

FY26 OSP Rewind

PREPARED BY

FAIRMONT STATE UNIVERSITY™

Office of Sponsored Programs



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As I reflect on the past fiscal year, I'm proud of the continued development the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) has achieved in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. Shifting federal funding priorities significantly reduced available federal funding in FY26, which is reflected in the external funding sources who contributed to sponsored programs on campus. Private external funders represented 42% of the grant funding on campus, with direct federal funding only representing 13% of the sponsored programs at Fairmont State.

Despite these challenges, Fairmont State University was awarded 42 new grants totaling nearly $3 million in external funding. These awards support a wide range of sponsored programs and projects on campus, including equipment for instruction and research; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) engagement; and community outreach to local and international K-16 students and educators.

In this rewind, OSP reflects on the past year's accomplishments while also looking ahead to future goals and initiatives. I would like to thank all of the grants community at Fairmont State—whether you're a principal investigator, prospective applicant, or working in any way to support a grant-funded project on campus, you are contributing to the growth of Fairmont State University.

Christy K Burner

Christy Burner
Director
Fairmont State Office of Sponsored Programs

FY 2026 At a Glance

Externally Sponsored Funding



Total Dollar Amount Funded

$ 2,992,826

Proposals Funded

42

Proposals Submitted

55

Unique Principal Investigators

22

New Principal Investigators

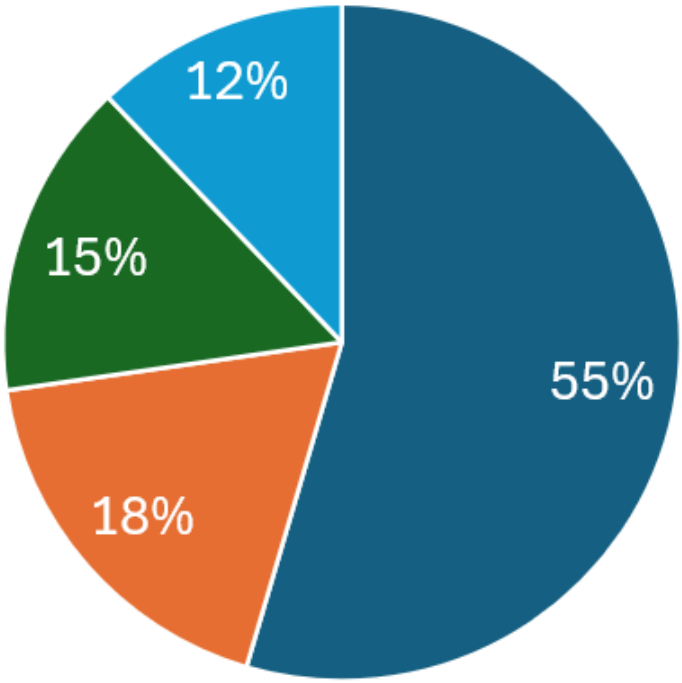
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FY26 Externally Sponsored Funding Breakdown

(Calculated based on number of awards)

