ the research environments they are providing.”

C.K Gunsalus – Director of the National Center for Professional and Research Ethics

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Introduction (cont.)

Current State of Leadership Programs

The lack of formalized research leadership training is due in large part to gaps in graduate, doctoral, and postdoctoral education and training programs. Although general faculty leadership trainings exist, few are designed to specifically address the competencies required to lead large and complex research projects and teams.

Three Common Leadership Training Programs



Faculty Orientation

Early-career faculty

- ✓ Covers many diverse topics:
 - Teaching
 - Service
 - Research
 - Campus logistics

- ✗ Primarily focuses on creating new faculty citizens rather than research leaders



Department Chair Training

Mid-career faculty

- ✓ Focuses on resource and people management
- ✓ Teaches the “business” of departments:
 - Assigning duties
 - Hiring
 - University policies

- ✗ Does not teach management skills in context of a lab



Generic Leadership Development Training

All faculty

- ✓ Identifies leadership approaches
- ✓ Focuses on conflict management and personality types

- ✗ Does not cover lab management or research development

In addition to lacking fundamental training in research leadership, the types of roles faculty hold within research continue to expand. The skills required to effectively lead research teams have grown to encompass new competency areas as well as technical and interpersonal skills that have traditionally not been expected of research leaders.

Traditional Research Leadership Skills



- Team assembly
- Group dynamic management
- Communication
- Compliance
- Research ethics
- Vision setting and accountability
- Consensus building

Added Research Leadership Skills



- Budget and funding strategy
- Complex proposal development
- Diversity and inclusion
- University stakeholder management
- Non-university stakeholder management
- Policy analysis
- Science communication
- Mentorship

Introduction (cont.)

Benefits to the Research Mission

By addressing these gaps in faculty training, CROs can support individual faculty career development as well as the broader success of their research mission. Developing research-specific leadership programs allows CROs to focus on the competencies that are unique to roles in research labs at their respective campuses and to each campus's unique faculty culture.

Benefits to Research Faculty



Support research team productivity



Improve research administration effectiveness



Boost faculty morale



Promote healthy research lab culture



Provide faculty professional development

Brief Overview

This publication helps CROs take the initial steps in launching research faculty leadership programs. The following section expands on a six-step process to design a program, profiling institutions with unique initiatives for each corresponding step. Following the process below, institutions can build a training program that contributes to the development of faculty skills and the advancement of university research.

Six Steps to Launching Research Faculty Leadership Development Programs

- 1. Define scope of competency areas**
Skills and competencies that program addresses
- 2. Assess institutional networks and resources**
Campus resources, expertise, and networks that support programming efforts
- 3. Build program agenda**
Specific topics and activities that align with the defined program competency areas
- 4. Design application process**
Transparent and equitable selection process with clearly defined eligibility criteria
- 5. Select program participants**
Participants that reflect a broad array of academic disciplines and research terrains
- 6. Evaluate and report**
Participant feedback and metrics that measure program effectiveness

1. Define Scope of Competency Areas

Step Overview

Clearly define the competency areas and specific skills that faculty will develop in the program.

Guidance

Defining specific competencies is the initial step in developing a research faculty leadership program. Competencies should be specific and outcomes-focused as these will serve as the foundation for the program structure, sequence, and design. As sponsored research projects have grown to be more complex and comprehensive, researchers are being required to exercise new skills that were traditionally not expected of faculty. The graphic below illustrates how research leadership has evolved to encompass a more labor-intensive skill set.

Traditional Research Leadership Skills



- Team assembly
- Group dynamic management
- Communication
- Compliance
- Research ethics
- Vision setting and accountability
- Consensus building

Added Research Leadership Skills



- Budget and funding strategy
- Complex proposal development
- Diversity and inclusion
- University stakeholder management
- Non-university stakeholder management
- Policy analysis
- Science communication
- Mentorship

In addition to these research-specific skills, institutions should prioritize competencies that are not addressed by existing programs. The table below provides overviews of the competencies and skills of five faculty research leadership programs. Each of the profiles will be expanded upon in the subsequent steps of this guide.

