UF | IFAS Research
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SEED FUNDING

NATURAL RESOURCES

AGRICULTURE

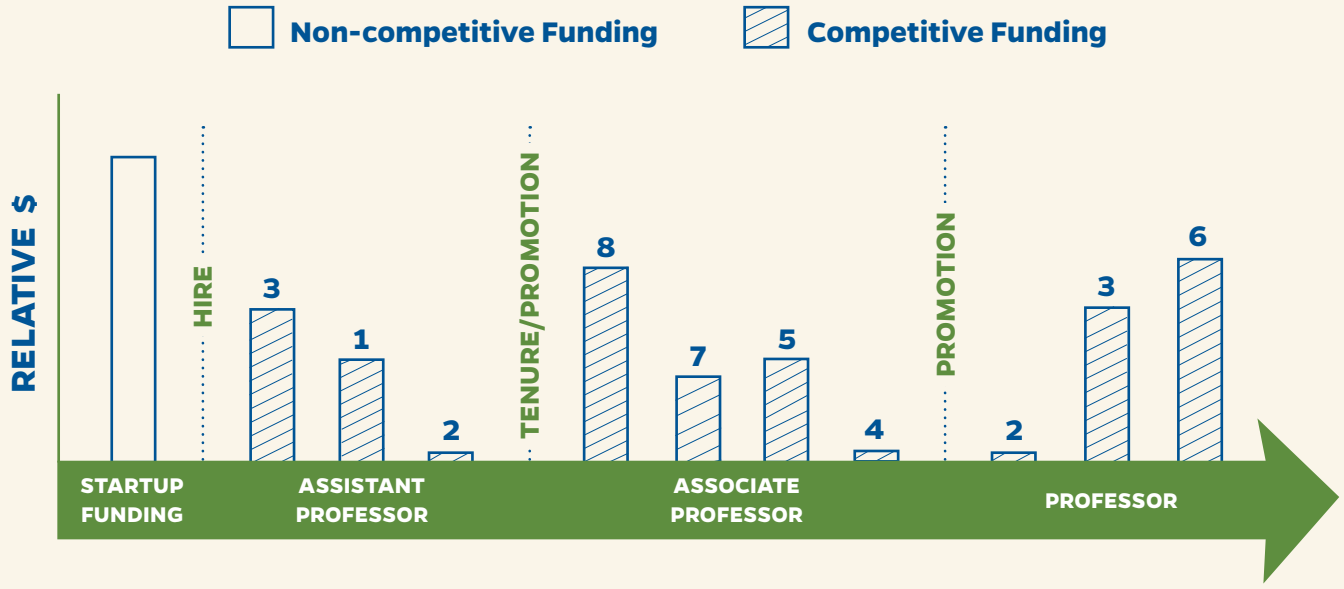
HUMAN SYSTEMS

Value proposition for faculty:

- **Builds success in grantwriting**
- **Supports team science**
- **High funding rates (typically 40-50%)**
- **Drives innovation around strategic initiatives**
- **Reflects a commitment to long-term support of faculty success**

Our Investments Drive Innovation at All Career Stages

Example Career Path Below



UF/IFAS-DRIVEN PROGRAMS

1. **Archer Early Career Seed Grants** (for assistant professors only)
2. **Undergraduate Research Internships**
3. **Equipment & Infrastructure Awards**
4. **Travel Awards for Research Grant EnhancemenT (TARGET)**
5. **DeLuca Preserve/Forest Systems Jumpstart Awards**
6. **Support for Emerging Enterprise Development Integration Teams (SEEDIT)**
7. **Launching Innovative Faculty Teams in AI (LIFT AI)**

VPR-Driven Program

8. **Research Opportunity Seed Fund**

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forests

MDPI

Communication

Seed Funds Leverage External Awards for Research in Natural Resources and Agricultural Systems

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Abstract: In the United States, "seed fund" programs in biomedical fields have been reported to enhance faculty success in securing federal awards. Seed funds are relatively small internal grants that are allocated by universities to their faculty to invigorate research, in anticipation that they will lead to larger benefits—these benefits could be the creation of stronger teams that lead to larger external grants and/or more impactful publications. We hypothesized that a seed funding approach for research on natural resources and agricultural systems, including forest systems, may have similar benefits. Here, we report that seed funding supported faculty development in numerous ways, including leveraging to generate external competitive awards. For each dollar of institutional investment in each of the three seed funding programs, faculty acquired $6, >$50, and $4.50, respectively, in external funding that was leveraged within three years of the seed fund award date. Notably, the majority of the leveraged funding was from federal granting agencies through competitive programs. Federal competitive awards are important elements of tenure and promotion dossiers, as they reflect success in acquiring grants that are difficult to obtain, thus providing evidence of research excellence. We speculate that the seed fund proposal review process prepared faculty for competitive awards. Finally, we suggest best management practices for the implementation of seed funding to support teams of faculty.

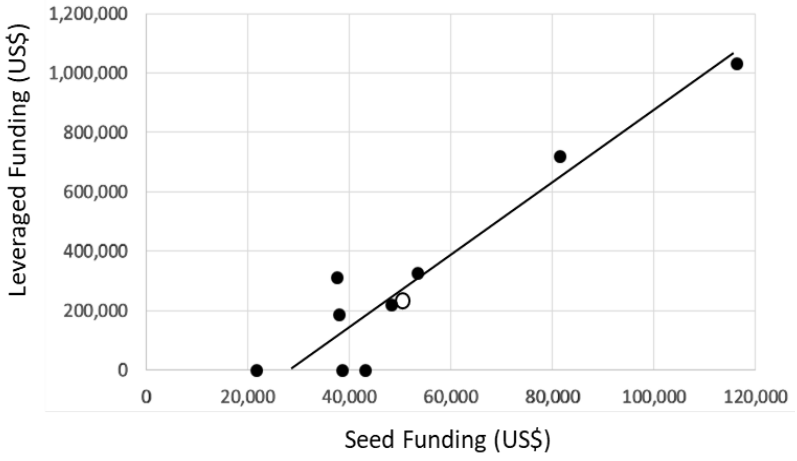

Figure 1. Positive correlation between seed funding (*x*-axis) and leveraged external awards (*y*-axis) in the first program (solid circles) and the third program (open circle). The best fit regression line is shown, with the x-intercept representing the break-even point for positive leveraging.