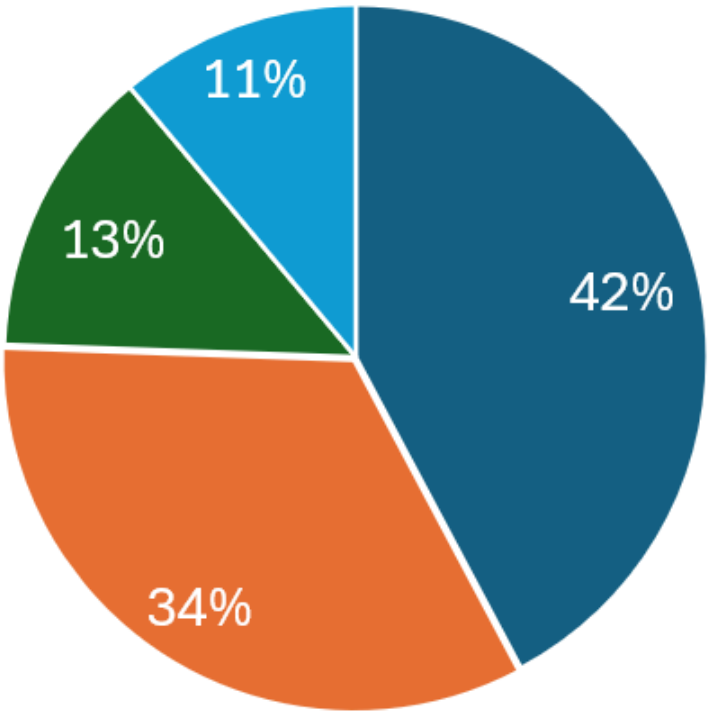
By Area

- College of Science and Technology
- Other Colleges/Units
- College of Liberal Arts
- Student Services