Profiled Institutions

Institution	Program	Defined Competencies
Purdue University	Faculty Leadership Academy for Interdisciplinary Research (FLAIR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops research-specific skills needed to lead interdisciplinary research teams • Focuses on complex proposal development, team management, networking, and resource education
University of Colorado Boulder	Research & Innovation Office (RIO) Faculty Fellows Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports faculty to lead large impact research • Focuses on research leadership, communication, collaboration, and systems thinking
North Carolina State University	Research Leadership Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages research mentorship across disciplines • Focuses on advancing multidisciplinary networking
Duke University	Duke Clinical Leadership Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepens faculty awareness of healthcare operations • Builds relationships between faculty and Duke Health leadership
University of California, San Francisco	Scientific Leadership & Management Life Skills Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides scientific management skills training for academic research environments • Targets post-doctoral students and junior researchers

2. Assess Institutional Networks and Resources

Step Overview

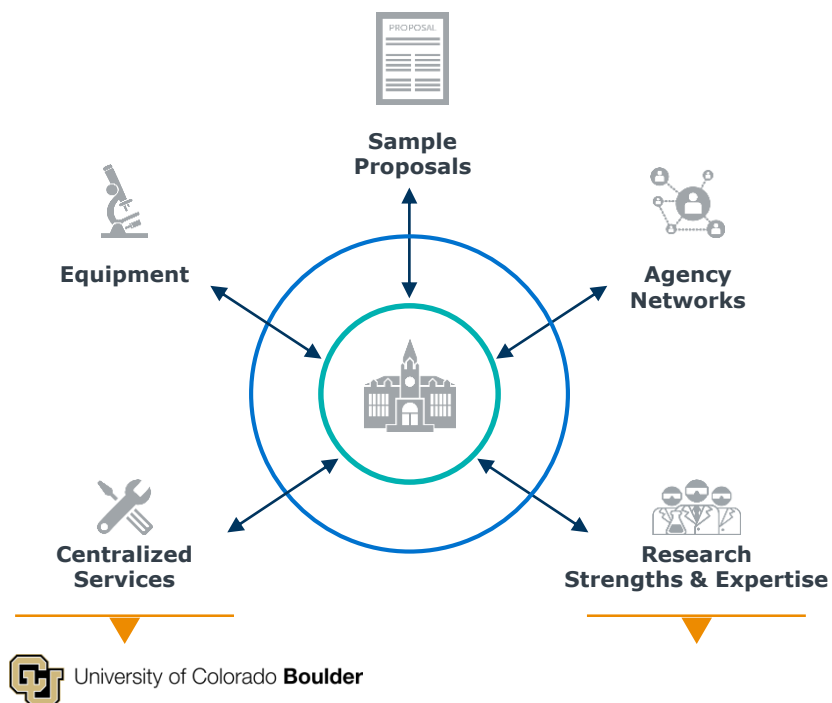
Consider what resources, faculty expertise, and networks exist on campus that can support programming efforts.

Guidance

The next step in designing a research leadership program is to assess the institutional networks, expertise, and resources on campus that can be made available to research leaders. Often, faculty are unaware of the various services available due to institutional siloes and lack of networks.

Assisting faculty in building relationships across the institution and gaining access to existing resources allows them to leverage these tools when leading research teams. Additionally, working with institutional partners on components of programming can minimize duplicative efforts and streamline the services available on campus. The graphic below highlights various institutional resources that can be leveraged to build faculty leadership skills and networks.

