UCDAVIS
VENTURE CATALYST

Part of Innovation and Economic Development Office

UC Davis Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR) 2026 Proof-of-Concept Grant Program: Autumn Cohort

The UC President's Entrepreneurship Network Council has developed the UC Proof of Concept Program with the goals to identify promising inventions for commercialization at each campus and to provide early-stage support for their development. At UC Davis, the Autumn cohort of the **Science Translation and Innovative Research (STAIR) Grant Program** - now in its third year under the direction of Venture Catalyst - serves as part of this initiative. This program supports innovative research projects that have the potential to translate groundbreaking ideas into viable solutions and commercial applications.

The **STAIR grant program is specifically designed to promote the commercialization of innovative research** by supporting projects with strong potential for real-world application. The objective of this cycle is to provide seed funding for early-stage research projects, enabling researchers to validate their concepts and explore their market potential.

Early-stage technologies from university research are often perceived as too uncertain or too risky to attract funding or partners to translate into commercial products or services. The lack of accessible funding creates a gap between basic research and early-stage commercialization efforts. The STAIR Grant helps bridge this gap by providing funding and resources to translate basic UC Davis research with commercial potential by demonstrating proof-of-concept and establishing market viability, thus de-risking the innovation. The STAIR Grant program will support new and innovative ideas and enable their transformation into impactful business ventures or make the funded projects attractive for licensing to industry and investors.

The ultimate objective of the program is to develop technologies that attract entrepreneurs, industry, and investors willing to commercialize UC Davis technologies, resulting in societal and economic impacts aligned with our Land Grant status.

Successful projects will advance UC Davis technologies towards commercialization by achieving specific research and development milestones. Outcomes that might be enabled by STAIR Grant funding include, but are not limited to:

- Generating translational data or research results to create more robust foundational intellectual property (IP), therefore strengthening patent claims.
- Testing commercial and market feasibility.
- Building a working prototype or second iteration prototype to prepare for commercialization.
- Demonstrating scale-up development potential that would be compelling to external partners.
- Producing results that support more competitive Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant applications and/or hitting a technical de-risking milestone that would make the technology more appealing to partners or investors.

Key features of the STAIR Program include: 1) targeted funding to bridge the gap between basic research and early-stage commercialization efforts, 2) project work conducted over a 12-month period, 3) a Review Committee consisting of industry representatives with corporate, investor, and entrepreneurial expertise, 4) feedback and guidance on commercialization from members of the Review Committee and the Venture Catalyst team, and 5) structured entrepreneurial training.

A key to achieving translational impact is mentoring provided by industry experts to STAIR Grant awardees and finalists. Feedback from industry experts through the review and mentoring processes has been invaluable to the program and to UC Davis researchers as they design and implement research plans to increase the commercial potential of UC Davis technology.

To encourage a broad range of translational opportunities across the UC Davis research community, each Principal Investigator (PI), as well as any of their collaborators may receive **no more than two STAIR awards for the same project concept over time**. While proposals that reflect different development strategies or milestones may be submitted in subsequent cycles, the underlying technology or core innovation must demonstrate significant differentiation to be considered a new project concept. Distinct proposals from the same research group will be evaluated on their own merit, provided they present clear and independent commercialization objectives.

In addition to enabling outcomes such as those listed above, the program also helps develop an innovative and entrepreneurial culture that extends the benefits of UC Davis research activities beyond the boundaries of the university.

How to Apply

For more information and application instructions, visit the Venture Catalyst proof-of-concept programs website at: https://venturecatalyst.ucdavis.edu/stair. **The application deadline is Monday, Sep 28, 2026, at 11:59 pm PDT.** You can email any questions you have to stairgrant@ucdavis.edu or arangan@ucdavis.edu.