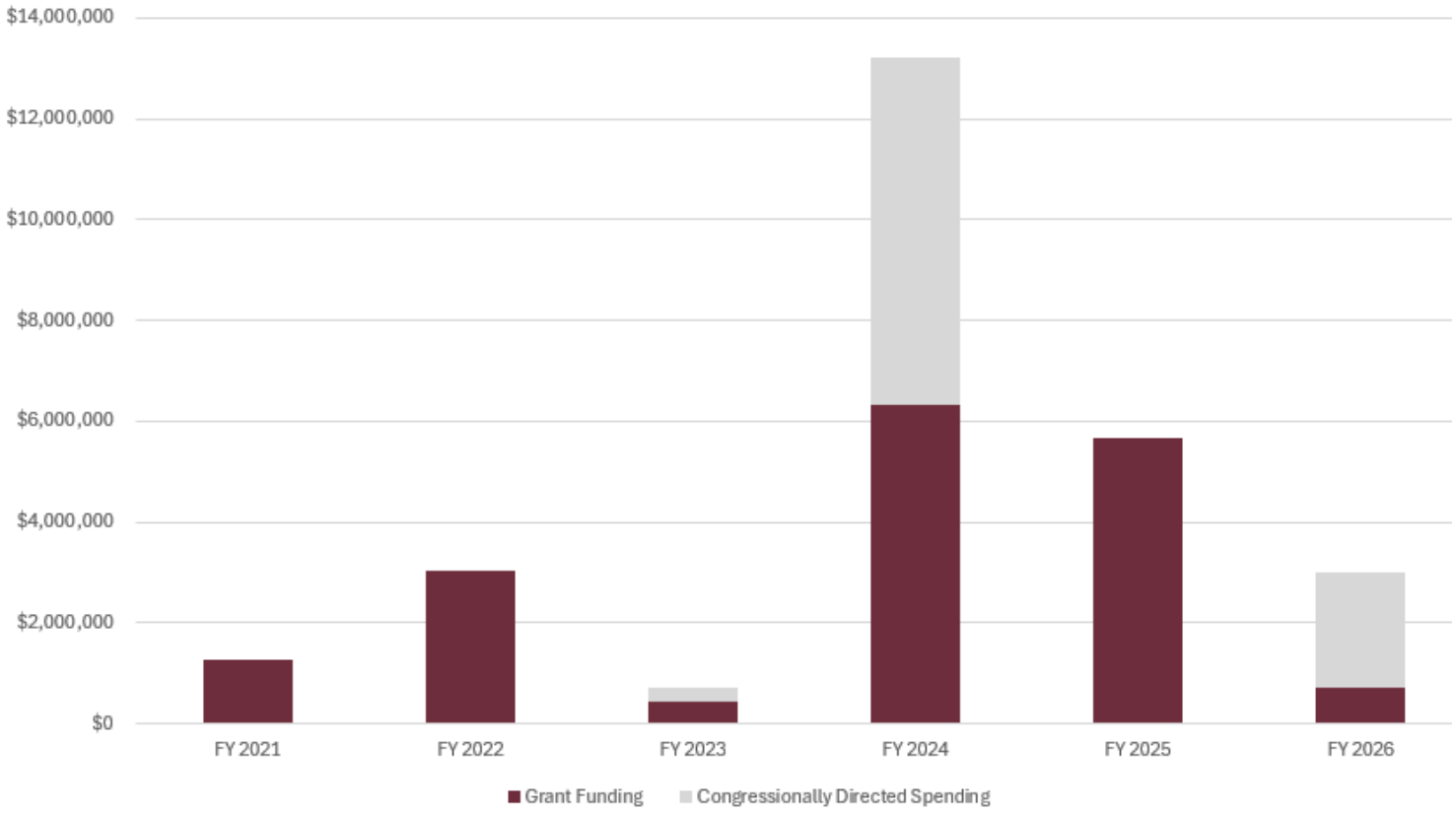


By Source

- Private
- State
- Federal
- Federal Pass-Through



New Funding Awarded by Fiscal Year



Grant Funding

New funding awarded by fiscal year includes total amounts for multi-year awards and is based on project start date rather than award notification.

Congressionally Directed Spending

Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) is awarded through a competitive application process. Congress excluded CDS from the FY25 Continuing Resolution.

FY	Grant Funding	CDS	Total
2021	$1,284,415	$0	$1,284,415
2022	$3,849,020	$0	$3,849,020
2023	$450,405	$270,000	$720,405
2024	$6,343,626	$6,890,000	$13,233,626
2025	$5,685,388	$0	$5,685,388
2026	$699,826	$2,293,000	$2,992,826

FY26 Sponsored Projects

Principal Investigator	Sponsoring Agency	Project Title/ Description	Amount Funded
Academic Affairs			
Valerie Morphew	U.S. Department of Education	Title III Supplemental	$168,962
Valerie Morphew	Carnegie Foundation	Funding for ACUE	$25,000
Dedra Cobb	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation/Gardner Institute	Artificial Intelligence (AI) Project	$10,000
Jacki Sherman	WVHEPC	OER Campus Engagement Grant	$9,529
Rosemarie Igbo	WVHEPC	StudyWV Online Pilot	$5,000
Nicole Samson	FirstEnergy Foundation	Support for the Student Professionals Corp (SPC)	$3,000
Mary Sortino	WVHEPC	Travel Grant	$2,500
Athletics			
Greg Bamberger	Mountain East Conference	Academic & Life Skills	$1,000
College of Business and Aviation			
Jeremy Griffin	Congressionally Directed Spending	Funding for Aviation	$1,650,000
College of Education, Health, and Human Performance			
Shawn Reese	WV-IDeA Network of Biomedical Research	Exercise Science Equipment	$71,701
Amanda Metcalf	WV Department of Education	Teacher Preparation	$18,600
Maria Agee	WVHEPC	WVAbroad Grant	$5,000

FY26 Sponsored Projects

Principal Investigator	Sponsoring Agency	Project Title/ Description	Amount Funded
College of Liberal Arts			
Samantha Godbey	AmeriCorps	Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)	$28,620
Leigh Anne Riley	George W. Bowers Family Charitable Trust	Funding for theater carpeting	$10,000
Andrea Haney	Hope Gas	Funding for a campus community garden	$10,000
Leigh Anne Riley	FirstEnergy Foundation	Funding for theater renovations and production costs	$5,000
Samantha Godbey	Institute for Citizens & Scholars	Funding for campuswide civic engagement	$2,241
Maria Agee	WVHEPC	OER Travel Grant	$2,000
College of Nursing			
Lisa Eades	Milan Puskar Foundation	Community Health Outreach	$25,000
College of Science and Technology			
Deb Hemler	WVDE	Elementary Earth and Space Sciences Literacy	$48,000
Deb Hemler	NASA Educational Resource Center	RAP Supplemental Funds	$45,000
Todd Ensign	Johns Hopkins University	Dragonfly Drone Research Continuation	$35,000