Institutional Networks and Resources



Research & Innovation Office Faculty Fellows Program

- Program collaborates with University Strategic Relations and Communications units
- Faculty develop websites and professional videos for large impact research initiatives
- Campus communication experts and journalists help develop high-impact communications on local, national, and international levels

Duke Clinical Leadership Program

- Program leverages Duke's strong medical research community and disciplinary faculty experts
- Junior faculty collaborate on sponsored research projects targeting medical research funding
- Leadership program established by the School of Medicine Office for Faculty, Chancellors, leadership of the Duke Health System, and the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Business

3. Build Program Agenda

Step Overview

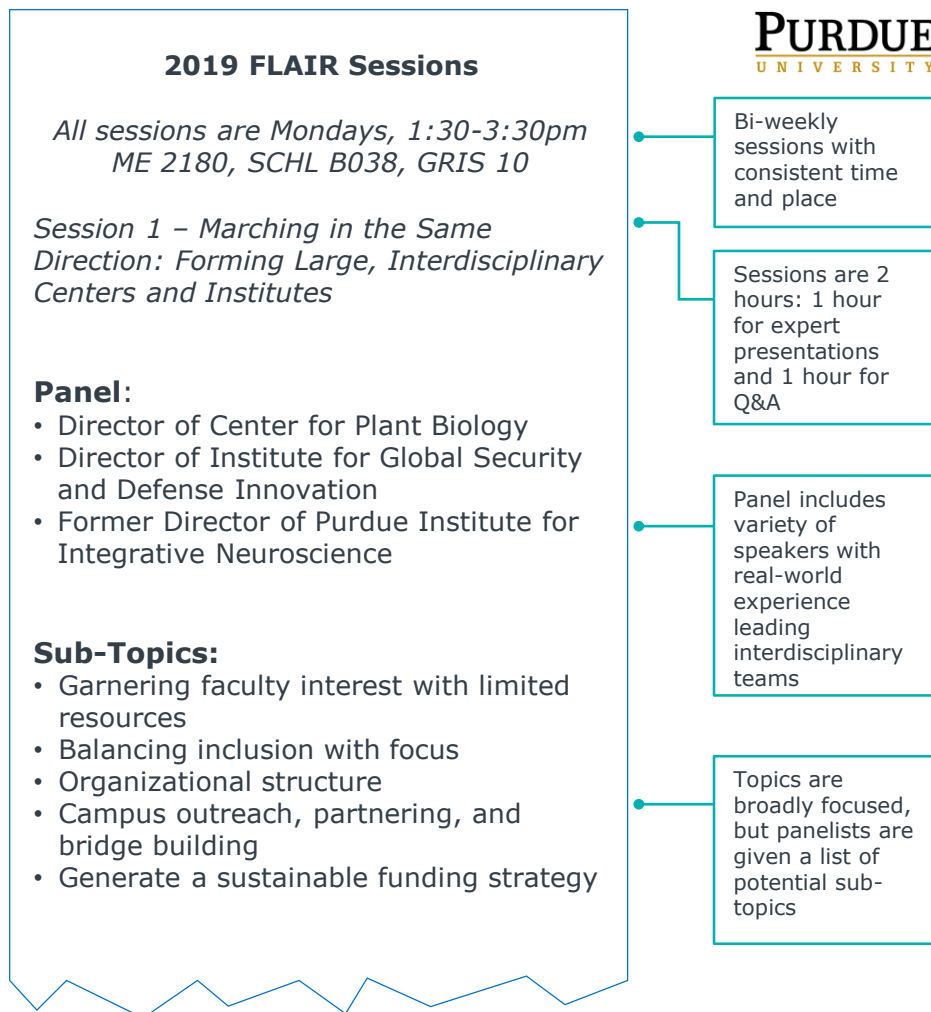
Design a program with specific topics and activities in alignment with the defined competency areas.

Guidance

The program agenda is an opportunity to creatively construct an experience for faculty that fosters their learning and development. Building an agenda requires paying close attention to logistical details including potential collaborator outreach, room reservations, schedule management, and any associated costs. To ensure the effectiveness of the program, the structure and content of the agenda must address the defined competency areas and skills.

Purdue’s Faculty Leadership Academy for Interdisciplinary Research (FLAIR)

Purdue’s FLAIR program is an example of research leadership program designed specifically to build foundational leadership skills within a research context. Through bi-weekly sessions, the program focuses on the skills needed to lead large and complex research teams—such as how to diagnose complex RFPs, build internal coalitions, and execute on outreach and engagement requirements. The sample agenda below illustrates the specificity of each session: highlighting topic, expert panelists, and learning objectives.



