

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

2025-2026 ISCE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Request for Applications

The Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) is accepting applications for its **Scholars Program**. The aim of this program is to provide support for faculty teams developing grant proposals in the social sciences (broadly defined) and consistent with ISCE's four thematic areas and Virginia Tech's [Research Frontiers](#). Proposed projects are expected to address critical individual and social concerns impacting the lives of people and places locally, nationally, or across the globe. **Applications are due Wednesday, February 12, 2025.**

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

The ISCE Scholars Program provides support for both relatively new faculty investigators and more experienced investigators to undertake initial work in a new or existing program area. The expectation is that proposals developed through the Scholars Program will lead to the submission of an application for funding to a government agency, foundation, or corporate sponsor for a project requiring a minimum of \$100,000 in direct costs per year within six-months of completing the Scholars project.

Proposals must address one of ISCE's thematic areas of research and scholarship (www.isce.vt.edu):

- **Global Policies & Practices:** global trade and economic integration; security and counter-terrorism; health; science; and policy.
- **Human Development & Health:** social and behavioral aspects of development across the lifespan; health issues facing individuals, groups, communities, or societies; social determinants of health; disparities; policy.
- **Risk & Resilience:** individual or community level responses to social issues, natural disasters, security; technology & communication; social complexity, ethics; risk analysis and policy.
- **Communities and Environments:** geographic locations, environments, structures and settings affecting the human condition; policy implementation and evaluation.

In addition, team proposals aligned with Virginia Tech's [Research Frontier areas](#): Artificial Intelligence, Health, Quantum, and Security are encouraged as are proposals that address disparities and inequalities across topic areas.

ISCE anticipates making six to eight awards of up to **\$30,000** per award. Projects may have a start date of May 19, 2025 or July 1, 2025. Regardless of start date, projects must be completed by June 30, 2026.

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

Proposals are welcome from faculty members in all departments, centers, and programs at Virginia Tech whose research/scholarship is grounded in traditional social science disciplines including behavioral and public health science, from policy and humanity scholars, and from individual faculty embedded in departments not traditionally aligned with the social sciences whose research explicitly addresses contemporary social problems within their respective disciplines. The PI is expected to be a full-time, tenure-track/tenured faculty member or a research faculty member at the rank of senior research scientist or higher with a multi-year appointment; team members may include collegiate faculty, clinical faculty, professors of practice, and post-doctoral associates. While graduate students cannot serve as the project PI/Co-PI, teams are encouraged to include funds for both Virginia Tech graduate and undergraduate student assistants to work on the project as appropriate.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Applications must include: (a) e-signed cover sheet (available at www.isce.vt.edu); (b) 200-word abstract describing the research topic/project in language suitable for the general public and posting on the ISCE website; (c) project narrative of up to four pages; (d) itemized budget sheet (available at www.isce.vt.edu) and budget justification; and (e) appendix with information about potential funding agencies (see page 4).

Required information for the 4-page narrative portion of the proposal includes (suggested length):

1. Overview and significance of the issue, problem, or situation. (one-half page)
2. Goal and specific aims of the proposed investigation. (1 paragraph)
3. Alignment with ISCE's thematic areas and/or the University's Research Frontiers. (1 paragraph)
4. Research methods/approach, including description of study sample, design, and key measures. (2 pages)
5. Timeline with list of key proposal development activities and project milestones. (one-half page)
6. Primary team members, including identification of the team leader (point of contact) and primary role and expertise of *all team members* and consultants, even if not receiving direct financial support from the Scholars award (do not submit curriculum vitae). (one-half page)

BUDGET

The expectation is that the funds will be used to support Virginia Tech faculty and students to carry out the proposed project. Examples of appropriate use of funds include, but are not limited to, course buy-outs, faculty summer stipends, graduate assistantships and tuition, student wages, travel related to data collection, transcription services, and limited external consultation/technical assistance.

Funds may not be used to: provide salary support/stipends for individuals not employed by Virginia Tech, conference travel, open-access fees, activities typically supported by departments and colleges (e.g., development/implementation of projects not requiring external funds, standard software), or to support graduate student thesis/dissertation research, or on-going research and scholarly activities of faculty.