FY26 Sponsored Projects

Principal Investigator	Sponsoring Agency	Project Title/ Description	Amount Funded
College of Science and Technology (continued)			
April Townsend	High Rocks Corporation	First2 Institutional Advancement Awards	$30,673
Deb Hemler	NASA	FY26 NASA Space Grant	$17,000
Todd Ensign	FirstEnergy Foundation	Funding for SPACE Camp	$12,215
Stephanie Jones	EQT Foundation	Funding for STEMpact Camp	$8,215
Jamie Miller	Truist WV Foundation	Biology Microscopes	$8,000
Todd Ensign	Boeing Foundation	Student Scholarships Cycle 2	$7,000
Todd Ensign	WVSD&B	STEM Summer Camp	$6,000
Abby Chapman	Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Funding for ABET Contribution	$5,000
Todd Ensign	WVDE	Robotics Support	$5,000
Stephanie Jones	WVHEPC STaR Division	Opportunity Grant for STEMpact Camp	$5,000
Stephanie Jones	FirstEnergy Foundation	Funding for STEMpact Camp	$4,785
Deb Hemler	WVDE	FY26 Regional Science Fair	$4,000
Todd Ensign	WVSD&B	STEM Clubs	$3,500
Ganga Sharma	OpenLearning WV	OER Travel Grant	$2,000

FY26 Sponsored Projects

Principal Investigator	Sponsoring Agency	Project Title/Description	Amount Funded
College of Science and Technology (continued)			
Todd Ensign	WVSGC	2026 NASA Day	$2,000
Ganga Sharma	NASA	EPSCoR Travel Grant	$2,000
James Long	WVSGC	FY26 Student Org. Support	$2,000
Todd Ensign	EQT Foundation	Funding for SPACE Camp	$1,785
Ganga Sharma	American Physical Society	Travel Reimbursement	$1,300
Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center			
Lydia Warren	Mid-Atlantic Arts	Central Appalachian Living Traditions	$7,200
Student Affairs			
Lauren Pearson	WVHEPC	First-Generation Student Success	$16,000
Luke Kopp	Milan Puskar Foundation	Funding for The NEST food pantry and General Student Emergency Fund	$10,000
Gabby Lory	WVDE	2026 Academic Showdown	$4,500
Emily Swain	Milan Puskar Foundation	Middle College Emergency Fund	$2,500
Carla Marshall	Spark Good Walmart	Veteran-Connected Food Pantry	$1,000
University Police			
J.W. McGahan, III	Congressionally Directed Spending	FY26 CDS Funding for Police Upgrades	$643,000

FY26 Falcon Mini-Grants

This competitive internal grant program seeks to expose faculty and staff to the grant writing process, as well as grant management, while also funding innovative, worthwhile projects that contribute to the campus community in meaningful ways.

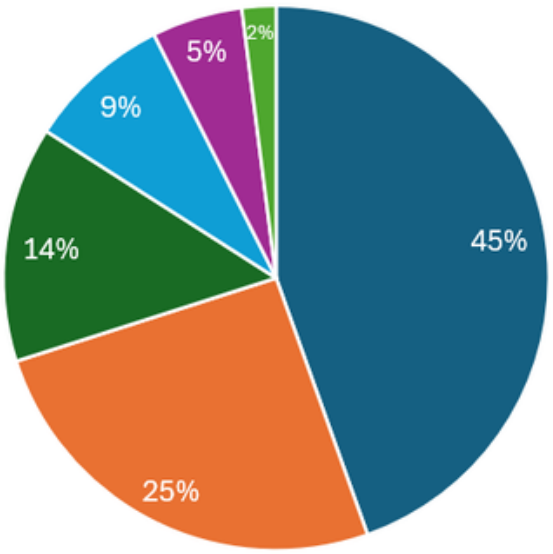


43
Projects funded

$74,431
Total dollar amount funded

26
Units received funding

31
New Applicants to Falcon Mini-Grants



- Academic Affairs
- Student Affairs
- Finance & Administration
- Enrollment Management
- Athletics
- Information Technology

Mini-Grant Highlight

The Falcon Mini-Grant was not only designed to give faculty and staff grant writing and management experience; it was also created to bolster innovative projects at the University. One student-centered project OSP would like to highlight from the FY26 Falcon Mini-Grant cycle is that of Dr. Moshe Machlev.