4. Design Application Process

Step Overview

Create a transparent and equitable selection process with clearly defined eligibility criteria.

Guidance

The next step in developing a research leadership program is to design an application process that addresses the intended learning objectives and demographic of faculty. Eligibility criteria should ensure accessibility to the faculty in need of the training. Given existing faculty workloads and capacity, the process should be simple and streamlined to avoid creating additional barriers to participation. A variety of elements can be added in an application such as demographic information, faculty CVs, letters of recommendation, statements of intent, and research portfolios.

The application is an opportunity to promote the leadership program as well as gauge the training needs and interests of faculty. The Duke Clinical Leadership Program was established to develop relevant clinical leadership skills for faculty and build collegiality among Duke Health's next generation of faculty leaders. To attract and select qualified participants, the application process requires a nomination from senior faculty leaders or administrators, demonstration of relevant research activity, and personal statements articulating the applicant's philosophies of clinical leadership. The graphic below illustrates the elements of the application process.

Duke's Clinical Leadership Program Application Requirements



Faculty CV and Biosketch

Faculty must demonstrate previous research activity to establish credibility and qualification for program



Short Essay Responses

Applicants must provide responses to short essay questions highlighting their intent and visions for research



Leadership Philosophy

Faculty must explain their approach to teamwork and challenges faced in a research environment



Letter of Nomination

Applicants must receive letters of nomination from a department chair/dean, medical division chief, or equivalent leadership that can speak to their academic career



Commitment

Participants must pledge commitment to all program requirements including attending sessions, class work and long-term projects

5. Select Program Participants

Step Overview

Select program participants that reflect a broad array of academic disciplines and research terrains.

Guidance

Program participants should be selected by considering program objectives, available capacity and resources, as well as the broader university mission and vision of research. For example, if an institution is expanding its investment in key research terrains, the program should select participants from disciplines that could lead those efforts. Other criteria to consider when selecting participants include academic disciplinary background, research tenure and skills, and upcoming research initiatives and opportunities.

Participant selection is an opportunity to ensure equitable support of researchers across the university's academic disciplines from a central institutional office. Units have varying capacities to support faculty leadership on a disciplinary level, so centralized programming efforts can provide opportunities for researchers that might not receive support elsewhere. The profiled institutions below have tailored the selection criteria of targeted participants to align with the broader objectives of the research leadership program.

Participant Selection of Profiled Programs



1



Scientific Leadership & Management Life Skills Course

- Post-doctoral students and junior researchers
- Priority given to applicants with academic or industry job offers in need of training before graduating



2



Research & Innovation Office (RIO) Faculty Fellows Program

- Early-mid career faculty
- 13-15 person cohorts representing a wide range of academic disciplines



3



Research Leadership Academy

- Highly active faculty researchers
- Inducts 4-6 faculty into academy across academic colleges

Source: North Carolina State University, [Research Leadership Academy](#); University of California San Francisco, [Scientific Leadership & Management Life Skills Course](#); University of Colorado Boulder, [Research & Innovation Office \(RIO\) Faculty Fellows Program](#)

