



[skip to section links](#)

Research

Research

News

Sequence of Project Events	
Activities	Notes
Literature review	
Targeted interviews with:	team members and other members of the faculty/staff chosen for their high level of sponsored project activity.
Compilation of existing data	
Focus group session – "Telling our Stories"	One of the best attended workshops the Office of University Research Services has hosted. Five experienced faculty members who have recently been active in sponsored projects shared their experiences, and those less experienced shared their thoughts and "wishes."
Review of data and results	
Focus group session – new faculty members	A small but very interested and motivated group shared their thoughts about their needs in, and hopes for, the coming years

Chart of Project Activities for the Leadership Development Institute case study of Towson University

Towson, Md. (July 13, 2011): As a member of the National Council of University Research Administrators' 2010 Leadership Development Institute, Mary Louise Healy and the staff of the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research recently completed a case study of Towson University's research climate. The study sought to find the best way to help faculty members begin, and sustain, independent research careers and thus move the University towards becoming more research-intensive. As part of the study the staff conducted a literature review of publications on research culture at Predominately Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs), conducted targeted interviews with faculty and administrators, facilitated focus group discussions with faculty about their research experiences, and compiled and reviewed data on the initiatives and results of research development activities of the University.

These activities resulted in both expected and unexpected findings. Like many PUI faculty, Towson's researchers have heavy teaching loads and difficulty finding the time to write competitive proposals, let alone carry out

research. Although the University has evolved as an institution and is now longer seen as solely (or even predominantly) a teacher preparation institution, it's still difficult to make the case for infrastructure, especially with the National Institutes of Health. Towson needs to "get its name out there" to increase success.

Unexpectedly, the study revealed that spending more money on internal awards does not seem to have a large impact on external success. The University has spent nearly \$1 million on internal grants since 2004. This investment has resulted in no documented external awards. While time is an issue for PUI faculty, this is also true of more research intensive faculty. Mentoring availability and social pressure play a much larger part in research culture; if new faculty feel reverse social pressure toward research activity, they tend to abandon their research agendas in order to conform to the norm in their departments.

Finally, the study found that the efforts of sponsored research offices can make a difference. The team will continue to work to make the culture of Towson University more conducive to winning sponsored project funding in general and funding for research in particular. In support of this goal, the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research will be implementing a series of informal research focus groups and gatherings, starting in September, 2011. These lunchtime sessions will be open to all faculty who are active in sponsored funding, as well as those interested in becoming more involved in research. The session will hopefully provide a forum to build a community among Towson faculty, and discuss research ideas, methods, collaborations, and exchange encouragement and advice.

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