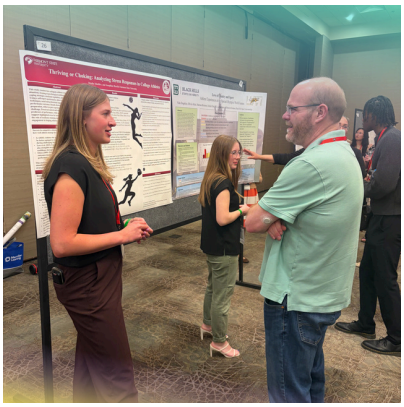
Dr. Moshe Machlev, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychology, used mini-grant funding to bring three students to the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Annual Conference in Boise, Idaho. This conference was held by the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, which operates under the umbrella of the American Psychological Association, and hosted faculty and students from various institutions in the country. While there, Fairmont State students were given the opportunity to present research, attend informative sessions, and build professional networks.

Machlev shared, “The students told me that this was a great first experience in presenting at a conference and that it prepared them well for future presentations at graduate school.”

By presenting research, students were able to enhance their resumes, improving their chances of admittance to post-graduate programs or full-time employment. This project also raised the profile of Fairmont State, as Machlev and his students represented the University and the quality research being done here.



Fairmont State students Joey Borelle, Heather Straight, and Caden Cook during their presentations.







PI in the Spotlight

Todd Ensign, Ed.D.

Dr. Todd Ensign is a STEM outreach specialist and highly active grant writer at Fairmont State. Serving as program manager for more than two decades for the Education Resource Center (ERC), formerly sponsored and housed at the Katherine Johnson NASA Independent Verification & Validation Facility, Dr. Ensign has spent much of his career sharing his passion for robotics and space with West Virginia youth and educators. For FY26, Dr. Ensign is the PI on eight different awards, representing his commitment to securing external funding for the Fairmont State Scitech ERC.

Q: When did your interest in grant writing begin?

A: My interest in grant writing started almost 25 years ago while working for the EdVenture Group, a non-profit educational consulting firm in Morgantown, where I was predominately providing professional development in educational technology for teachers across West Virginia as part of a U.S. Department of Education grant. I remember asking how I could get more involved in delivering Earth Science, which was my undergraduate major. I was then encouraged to find and write for funding.

My initial efforts resulted in some small wins, but it was the WVDE Improving Teacher Quality Grants to deliver NASA's GLOBE Program through a collaboration with Karen Davis at the NASA IV&V Education Resource Center, Dr. Deb Hemler at Fairmont State University, and Dr. Tom Repine at the WV Geologic and Economic Survey that re-defined me as a grant writer.

Q: Why do you pursue grants and grant-funded projects when it's an extra workload on top of your other commitments?

A: When I was hired by Fairmont State to work at the NASA IV&V Education Resource Center over 20 years ago, grants were the means to continue offering high-quality programs and to expand our Loan and Learn Program, which has grown to over $2 million in educational classroom kits. Today, the SciTech ERC is blessed with strong partnerships with grant-funded organizations including the NASA WV Space Grant Consortium, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, and the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation who all expand and magnify the impact of our program through grant funding to hire interns and AmeriCorps members, deliver teacher institutes, travel to represent NASA missions, and much more.

PI Rising Stars



Stephanie Jones, Ed.D.

Stephanie Jones, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Mathematics Education, has been involved with grants since 2020. Her inspiration to seek grant funding, however, originates from her time as an undergraduate student at Fairmont State, in which she saw firsthand the impact a STEM summer camp had on middle school students. The camp involved both career exploration and relationship building with like-minded peers, which greatly inspired Dr. Jones. She explains, "Since becoming a faculty member, I have been interested in providing similar opportunities for local secondary students and a recent STaR grant enabled me to do that."



Shawn Reese, Ph.D.

Shawn Reese, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Exercise Science, has been employed at Fairmont State University for two years. During that time, he's been involved in three successful grants and has led a student research project on the SURE grant. Dr. Reese identifies an inherent benefit within his work with grants: "The return on the investment for our students and our community makes writing grants entirely worth the effort. Grant funding allows us to bring cutting-edge, research-grade technology into our laboratories to provide our students with hands-on research experience."