6. Evaluate and Report

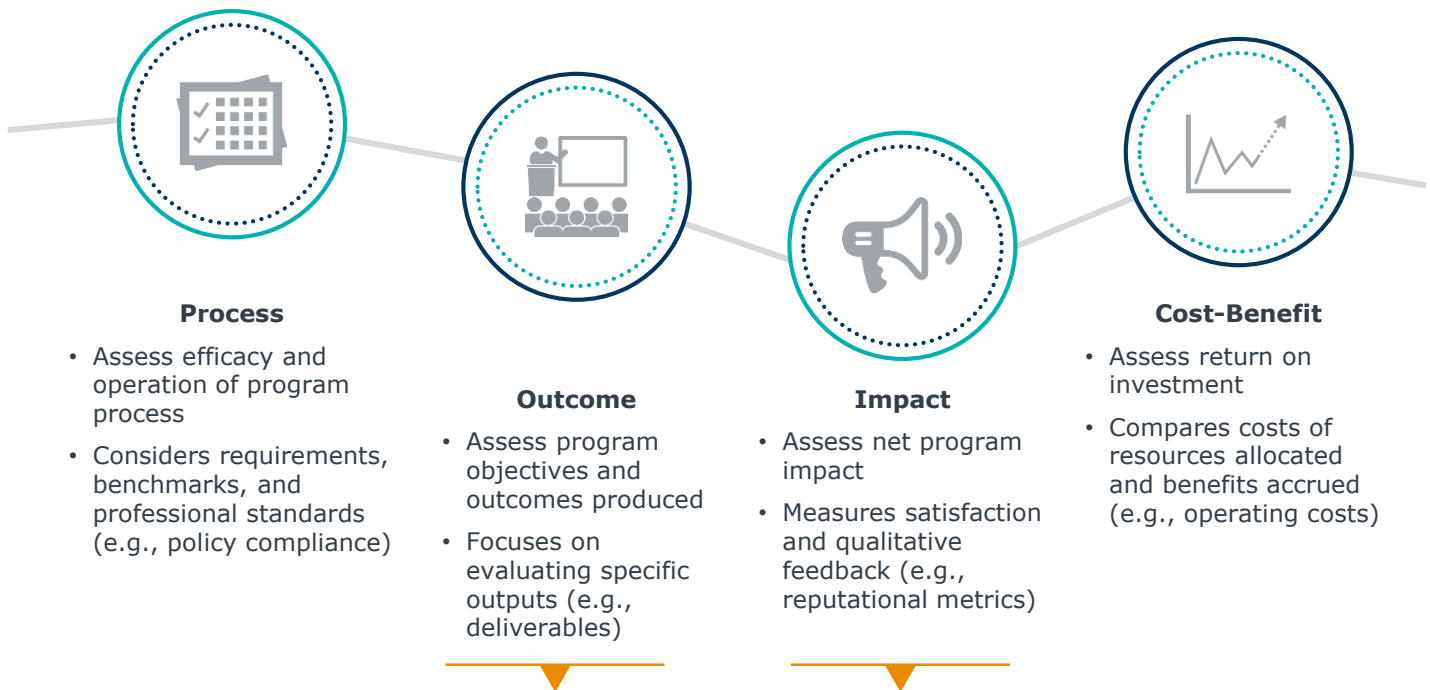
Step Overview

Collect participant feedback and provide documentation on program assessment and evaluations.

Guidance

Research leaders must determine how to evaluate program efficacy before launch. Solicit feedback from all stakeholders engaged within the program including faculty participants (applied and selected), collaborating campus partners, and research office staff who assisted in the execution of the program. Proactive and intentionally designed evaluations can assist in identifying successes and areas of improvement for future iterations of the program. Additionally, collected metrics and testimonies can serve as justifications for continued or expanded support from faculty, campus partners, and executive leadership. The graphic below illustrates four types of evaluation and two profiled institutions that can be used to assess and report the various components of the research faculty leadership development program.

Program Evaluation Measures



RIO Faculty Fellows Program

- Upon completion of the program, RIO faculty fellows participate in CU Boulder’s annual “Research & Innovation” showcase week
- Each fellow is required to present a [5 minute TED-style talk](#) overviewing research projects and highlighting communication materials developed throughout the program



Purdue FLAIR Program

80% Average participant attendance per session

“I am very thankful for the time the speakers gave – they were all honest about the hurdles they faced to success.”

“I learned about the importance of collaborators. Specifically, how to keep them informed, provide transparent information, and acknowledge them.”

— Testimonies of 2018 Participants

Source: University of Colorado Boulder, [Research & Innovation Office \(RIO\) Faculty Fellows Program](#); Purdue University, [Faculty Leadership Academy for Interdisciplinary Research Program](#)



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