



POLICY 7A-29 POLICY ON CROWDFUNDING RESEARCH PROJECTS

Responsible Executive:	Gary K. Ostrander, Vice President for Research
Approving Officials:	Gary K. Ostrander, Vice President for Research
Effective Date:	September 18, 2017
Revision History:	None

I. INTRODUCTION

The following policy applies to crowdfunding projects undertaken by any Florida State University (“FSU”) faculty, staff, or student who plans to use sparkFSU or an external crowdfunding service provider to support a research project.

Definitions:

- “Crowdfunding” refers to the process of obtaining funding by soliciting contributions from multiple people, typically using the internet.
- “FSU resources” refers to the use of FSU’s branding, name or logos, intellectual property, information technology or computing resources (e.g. computers and internet networks), research or laboratory resources, facilities, or FSU email lists. This list is not exhaustive, and this definition is intended to be construed broadly to encompass any/all FSU resources used in any crowdfunding project. “FSU email lists” refers to any and all email lists containing email addresses belonging to FSU students, staff, faculty, administration, donors and alumni.
- “Institutional Research Projects” means any research project that uses FSU resources, affiliates itself with FSU in any capacity, or that falls under a staff or faculty member’s University responsibilities and assignments.
- “Project” or “Campaign” refers to any type of crowdfunding initiated by FSU faculty, staff, or students to support institutional research.
- “Project Leader” is the individual responsible for managing a crowdfunding campaign, who ensures the requirements of this policy are adhered to, and the required campus pre-approvals are obtained before commencing a crowdfunding campaign or project. The Project Leader is also responsible for proper accounting to ensure that donated funds are used for the Project’s approved purposes.
- “sparkFSU” is Florida State University’s online crowdfunding platform that allows faculty, staff, students, and organizations to create and share fundraising campaigns.
- “External crowdfunding platform” refers to any crowdfunding service provider not owned, licensed, or operated by FSU.



II. POLICY

The purpose of this policy is (i) to ensure that FSU maintains control over the use of FSU resources in crowdfunding research efforts, and (ii) to allow FSU to track the level of campus crowdfunding to assess the impact of such activity at FSU. Researchers are required to comply with all applicable University regulations, policies and procedures, including those related to research compliance such as human or animal subjects, conflicts of interest, intellectual property rights, and all other relevant compliance requirements.

All institutional research projects must have a designated Project Leader responsible for seeking the approvals set forth in this Policy. If the Project Leader is a student, the student's advisor must approve the proposed activity. It is the Project Leader's responsibility to complete his/her campaign objectives as indicated in published campaign material. Project leaders are encouraged to communicate with their donors during and at the conclusion of the project.

The Project Leader or team members cannot have a financial interest in the crowdfunding company or any interest that is in conflict with the discharge of University duties. Project leaders or team members cannot accept gifts or anything of economic value from the crowdfunding company if it could be reasonably expected that the gift or favor would influence the action of Project Leaders or team members with respect to the company. Unsolicited advertising or promotional items of nominal value, such as pens or notepads, can be accepted.

Federal grant/contract award requirements are only applicable if the project is already partially funded by a federal award or an application for such an award. Federal funding sources, such as the Department of Health and Human Services (which includes the Public Health Service and the National Institutes of Health), the Department of Defense, and the National Science Foundation, do not allow any scientific overlap between projects they fund and any other project funded by a separate source (e.g., via crowdfunding). The Project Leader is responsible for ensuring that the crowdfunded project is outside the scope of federally-funded research and complies with the terms of the federal award.

Any individual, group, or organization desiring to use registered University symbols or logos for commercial or non-commercial crowdfunding purposes should contact FSU's [Office of Trademark Licensing](#), which shall be responsible for determining the appropriateness of such use, and the execution of any necessary written agreement extending permission for use. The approval and agreement by the Office of Trademark Licensing is separate from the project approval obtained from the Vice President for Research.

Project leaders are advised that crowdfunding sites ordinarily do not provide intellectual property protection. Presenting the campaign to the public could result in others using the ideas and research before they can be protected with patents or other legal measures. The University has an interest in any discoveries or inventions made during project performance. Consult with [FSU's Office of Commercialization](#) about intellectual property protection.

Use of External Crowdfunding Platforms

FSU prefers that Project Leaders use sparkFSU as their crowdfunding platform. SparkFSU allows donors to the project also to be recognized as donors to Florida State University and to claim a charitable tax deduction for the gift when they itemize deductions on their federal taxes. SparkFSU projects will receive all proceeds from donations made toward the research project, regardless of whether the project goal is achieved. The SparkFSU site charges a 2.5% processing fee, which allows for coverage of credit card costs. This is normally less expensive than most non-FSU platforms.



External platforms may be used if requested and approved *prior to* launching a campaign. Approval to use an external platform for a research project may be requested on the [FSU Crowdfunding Research Project Application](#) form. These external platforms usually have their own terms and conditions of use. **FSU will not accept crowdfunding distributions from an external platform whose terms are unacceptable.**

One of the following disclaimers is required to be added to the project's crowdfunding website:

External (Non-FSU) web site disclaimer:

Gifts made through this web site will not be processed by Florida State University or its Direct Support Organizations, including the FSU Foundation. In addition, donors to this site will not receive donor recognition from Florida State University, nor will the contributions be credited toward the donors' lifetime giving totals at FSU. Donors will not receive a gift receipt from FSU for contributions made through this web site. Donors who wish to have their gifts recognized by FSU should make their gifts through the FSU Foundation, which is an approved Direct Support Organization of Florida State University and a 501(c)(3) charitable organization; gifts made to the FSU Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and gift receipts will be provided, as appropriate.

SparkFSU web site disclaimer:

The FSU Foundation is an approved Direct Support Organization of Florida State University and a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Gifts made to the FSU Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Donors to the FSU Foundation shall be provided a gift receipt for tax reporting purposes; in addition, donors' contributions will be credited toward their lifetime giving totals at FSU, and donors are eligible for donor recognition at various gift levels.

All institutional research projects must receive approval *before* they are submitted to, published to, or go live on, any crowdfunding site. See FSU's [Crowdfunding Research Project Application Procedures](#). Budgets must cover all project costs, including crowdfunding platform service fees and indirect costs as described in the Procedures. **FSU reserves the right to reject funds/projects that utilize FSU facilities, equipment, or resources in the event that prior approval was not obtained.**

At the end of the campaign period, any funds disbursed to FSU from the crowdfunding platform service (donated amount less platform fees) shall be deposited into a unique FSU Research Foundation fixed-price account for project expenditures.

III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Fla. Stat. 1004.22

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated when changes are necessary.

/s/ Gary K. Ostrander
Vice President for Research
[Proof of approval retained in file.]