Research in Mexico/ConTex Information Session

October 24, 2019
POB 2.402
Research Resources

UT Rules and Regulations:

• Office of Research Support and Compliance: International Relationships and Activities

• Office of Sponsored Projects: Export Controls: Regulations and Resources

• International Office Risk and Safety

• Departmental/College Research Administration Support
Research Resources

Funding:

• **International Research Grants and Scholarships**

• **ConTex**
  
  • **Collaborative Research Grants** (up to $100k): STEM, Social Sciences, Humanities, Education. Anticipated due date 2/2020
  
  • **Postdoctoral Fellowships** (salary and allowance): anticipated due date 8/2020

• **Doctoral Fellowships**: **Registration** is now open!
  
  1. register with ConTex,
  2. apply to a UT Austin doctoral program,
  3. apply to CONACYT for one of their scholarships ([Convocatorias-Becas al Extranjero](https://www.convocatorias.becasex.org)).
Research Resources

Funding:

• **Pop-up Institutes**: available next Spring
  • Hybrid research planning grant/seed funding mechanism
  • Up to $50k
  • Multidisciplinary
  • Internal and external collaborators (25%)
  • Principal Investigator driven (non-tenure track faculty/researchers can apply for PI status)
  • Summer ‘pop-up’ month

• **Research and Creative Grants**: up to $10k

• **Special Research Grants**: $1k
Research Resources

Collaboration:

- Directory of Faculty and Researchers
- International Research Units
- Research-Related Agreements or MOUs
- Student Reciprocal Exchange
Meet our Distinguished Panelists

Ricardo Ainslie
Professor, Department of Educational Psychology; Director of The LLILAS Mexico Center

Ilya Finkelstein
Associate Professor, Department of Molecular Biosciences; ConTex Awardee

Kenneth Greene
Associate Professor, Department of Government; ConTex Awardee

Tracie Harrison
Professor, School of Nursing; Director of the Center for Excellence in Aging Services and Long Term Care; ConTex Awardee

Juan Murcia-Delso
Assistant Professor, Department of Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering; ConTex Awardee

Jorge Piñon
Director, Latin America and Caribbean Energy Program, Jackson School of Geosciences
Research in Mexico and ConTex Funding
Faculty Development Panel Discussion
October 24, 2019

Resources at a glance:

UT Rules and Regulations:
- Office of Research Support and Compliance: International Relationships and Activities
- Office of Sponsored Projects: Export Controls: Regulations and Resources
- International Office Risk and Safety
- Departmental/College Research Administration Support

Funding:
- International Research Grants and Scholarships
- ConTex
  - Collaborative Research Grants (covers up to $100k in eligible expenses): STEM, Social Sciences, Humanities, Education. Due date: March 13, 2020. Expect award announcements in late summer; typically, August.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success rate:</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Awards</th>
<th>Total UT Austin Awards</th>
<th>Total UT Austin Proposals</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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- Postdoctoral Fellowships (covers salary and allowance): anticipated due date 8/2020
- Doctoral Fellowships: Registration is open for 2020 awards.
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- Pop-up Institutes: available next Spring
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- Special Research Grants: $1k

Research Collaboration:
- Directory of Faculty and Researchers
Panel Discussion – Salient Points:

On establishing collaborations:

- Build relationships: keep in mind that building relationships that lead to funding may take time: for example, a recent, multi-million Conacyt grant awarded through the Mexican private sector/oil sector to UT took about 4 years to develop.
- Take advantage of connections made when applying to domestic grants that might have applications in Mexico (or other geographic areas).
- Find a problem that needs a solution: focus on the funder’s priorities. In the case of ConTex funding, its focus reflects Conacyt priorities.
- Contact the Mexico Center or Texas Global to explore existing UT-led Mexico programs, conferences or other events.
  - Puentes event: includes over 17 researchers from Mexico and the UT campus: this event focuses on health issues within communities in the State of Texas and in Mexico. Joint collaborations have resulted, deepening our relationship with Dell Medical School. Contact Dr. Ricardo Ainslie to learn more.
- Take advantage of UT Austin’s presence at UNAM: small and large meeting spaces are available, as well as in-country advisory support. Contact Texas Global for more information.
- Seek networking opportunities available through professional or research conferences. In one ConTex award example, this is how the lead PIs met.

On overcoming hurdles:

- Political climate: expect recent political changes in Mexico to affect funding opportunities and existing relationships (interests change/priorities change), but don’t let this discourage you from building them. Relationships tend to outlive political climates and are instrumental in finding key connections in a foreign country.
- Timing constraints: this can be crucial in matching Mexican needs with ours (UT Austin/Texas).
- Funding support: think strategically: the OVPR Special Research Grants and the Research and Creative Grants (seed funding) can help launch larger collaborations.
- Understand levels of expertise/resources available on both sides: be cognizant of the level of expertise of your counterpart at the foreign institution, and be open to in-kind contributions. This will help you articulate the kind of budget/support needed.
  - Lab work: dividing work between each of the Co-PIs seemed to make it easier/seamless to collaborate. In some instances distributing the work into time modules might work better (i.e. first 6 months conducted in Mexico/ last 6 months, in U.S.)
• Identify human resource investment/collaborators needed: work this out in person whenever possible.
• Challenges working outside the U.S.: In some areas there is no internet (this can be crucial when collaborating remotely). Acclimation may be necessary. Context is important: things are different in the city versus in rural areas (understand the differences before committing to a research location or your choice of research subjects).
• Administration/budget needs: understand cost differences and policy guidelines (i.e. equipment or cash transfers may not be allowed from the U.S. to Mexico and vice versa).
• Incentives may or may not be allowed, depending on location.

• Travel in dangerous areas: check UT Global’s restricted regions list before, and during travel. You must vouch for student-travel and may need to sign health release forms.

Lessons Learned/Outcomes:
• The administrative burden of managing a ConTex grant is heavy, but rewards such as investment in human capital and long-term collaborations make it worth it.
• The quality of the students and postdocs that come from Mexico through the ConTex program are top-notch.
• More PIs in the liberal arts and social sciences should apply for a ConTex grant, as they are currently underrepresented: funding can go farther than in STEM fields.
• Designing a budget for ConTex on both sides (Mexico/UT Austin) can be challenging; start work on this early.
• One-on-one Principal Investigator relationships seem to have more longevity/continuity than larger projects.
• Many opportunities are available: the key is to find those that benefit both sides.