2025-2026
Fred J. Kelly Fund
Request for Applications (RFA)

Application Deadline:
Funding applications must be submitted by Friday, October 31, 2025, 5 p.m. Central Time via the NuRamp website.

Introduction: The University of Nebraska System, under the will of Mabel Elizabeth Kelly, holds funds to honor her husband Fred J. Kelly to be used "to foster research looking to the improvement of teaching in the University." Through the Kelly fund, the NU System invites proposals that support our Odyssey to the Extraordinary priorities of Inspiring all Future Learners, Transforming the Learning Environment, and/or Curriculum Innovation and Alignment. **The 2026 funding opportunity is designed to facilitate research on integrating AI in courses—spanning effectiveness, ethics, pedagogy, and student experience.**[1] Proposals must request funds for research that hopes to improve teaching by making significant, transformative changes to the design, pedagogy, learning materials, or special supports associated with existing courses. The proposed project may involve one faculty member or a team; Co-PIs may be from the same campus or skills might be leveraged by using expertise from faculty on other campuses. No funding can be awarded to those outside the NU System. If the PI does not have research experience, it is highly recommended an experienced Co-PI or research mentor be included in the proposal. Proposals related to general education or discipline-based courses will be considered.

Grant Descriptions:[2]

Awards will be for up to $75,000 total for two or three years, with an expectation that the campus, college, and/or department provide an additional $25,000 for a total of $100,000. Proposals impacting larger numbers of students will be given priority.

General Eligibility (all grant types): Assistant, Associate, or Full Professors (including Professors of Practice) with instructional apportionments employed by any University of Nebraska campus are eligible to submit funding applications as the PI and participate as Co-PIs. Faculty without instructional apportionments (typically those with research professor titles) are eligible to serve as Co-PIs. Faculty may serve as the lead PI on one grant; there is no limit on participation as Co-PIs.

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[1] Examples could include (but are not limited to) research utilizing AI to improve student performance, retention, critical thinking, engagement, or satisfaction; AI influence on academic integrity; faculty changes or improvements in teaching, assessment writing, or student satisfaction through the use of AI.

[2] The total award budget for a single year of program described in this RFA will be up to $400,000. All awards are subject to funding availability, eligibility, and determinations of application suitability. It is anticipated that award notifications will be available prior to December 1, 2025. Funding will commence on January 1, 2026.

Application Format and Content: Application narratives (*including* references, tables, and figures) must not exceed the page limits. Font size must be 12 points or larger and margins must be at least one inch on all four sides. A title or signature page is not required. Proposals will only be accepted when submitted through the NuRamp website. In addition, by submitting (or administratively approving) an application, each campus certifies that named PIs, Co-PIs, and the campus itself agrees to waive all rights of access to the identity of any person who may conduct internal or external peer evaluations of their application. Each application shall have the following components:

Online text entry for (not counted in page count):

- Application Title
- Course(s) Being Studied
- PI Contact Information
- Co-PI(s)

- Abstract/Summary (not to exceed 300 words)
- Number of course AY enrollments (all sections)
- Total Funds Requested and source of cost-share
- Budget
- (Up to) Five primary aims/goals/objectives

Project Description/Narrative (uploaded as a PDF document)
Eight-page maximum (including all references, tables, and figures), with the following elements:
- **Long-Term Objectives and Impact(s):** Clearly state the research question(s) to be addressed
- **Significance, Innovation, and Impacts*:* Describe the *significance* of addressing the research goals (why the course is important to student success and the number of students potentially impacted), why the proposal represents a *conceptual innovation* and/or an *innovative approach*, and how anticipated achievements will lead to potential positive *impact*.
- **Specific Aims and Approach:** Clearly describe the research question(s), hypotheses to be tested, and goals to be achieved if the proposed grant is funded. Describe the approach (work plan) to be used to achieve these goals/aims (including timeline for completion of key project milestones).
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly describe the *role(s)*, *responsibilities*, *unique expertise*, and *expectations* for the PI and any Co-PI(s). Describe how each PI's/Co-PI's expertise is ideally suited to address the specific aims and research questions described in the application.

Budget
Complete the online budget and upload a budget justification as a PDF file. Personnel expenses aggregated on the budget form must be justified individually.
- F&A costs are not allowed; cost-share source(s) must be listed and detailed.
- Allowable expenses include support for undergraduate students and stipends for graduate research assistants (GRA), publication costs, course materials, or equipment. Tuition remission and health insurance for GRAs are allowable expenses. Funds from this program must not be used for construction, renovation, administrative assistance, or release time for teaching.

- Academic year salaries for PIs and Co-PIs are <u>not</u> allowable expenses. Summer salary expenses are allowed, but no salary savings can be accrued.
- PI and Co-PI salary and/or staff time <u>may</u> be considered as part of the cost sharing if appropriate and thoroughly justified, but may not exceed $10,000.

Project Goals

Use the online form to list up to five primary goals/objectives (specific aims) of your proposed research. These should match the specific aims/activities/actions listed in your uploaded project narrative. If you have fewer than five objectives/goals/specific aims, leave the extra fields blank. <u>This section is not available to external or internal reviewers; this information is used to pre-populate all post-award reports</u>.

PI and Co-PI CVs

Upload CVs for each PI/Co-PI as a single PDF. The PI's CV should be first. Follow a current format acceptable to a federal funding agency or foundation; the same format must be used for all CVs.

General Criteria for Evaluation: Applications will first be screened to determine if all RFA guidelines have been met, including (but not limited to) general eligibility, formatting, and budget amounts. Applications that meet all general criteria will be further evaluated as shown below.

Each application will be reviewed using a 100-point scale as follows:
a) Justification/description of research significance, innovation, and potential student impact (60 points);
b) Approach/work plan that will allow key hypotheses to be measured (25 points);
c) Alignment of PI/Co-PI roles with documented expertise in the disciplines and areas being researched (10 points); and
d) Budget adequate to support the plan of work; realistic and achievable timeline (5 points).

Reviewers also will be asked to provide an evaluative summary* and rank all proposals. Final funding decisions will be made by the Vice Provost and the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Post Award Management, Obligations, and Reporting Requirements: PIs will be required to submit a brief project initiation report 90 days after the award start date. During the award period, programmatic progress and detailed financial reports will be due 30 days after each award anniversary. A final report will be due 60 days following the award's end date. Satisfactory progress and adherence to award conditions will be required for access to current and future award funds from the University of Nebraska. This program is administered by the University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.[3]

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* Reviewers provide written comments and group applications into three categories (<u>Exemplary: Fund if resources allow</u>, <u>Very Good: Consider for funding</u>, <u>Needs Improvement/Inadequate: Do not fund</u>).

[3] Questions regarding the RFA and award management should be sent by email to: Kendra Schmid, kendraschmid@nebraska.edu.