Specific funding guidelines for summer stipends and course buy-outs:

- Summer stipends for the PI may not exceed \$8,000 and must align with the timeframe/tasks of the project. Co-I stipends should be commensurate with contribution to the team. Stipend amounts are inclusive of fringe benefits. The specific amount allocated for faculty support must follow University policy for summer compensation (see <http://www.policies.vt.edu/4296.pdf>). Applicants should discuss summer salary caps with department fiscal staff prior to submission.
- Requests for buy-out may not exceed \$8,000. Team members who take a course buy-out during the academic year are not eligible for a summer stipend. No more than one course buy-out may be requested for small group proposals (1-3 investigators). Teams of 4 or more faculty may request one course buy-out for no more than two faculty members. Prior to submitting a Scholars Program application, applicants should check with their department/college as course buy-out policies vary by college and in some colleges, proposals must be approved by both the department head/chair and college dean.

Carry Over: If proposed work is still in progress at the end of the fiscal year, the PI may request to carry over unallocated funds to complete the project in FY27. The amount to be carried over, a justification for the use of the funds, and an email/statement submitted by the fiscal manager of the PI's home department stating the department is able to carry over the remaining funds for faculty use in FY27 to complete the project, should be submitted to ISCE no later than May 1, 2026.

For completed projects, any unallocated funds need to be returned to ISCE by June 5, 2026.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based upon:

- Specific relevance to the social sciences and alignment with ISCE's thematic areas and/or Virginia Tech's Research Frontiers.
- Degree the goals/specific aims, approach and milestones are clearly described and justified.
- Collaboration across disciplines, departments, and colleges.
- Extent proposed work is innovative and has the potential for creating a new research direction or advancing previous research, theory, policy, and/or practice.
- Link between requested funds (budget details) and proposed activities and outcomes.
- Potential for external funding (including responses to Appendix items). Please note: Appendix A is a required part of the application and is of primary consideration in evaluating applications.

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Each individual/team selected to receive an award is required to:

1. Develop and submit a proposal for funding consideration to a government agency, private organization, corporation, or foundation, no later than December 31, 2026 (exceptions may be made based on due dates of individual agencies and foundations).
2. Acknowledge ISCE support in all media interviews, presentations or publications related to the Scholars award.
3. Provide a brief progress report, including a fiscal report documenting use of funds, in June 2026 and a progress report for three years thereafter (specific due dates/reminders will be sent).
4. Present project findings at a forum or other event sponsored by ISCE as requested.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS/DEADLINE

Applications are to be prepared using 1-inch margins and Arial 11 font. Submit an e-copy of the complete application, e-signed coversheet, and itemized budget/budget justification/other resources received to Ms. Yancey Crawford (yanceyc3@vt.edu) by **5:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 12, 2025.** Acknowledgement of receipt of an application will be made within 48 hours.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD/AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Notification of awards will be made by the end of March.

Projects may have a start date of May 19, 2025 or July 1, 2025. Regardless of start date, projects must be completed by June 30, 2026 (see university guidelines for specific dates and deadlines).

QUESTIONS

Karen A. Roberto, Executive Director
Institute for Society, Culture and Environment
kroberto@vt.edu

Yancey Crawford, Associate Director for Faculty Development and Administration
Institute for Society, Culture and Environment
yanceyc3@vt.edu

Isabel Bradburn, Associate Director for Strategic and Faculty Initiatives
Institute for Society, Culture and Environment
isbrad@vt.edu

PAST ISCE SCHOLAR AWARDS MAY BE FOUND AT: <https://www.isce.vt.edu/index3/index1.html>

Appendix A: Potential Funding Sources

The ISCE Scholar awards are designed to support the development of proposals that have the potential for external funding. Proposals are more likely to foster success in securing external grants when faculty have fully explored funding opportunities and have used that information to inform their proposal writing plans.

Responses to the following questions are required as an appendix (1-page limit) to your submission.

- a. What is the focus of the specific request for proposals, program announcement, or other special funding initiative you are working toward? What is its timeline?
- b. Which agency, organization, foundation, or corporate official (e.g., project officer, research director) have you contacted to determine their interest in this project or project area? Describe the communication you have had with the possible funder(s), including their level of interest in your idea, and any input they may have provided on the study you are proposing.
- c. How does your proposed research compare with projects in similar domains that have been funded by your targeted agency? Is the scope of your project comparable to other funded projects (e.g., sample size, measurement strategies, project design, and analytic approach)? What is unique about your project relative to others that have been funded?
- d. What criteria does the identified funder use to evaluate proposals? Who are the likely reviewers?