Grantseeking Advice

"My best advice for grant writing is to start small and build relationships. Once you find a Request for Proposals, I think it's important to define your goals and outcomes before delving into your budget to ensure reviewers can recognize the broader impacts of your project." - Dr. Ensign

"Don't hesitate to ask questions. The staff in the Office of Sponsored Programs is fantastic about responding quickly and patiently." - Dr. Jones

"Keep an eye out for regional or state-specific networks such as the IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) or the National Science Foundation's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) programs. These are specifically designed to build research infrastructure at smaller public universities, and often have higher funding success rates." - Dr. Reese

Major Accomplishments of Grants Closed in FY26

American Physical Society-Simons Professional Development and Travel Award

PI: Ganga Sharma, Ph.D.
Funder: American Physical Society

During December 2025 to January 2026, Ganga Sharma, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Physics, led an academic engagement project in Nepal. Through this grant funding, Dr. Sharma was able to hold science inspiration workshops at the Janapriya and Bhairav Secondary Schools in close coordination with school administration and local government. Over six high schools participated in these workshops, ensuring as many students as possible could benefit from the sessions. During his time in Nepal, Dr. Sharma was also able to host a teaching pedagogy workshop at Mid-West University in which faculty members and students were able to discuss best teaching practices, active learning strategies, and SCALE-UP instructional model.





Wallman Hall Theater Renovations

PI: Leigh Anne Riley
Funders: FirstEnergy Foundation and George W. Bowers Family Charitable Trust

While the University regularly invests in the Wallman Hall Theater to ensure constituents can enjoy events, sometimes external funding is needed to develop even more momentum on a project. In FY26, the FirstEnergy Foundation and the George W. Bowers Family Charitable Trust awarded grants to more extensively renovate the Wallman Hall Theater. Funding from these organizations covered painting and carpeting costs for the theater as well as production costs for the Summer 2026 performances of *Come From Away*. These theater updates were necessary, not just for aesthetic reasons, but also to preserve the usability and integrity of an important shared venue. Fairmont State's Town & Gown Players and Academy for the Arts serve hundreds of youth and community members and their theatre productions reach an audience of approximately 8,000 annually.



Fairmont State SciTech Education Resource Center (ERC)

PI: Deb Hemler, Ed.D.
Funder: NASA

When the NASA ERC team learned in October 2025 that Fairmont State's long-standing NASA grant was ending due to a change in federal funding priorities, they were concerned about the closure of a decades-long project to further STEM programming, particularly beneficial to K-12 students and educators throughout West Virginia. Fairmont State stepped up to maintain the critical work of NASA ERC and the College of Science and Technology ERC now provides resources to local educators and students, carrying on the mission of the original grant to expand opportunities for West Virginia's students and educators as well as providing access to facilities and supported application of expertise in their efforts to meet national and state education standards. Though the grant is closing, the essential work continues.

First-Gen Student Success

PI: Lauren Pearson
Funder: West Virginia Higher Education Commission (WVHEPC)

A grant opportunity typically available annually through WVHEPC, the First-Gen Student Success Grant aims to improve the retention and academic success of first-generation students. Fairmont State hosted various activities to foster success and belonging amongst first-gen students on campus, including a carnival and an Artificial Intelligence (AI) workshop. Through this grant, approximately 130 students attended the carnival and were able to interact with the first-gen community on campus. Events during the national First-Generation Week further supported the work of this grant. With over one thousand undergraduates identifying as first-gen at Fairmont State, the University makes a serious effort to acknowledge those individuals who were the first in their family to attend college.



FY 2026 Program Highlights



Students at STEMpact camp participate in an early calculus activity.

STEMpact and SPACE Camps

Grant funding from multiple sponsors was used to host two STEM-based camps for K-12 students at Fairmont State this summer: Students Pursuing Aerospace Careers and Engineering (SPACE) Camp and STEMpact Camp. These camps, designed to help young West Virginians see themselves as future scientists, engineers, and mathematicians, help youth overcome barriers that keep them from pursuing higher education. Activities at these camps included LEGO robot programming; extracting plant DNA using microscopes; exposure to various areas of engineering; local robotics facility tours; participating in a "Robot Competition in a Day;" and designing their own team mission patch inspired by those worn by astronauts. STEMpact was funded by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission StaR Division, the EQT Foundation, and the FirstEnergy Foundation. SPACE Camp received funding from the EQT Foundation and the FirstEnergy Foundation.

