Pilot Project Funding: Return on Investment and Impact of a “Core Voucher” Program

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Program Description

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- In FY2020, the UNC SOM Office of Research Technologies established a Core Voucher Program. This was subsequently funded in FY2023, FY2024, and FY2025.

- Vouchers fund pilot data collection or new method development in UNC SOM cores. Program provides up to $10,000 to pay core invoices directly (within same FY)
  - Eligible applicants - trainees (students and postdocs), staff scientists, or faculty.

- Requires applicants to consult with core directors prior to application and for the core directors to “sign off” that the application met the core’s standards for rigor and reproducibility. In Years 3 and 4 of the program, we required applicants to attest that they understood the core’s requirements for acknowledgment/authorship.

- Progress reports collected at 1-year post-award. Final report collected at 2-years post award (FY2023) or 3-years post award (FY2020).

Return on Investment

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Fiscal Year	Projects Funded	Amount Funded	Grants Awarded	Year 1 Direct Costs	ROI Ratio	Grants Under Review/In Prep	Papers Published	Papers In Prep/ Under Review	Oral or Poster Presentations
2020	27	$230,034	10	$3,417,842	1:14.8	3	15	2	n/a
2023	28	$253,688	4	$1,387,071	1:5.5	17	1	12	18
Total	**55**	**$483,722**	**14**	**$4,804,913**	**1:9.9**	**20**	**16**	**14**	**18**

- Final Report was 3 years post-award for FY20 and 2 years post-award for FY23

Educational Impact

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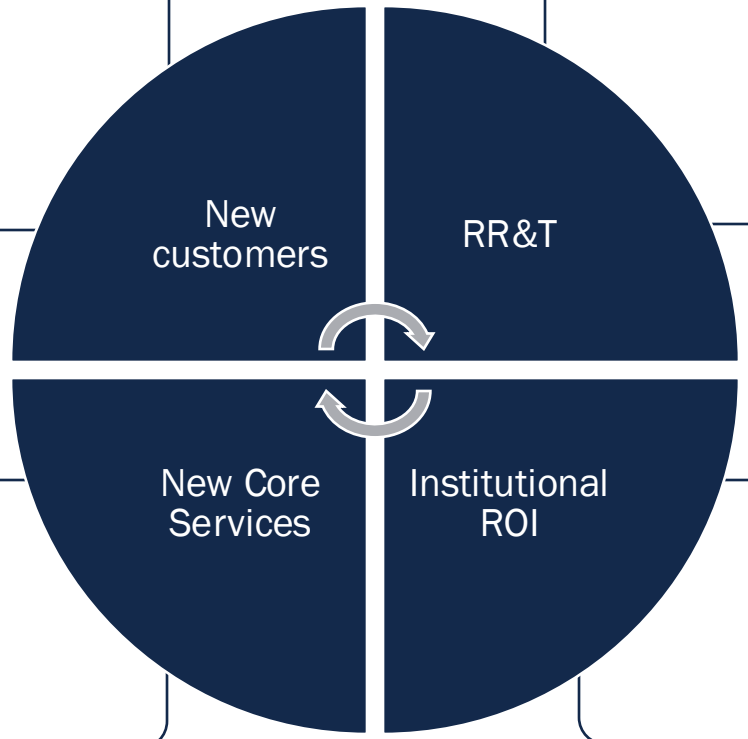
Fiscal Year	Undergraduate Research Assistants	Graduate Students	Postdoctoral Candidates
2020	1	13	5
2023	5	10	7
Total	**6**	**23**	**12**

- One post-doc received an American Heart Association Fellowship for their voucher project
- Two graduate students received UNC Impact Awards for their voucher project

Multi-Level Institutional Effects

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- Added 21 new customers to cores in 2 years
- Supported long-term stability as more grants are written to collect more data using the same cores



- Set expectations and demonstrate value of core consultation
- Impacted trainees and junior faculty to establish practices that improve RR&T overall

- Developed or optimized 9 new core services, protocols, or animal models
- Cores developed expertise in new sample prep/protocols and can advertise to other customers

- Grants: 1:10 ROI ratio (so far!) for first two years of the program
- Publications: 16 publications
- Education: 43 trainees gained experience in conducting pilot projects

Thank you!

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All the volunteer secondary reviewers

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- Questions?
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