UCM Academic Affairs Strategic Opportunity Fund

In Fall 2024, the Provost launched the UCM Academic Affairs Strategic Opportunity Fund with an investment of approximately $200,000. The program provides one-time funding to support innovative initiatives that advance one or more of the goals outlined in the UCM Strategic Plan. Funding requests range between $5,000 and $50,000.

For Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), ten initiatives were selected for funding. The progress report below provides a status update on each of these funded projects. The second year of funding is now underway for FY26 and a call for proposals has been issued.

Academic Affairs Strategic Opportunity Fund – FY25 Update

CTE BSE Online Expansion, $46,500

Project leaders: Michelle Conrad, Krystle Gremaud, Julie Lewis, Department of Career and Technical Education, and Andrea Dieckman, Office of Clinical Services & Certification

The purpose of the project is to move our currently face-to-face BSE in CTE content areas to be offered in online and/or online synchronous formats. We started the project by conducting a review of all 50 states on CTE certification and community college programs to target recruitment initiatives for states with either no CTE teaching certification programs or geographically limited certification programs. We also reviewed teaching reciprocity and national fingerprinting for teaching background checks for online students. We started the procurement process to utilize GoReact software for virtual student teaching observations and purchased/obtained equipment for offering synchronous online courses.

This summer we met with IMC to create advertisements (website & electronic banners and print advertisements) for national advertising and are in the process of launching national advertising through national CTE organizations this fall. This fall we are doing a trial run of utilizing the classroom technology with students who could not be on campus for classes. We are also conducting a trial run with the GoReact software with our fall methods and field experience students to work out any problems or concerns prior to launching with completely online students. We will continue with the GoReact software with these students through their student teaching experience in the Spring. Our goal is to recruit students nationally for Spring and Fall 2026 for a completely online BSE in CTE content areas!

UCM Allied Health Expansion, $20,600
Project leaders: Laurel Hogue and Amye Gilio, Online & Learning Engagement

It is with great pride and gratitude that we share the progress of the Practical Nursing/Allied Health Skills Lab. The lab is located in our new space at the Summit Technology Center in Lee's Summit. The funds received through the Opportunity Grant have made it possible to create a contemporary learning environment with the purchase of furnishings and other hands-on learning tools including:

- Manikins (Adult and Infant)
- Hospital Beds

- Over the bed tables
- Computer carts
- Sharps containers
- Glove racks
- Geriatric Chair
- Hoyer Lift
- Stand Up Lift
- Anatomical Models
- Hospital Partition Curtains/Rods
- Isolation Carts

We are in close contact with the Missouri State Board of Nursing and are hopeful to be approved for students to begin their Practical Nursing education and training in mid 2026. Our first cohort is anticipated to be 15-20 students that will obtain their practical nursing certificate during an 11-month program. And, upon successful scores on their state board exam, begin practicing as Licensed Practical Nurses. A role that has recently been modified by the State Board of Missouri to expand their scope of practice due to the ongoing nursing shortage and

increased cost of care. After a successful first cohort, our future long term goal is to have 2 cohorts staggered across each 11 month program thereafter.

Recently, we have had a few community leaders and potential UCM Practical Nursing Educator candidates onsite to see where we are with progress and to provide feedback. All were impressed with the contemporary space and items being placed within. They are eager to have our future students in their clinical care areas during onsite clinical practicums. They also have interest in providing employment after graduation.

While we continue to work on the practical nursing program, the skills lab is being used by Phlebotomy, CNA, and Medical Assistant Students. We are very appreciative, and we are looking forward to the call for 2025/2026 Opportunity Grants. Many of the hands-on items (par stock/consumables) for students are still needed to complete the required list for the State Board.