West Virginia Career Collaborative

In 2024, Fairmont State University received funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (ARC POWER) Initiative to create a regional career-services and workforce-development collaboration across nine counties in North Central West Virginia. A vital component of this grant was the formation of the West Virginia Career Collaborative (WVCC), which was created to develop West Virginia's STEM workforce pipeline by connecting industry, academics, educators, students and other job seekers, and workforce entities through a Regional Career Services and Workforce Development Collaborative. The WVCC organized several events this year to bring together workforce stakeholders and emphasize the importance of stronger connections between education and industry. Additionally, this grant has provided over 300 trainings designed to strengthen the STEM talent pipeline.

Student Professional Corps

As a component of Fairmont State's Title III grant, the Student Professional Corps (SPC) was established to provide professional on-campus employment opportunities that are closely aligned with students' post-graduation career goals. Through the SPC, undergraduate students receive professional development in skill areas that will improve workplace readiness and earn badges in skills that matter to employers. The Title III team received funds from the FirstEnergy Foundation to purchase marketing materials to ensure they can help as many students as possible. Although the Title III grant has a five-year project period, the long-term goal is to continue grant programs and initiatives, like the SPC, after award closeout. By working to secure additional funding, the project team has increased their knowledge, experience, and skill in applying for grant funding, which will help ensure program sustainability.

Visiting Artists at the Folklife Center

The Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center invited two local artists to create new works inspired by archived materials within the Folklife Center that detailed Appalachian traditions. This initiative was funded by the Mid-Atlantic Arts Central Appalachia Living Traditions grant and sought to increase archive accessibility and awareness. Sherry Harper-McCombs created an exhibition and hosted a free workshop based on research she had done on historical mending methods used on textiles in the archives. Attendees were given mending materials to take home, allowing for continued engagement in traditional practices. Sarah Bryan researched Ruth Ann Musick's collected folktales housed in the archives to create a digital map of traditional lore that can be accessed from anywhere, combatting financial barriers to accessing these archives.

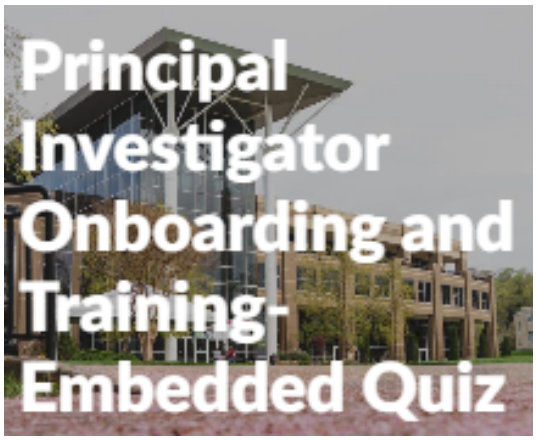


Community members attend a mending workshop hosted by Sherry Harper-McCombs.

AmeriCorps VISTA

Fairmont State University's AmeriCorps VISTA program, sponsored by Transform Mid-Atlantic, was designed to create and implement a sustainable, replicable model to increase post-secondary access and financial literacy among low-income high school students in West Virginia. Now entering its second of three years, these grant funds have allowed for the development of financial literacy, college access, and job skills learned in college workshop curriculum. These workshops are administered in multiple counties by the VISTA member funded by this grant and Fairmont State peer mentors who model academic persistence and civic engagement. Using data collected throughout the grant period, the project team will distribute field-tested curriculum to ten high schools, fully implement a peer-educator model, and establish a community network to sustain education as a pathway out of poverty programming long term.

OSP Updates



In August 2025, OSP implemented Principal Investigator (PI) Onboarding for all faculty and staff serving as PIs on behalf of Fairmont State University. This training reviews expectations and enables the appropriate use of external funding.

Introducing OSP's New Business Manager: Lea Ann Valentine



At the start of the spring 2026 semester, OSP created a new Business Manager position to strengthen and streamline the financial management of grants on campus. Lea Ann Valentine took the position and OSP is grateful for her financial expertise.



