

UNM Limited Competition Announcement

Dear UNM Researchers,

The Office of the Vice President for Research is requesting statements of interest in being nominated for the **ORAU Ralph E. Powe Junior Faculty Enhancement Awards Program**. A Powe Award provides seed money for junior faculty and is intended to enrich the research and professional growth of young faculty and result in new funding opportunities.

Sponsor: ORAU (Oak Ridge Associated Universities)

Opportunity Title: Ralph E. Powe Junior Faculty Enhancement Awards Program

Sponsor Due Date(s): 1/6/2027 at 10:00 AM MST

Award Amount: \$5,000

Cost Share Requirement: \$5,000

Number of Submissions Allowed from UNM: Two (2)

Solicitation: <https://www.orau.org/partnerships/grant-programs/powe/index.html>

Additional Information:

- Full-time assistant professors within two years of their initial tenure track appointment (Jan. 1, 2025 to Jan. 7, 2027) at the time of application at an ORAU member institution are eligible.
- Research must fall within the following discipline areas:
 1. Engineering and Applied Science
 2. Life Sciences
 3. Mathematics/Computer Sciences
 4. Physical Sciences
 5. Policy, Management, or Education
 6. **NEW for 2027:** Critical Mineral Constraints on SMR Deployment Capacity in the U.S (Sponsored by [AUI](#)). These proposals could address: What domestic and allied-nation mineral and processing capacity currently exist to support SMR fuel and component fabrication at scale? Where do single points of failure exist in enrichment, conversion, or alloy production? How do lead times for mineral extraction, processing, and qualification compare to reactor construction schedules? What policy, stockpiling, or recycling interventions could meaningfully expand the achievable build-out rate over 5-, 10-, and 20-year horizons? *Interdisciplinary approaches to combining nuclear engineering, mineral economics, supply chain modeling, and geopolitical risk analysis are strongly encouraged. Preference will be given to proposals producing quantitative, scenario-based estimates (e.g., maximum feasible reactors per year under current vs. expanded mineral supply conditions) rather than purely qualitative assessments.*
 7. **NEW for 2027:** Responsible AI in STEM Education Policy (Sponsored by [AUI](#)). Proposals are sought that examine, but are not limited to: (1) empirical potential of AI-assisted tools to improve evidence-based policymaking in STEM education, including data-driven identification of achievement gaps or resource disparities; (2) risks of algorithmic bias, data opacity, and reduced democratic accountability when AI systems inform high-stakes policy decisions; (3) institutional and workforce capacity needed within education agencies to responsibly adopt AI tools; (4) comparative case studies of jurisdictions that have piloted AI-informed policy processes; and (5) frameworks for evaluating when AI adds genuine value to policy work versus when it introduces unwarranted complexity, cost, or harm. *Interdisciplinary approaches bridging education research, computer science, public administration, and ethics are welcomed. Priority will be*

given to projects with clear pathways to actionable policy recommendations, attention to underserved and marginalized student populations, and methodological rigor suited to postdoctoral-level independent research. Successful projects will help clarify not only what AI can do for STEM education policy, but what it should do, and under what safeguards.

Limited Comp. Instructions: We will be conducting a two-step internal competition to ensure we have a review committee in place by the pre-proposal deadline. You must complete both steps if you are interested in participating.

Limited Comp. STEP 1: Required SOI Due Date: **NOON on October 1, 2026** (for planning purposes)

Limited Comp. STEP 2: Pre-proposal Due Date: **NOON on October 8, 2026**

STEP ONE: Please submit your ~100-word **statement of interest** in UNM's [InfoReady Review portal](#). This is a required step, and no late submissions will be considered. Note that SOIs will NOT be scored; we require them to assist us in forming a review committee.

STEP TWO: Please submit your 2-page pre-proposal, budget overview which includes the **required cost share arrangements** and abbreviated CV via UNM's [InfoReady Review portal](#). You will receive an email when the InfoReady competition has been converted from the SOI application to the pre-proposal application, but you may work on your documents outside the system before that. No late submissions will be considered.

The pre-proposal should address the major topics that will be included in the proposal narrative, including:

- Research goals and objectives and relevant background
- Expected research outcomes and relevance
- Research design and methodology
- Competence of the applicant to perform the proposed research
- The available research facilities and resources
- A budget justification

The budget can include funds for faculty summer salary, graduate student salary, travel, equipment, or other assistance relevant to the faculty member's research. **ORAU does not allow overhead charges or indirect costs on the award from ORAU or the university match.**

Pre-proposals will be evaluated using the criteria below:

- **Scientific/technical merit:** Likelihood that research will add to scientific knowledge base and address an important research problem or policy need.
- **Proposed method/approach:** Appropriateness of proposed methods to achieve results
 - For applications submitted under Areas 6 or 7, consideration should also be given to the extent to which the approach addresses the methodological priorities described for the selected topic area.
- **Relevance, responsiveness, and potential for future impact:** Alignment of the proposed research with the selected discipline/topic area and the potential for the project to result in publishable work, additional research opportunities, and/or future external funding.
 - For applications submitted under Areas 6 and 7, this criterion will also consider responsiveness to the specific research priorities, preferred approaches, and anticipated outcomes identified in the topic description.
- **Applicant's previous research performance:** Appropriateness of applicant's research experience to successfully complete the proposed research
- **Adequacy of facilities and resources:** Reasonableness of available facilities, equipment/instrumentation, research staff, and any support staff requirements
- **Likelihood research will lead to fundable research and/or publishable work**

- **Inclusion of reasonable cost share arrangements**
- **Overall quality of application**

Applicant selections will be published on the [UNM Limited Competitions website](#). Should you have any questions please feel free to contact us at limited@unm.edu. *If you are affiliated with HSC, please contact HSC Limited Competition at HSC-LimitedComps@salud.unm.edu for more information.*