

Dear Colleagues,

At the start of a new academic year, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your contributions to raising our institution's research impact and visibility during this past year, and to provide you with a brief update.

We have ended a very successful year of activities, whether working on projects with undergraduate or graduate students, publishing exciting new research results, developing proposals, managing awards, or patenting and licensing new technologies.

As you might have seen in the recent [Herd article](#), we ended a record year in terms of research funding, with **\$56.2M in new award increments**, \$31.7M in expenditures, and a record year in the number of issued patents (20 patents). The goals and strategies we developed in our strategic plan have come to fruition because we have been providing our faculty, students, and research staff with the support that is required to achieve such ambitious goals. These strategies include the further development of our [Office of Sponsored Programs](#), an enhancement of capacity in the [Office of Technology Commercialization](#), our new research development capabilities through the [Research Solutions Institute](#), the development of new research facilities and core centers like [Practice Point](#), [LEAP](#) and the development of the technical staff; they further include new partnerships with universities, research labs, corporations, and state agencies and, last but not least, the hiring of excellent faculty in strategic areas. We are proud to have achieved over 140% increase in funding from the FY16 level.

While the pandemic has slowed down some of the on-campus research in the past four months, research activities that could have been done [remotely have continued](#). In addition, we have had a record number of proposal submissions in May and June, totaling over 120 proposals. I would like to thank our colleagues in the [Office of Sponsored Programs](#) for providing crucial assistance in developing, reviewing, submitting these proposals, negotiating awards, issuing subawards, and ensuring that we are in compliance with a myriad of regulations. I would also like to thank our team of emergency responders who have maintained our research facilities during the campus closure.

It is too early to tell what FY21 will look like; however the start of the new fiscal year has already brought us \$5.4M in award increments. I would also like to thank the [Sponsored Programs Accounting](#) office staff for their dedicated help in processing awards, setting up accounts, and helping our faculty manage these record numbers of awards.

The reopening of on-campus research has been deliberate, and we have put every effort into balancing the need for continuing our research work with the need for doing this safely and protecting our community (see last week's [Herd article](#)). As we are moving into Phase 4, faculty are continuing to submit new lab reopening plans and we have introduced a separate process for adding new personnel to the already reopened labs. I would like to thank the department heads, EHS (Environmental and Health Safety), the CERT research subcommittee, and the many colleagues in IT, Facilities, General Counsel's Office, and IRB who spent many hours daily to make this a smooth and safe reopening.

This week, the Coronavirus Emergency Response Team (CERT) has approved guidelines and the approval process for reopening in-person **human subjects research** and for allowing our **external research partners** to join us for conducting research in our facilities. Again, this will be a deliberate reopening, which will require researchers to develop and implement safety plans, following general guidelines and

those that are specific to their projects. These reopening guidelines will be updated on the [research labs page](#) in the next few days, and the application process will be opened by the end of next week.

We are continuing to work to support researchers, especially during this challenging period, providing support for proposal development and submission, management of awards, and facilities support. We will also continue to facilitate virtual events and meetings with our existing and new collaborators.

I thank all of you who are contributing to WPI's research success, and I look forward to another successful research year for WPI.

Best,
Bogdan

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