

SRC Office: Enabling and Facilitating the Scientific Research at IIT Hyderabad



KID: 20220401

As the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IITH) celebrates its crystal jubilee this year, the sponsored research & consultancy (SRC) office takes pride in crossing the milestone of facilitating 2000+ research projects of our faculty members with a total funding of ~700 crores.

Scientific & industrial research has always been at the forefront of the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad since its inception. As IITH stands for Inventing & Innovating in Technology for Humanity, it may be ascertained without a doubt that while inventions come from research, it is research that leads to innovations.

As a Dean (SRC), in little more than four months' time, we have taken several measures to facilitate the research and researchers at IIT Hyderabad. From day one, our focus has not only been on streamlining the processes to enable the whole R&D ecosystem but also on new initiatives to create a vibrant research environment.

First and foremost, a new Research Advisory Committee comprising the representatives of all departments was constituted with the aim to contribute with suggestions for adopting good practices, coming up with new ideas and actionable recommendations for the development and smooth function of the SRC Office and taking the R&D at IITH to next higher level. We have set up an SRC help desk for the speedy redressal of all queries in a time-bound manner.

To understand the issues, improve the services and educate on the project management guidelines in view of the GoI mandates, we organized a few faculty connect sessions in the month of November and December. As an ad-hoc measure to enable and expedite the equipment purchase, Institute provided up to 50% support for paying the differential amount due to the withdrawal of GST exemption by the Government.

For the very first time, the SRC office has organized a Research Grant writing workshop for 30 young faculty of the Institute who joined in the last year or so. We hope to continue this at least once a year for all newly joined faculty to help them in writing strong research proposals with a success rate. In December 2022, we not only approved 21 new seed grant projects but also conducted a review of the ongoing/recently completed seed grant projects. This review process was introduced first time, more to provide specific inputs to improve the outcomes and also to understand any difficulties, young colleagues are facing.

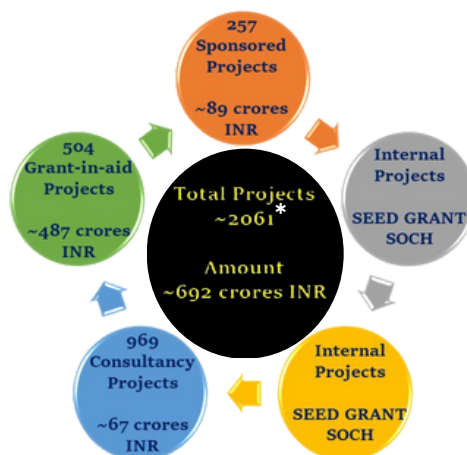
Further, as an extraordinary step, we have made a provision to allow a negative balance in the Research & Development Fund of an individual faculty and settle the same in that financial year as per the receipt of funds. This will be a great enabler for the cases where the project's progress is compromised due to long delays in the receipt of funds from the various funding agencies.

We are also excited to learn that our Director has inked an MoU with the DRDO in the august presence of Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh Ji in October 2022 to set up Defense Industry-Academia (DIA) Centre of Excellence. This DIA-COE will be an important milestone not only to strengthen our R&D ecosystem but also to develop cutting-edge technologies jointly with DRDO for our defense sector to achieve the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister towards Aatma Nirbhar Bharat. We also envisage a few more CoEs in near future in the research area of strategic and national importance.

Some of the immediate future plans for the SRC office include a new scheme for the summer internships named Summer Undergraduate Research Exposure (SURE) in which 150 UG internships will be offered to promote undergraduate research and to timely nurture potential PhD candidates. As a Dean (SRC), one of my major focuses is also on the maintenance and accessibility of R&D infrastructure for all. A committee has been constituted in this regard which is also coordinating with the I-STEM team at the National level.

Having said so, there are several challenges ahead for the SRC office due to recent changes in the funds' flow procedures from the Government. As this year was a transition from the old practice to new Zero balance subsidiary accounts and fund flow through Central nodal agencies, there have been unprecedented delays in the release of funds and return of the unspent balance in the mid of the financial year. To minimize the delay in preparing the final UCs with more accuracy, we are also preparing interim UCs till December 31, 2022, for all the projects. We also believe that a little cooperation from all the stakeholders in terms of following GFR and other Institute guidelines while managing their projects will ease the pressure on the system to benefit one and all.

I sign off here on a positive note. As Aristotle said, "Well begun is half done" and so is true for IITH as well. In this crystal anniversary time for IITH, let's contribute to realizing the dream of IITH becoming a leader in scientific research.



Statistical Summary of Sponsored Research & Consultancy projects at IIT Hyderabad
* Since Inception

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