On February 26, 2026, OSP participated in Fairmont State's annual Day of Giving by hosting the Punch-A-Bunch game. OSP is also glad to participate in other University-wide events, including the all-majors Career Fair and Welcome Back Tent, and contribute to the broader campus.

OSP Updates

With an open Sponsored Programs Associate position in Spring 2026, OSP was in need of a writing and editing professional to maintain the flow of grant proposal development within the office. Hannah Woods joined Fairmont State to fill that position in April 2026 and OSP is thankful for her essential contributions to the office.





As part of developing team leadership skills, OSP supported Isabella Tennant's participation in Leadership Marion, an eight-month program with leadership sessions conducted locally in Marion County. As a Fairmont State University employee, Isabella attended and graduated Leadership Marion and was actually chosen as the Co-Coordinator for the next year of the program.

During the 2026 Staff Awards, Amantha Cole received Staff Member of the Year and Christy Burner received Staff Supervisor of the Year. OSP is appreciative of the value Amantha and Christy add to not only OSP but Fairmont State University as a whole.



Five-Year Plan Progress Report

In June 2026, the Fairmont State University Research and Development Corporation (R&D Corp) held its first meeting. As a key component of OSP's Five-Year Plan, Christy is pleased to serve as the Executive Director of the R&D Corp, coordinating efforts to utilize the entity to its full benefit. Other progress toward our Five-Year Plan is detailed below.

FY26 Progress

Objective A: By 2030, increase new external funding by at least 30% to $6.2M (FY21-24 Baseline four year average: $4.8M).

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of proposals submitted to new funding agencies: 18
- Average proposal amount requested: $143,776
- Number of new PIs: 15

Actions Taken in FY26

- Offered professional development sessions for faculty & staff during CTLI Lunch & Learns, August Professional Development Days, and Fairmont State University's American Association of Geographers 2026 Conference Node
- Entered testing phase of Kuali Sponsored Programs platform and aim to go live in FY 2027
- Held first meeting of Fairmont State University Research and Development Corporation, established Board, and reactivated the R&D Corp

Objective B: By 2030, increase office capacity and efficiency in order to provide administrative oversight and compliance assurance for at least 85 active awards (FY24 Baseline: 69).

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of OSP trainings offered to Fairmont State University faculty/staff: 23
- Number of professional development trainings attended by OSP staff: 29

Actions Taken in FY26

- Hosted in-person PI Onboarding and virtual refresher training for 21 Fairmont State faculty and staff
- Grew the office by one full-time employee with experience in financial management through the hiring of Lea Ann Valentine

Meet the Team



Christy Burner, Director of Sponsored Programs

- Started Women's Rugby at Fairmont State as a freshman, later getting her ear bitten in a scrum
- Loves to travel, for the adventure and to justify owning so many travel-sized toiletries



Amantha Cole, Associate Director of Sponsored Programs

- Enjoys traveling and has made mission trips to India and Kenya
- Once traveled through 19 states in only eight days on the back of her husband's motorcycle, but she slept through most of Oklahoma.



Lea Ann Valentine, OSP Business Manager

- Puts the Y2K music on blast when the deadlines get tight and she needs to focus
- Used to race dragsters



Isabella Tennant, Sponsored Programs Associate

- Loves scary movies and has written a horror movie script about a couple hiking at Valley Falls State Park
- Has read every novel of Caroline Kepnes



Hannah Woods, Sponsored Programs Associate

- Recognizes every One Direction song within the first second
- Knows one of the most translated Wikipedia articles of all time: Corbin Bleu's

Thanks to Our Granting Agencies

New and Ongoing in FY26

WEST VIRGINIA Higher Education Policy Commission

NASA

NASA WEST VIRGINIA SPACE GRANT CONSORTIUM

APS

NSF

ARC Appalachian Regional Commission

Truist West Virginia Foundation

35 WV STaR Division

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FIRST2 NETWORK

George W. Bowers Family Charitable Trust

INSTITUTE FOR CITIZENS & SCHOLARS

NASA EPSCoR

BOEING



































Board of Certified Safety Professionals

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