Develop a New Online Graduate Certificate in Lean and Project Management (GC-LPM), $11, 820

Project leaders: Suhansa Rodchua, Hamza Saad, and Erica Spurgeon, School of Industrial Sciences & Technology

The Graduate Certificate in Lean and Project Management (GC-LPM) has made significant progress this summer 2025. Two new graduate courses IndM 5250 Advanced Project Management and IndM 6550 Essential Topics and AI in Lean Project Management were fully developed through collaboration between two faculty members and one graduate student worker. The team created a full syllabus, schedule, instruction manual, supplementary materials, assignments, tests, games, and simulation to achieve learning outcomes. DLII supported the development of a virtual reality (VR) experience featuring a 360° laboratory view of Grinstead 006 Lab and specialized software (MS Project), with AI tools integrated into the course design. These 2 new courses and a brand new GC-LPM proposal will be submitted to the departmental (SIST) Curriculum Committee for the review/approval on September 16, 2025.

UCM Digitization Lab, $20, 288

Project leader: Joshua Nygren, Department of History

The UCM Digitization Lab has been making steady progress since being awarded the Opportunity Grant in Spring 2025. In late August 2025 we received the final item from a vendor, bringing to completion the procurement of all the equipment included in our grant proposal. In the interest of financial stewardship, we purchased most of the equipment by June 2025, thereby avoiding a tax on those funds. Some items came in under budget, so in addition to the equipment proposed, we were also able to purchase five new desk chairs for the lab. We have approximately $500 remaining from the grant, which we may use to renew our subscription to DSpace, an online repository requested by our partners in the College of Education.

The awarding of the grant also triggered a search for lab space. Over the summer, faculty and staff from the representative programs (Drs. Joshua Nygren and Jon Taylor from History, Dr.

Jenna Kammer from Library Science and Information Services, and Mr. Darin Plummer from Communication and Digital Media Production) toured possible lab spaces. We settled on Wood 116-118 near the Department of History offices. The equipment has now been installed and will be available for use by the end of the Fall 2025 semester.

Open Educational Resources for Graduate Students in the College of Education, $20,000

Project leaders: Jenna Kammer and Lauren Hays, College of Education

Seven open educational resource (OER) projects were selected after a blind review by the OER Learning Circle Task Force. The selected projects are listed below:

1. Amanda Harrison (Department of Educational Technology and Library Science) will redesign a course to be zero textbook cost (an estimated savings of $57 per student)

2. Carla Williams (Department of Early, Elementary, Middle and Physical Education) will author an open textbook to supplement her course (an estimated savings of $90 per student)

3. Kris Schuler (Department of Early, Elementary, Middle and Physical Education) will author an open textbook for preservice teachers related to creating a lesson plan (an estimated savings of $29.95 per student)

4. Pik Wah Lam Chesnut (Department of Special Education and Behavior Analysis) will redesign a course to be zero-textbook cost (an estimated savings of $80 per student)

5. Daniel Gilhooly (Department of Educational Foundations and Literacy) will adapt existing OER for use to replace a textbook (an estimated savings of $65.95 per student)

6. Lauren Hays (Department of Educational Technology and Library Science) will author supplemental materials to complement a course (and for use in other courses) (an estimated savings of $30 per student)

7. Jenna Kammer (Department of Educational Technology and Library Science) will redesign a course to be zero textbook cost (an estimated savings of $30 per student)

The College of Education library liaison, Sara Evans, is working with project leaders and participants to curate resources, provide training, and support faculty with intellectual property questions and practices. Participants are currently planning their projects and will meet in October to determine the learning needs of the group.

Jenna Kammer and Lauren Hays have coordinated with Josh Bolick, Head of Scholarly Communications and Copyright from the University of Kansas Libraries. Josh will speak virtually to the learning circle and the UCM community at large about OER (registration is available at: https://forms.gle/siSr9RvSkQbkHrcA8). Beginning in October, the learning circle will continue to meet monthly, and projects will be completed by May 2026. At this time, $5,600 of project funds have been distributed. $14,000 in faculty stipends will be distributed throughout the Fall and Spring semesters. $400 will be distributed in the Fall and Spring to be split between two guest lectures.

College of Education STEAM Learning Hub and Camp $10,000

Project leaders: Rene Buress and Kelly Pryde, Department of Educational Technology & Library Science

We requested $18,500 for an opportunity grant to host an elementary student STEAM camp in the summer of 2025. We were granted $10,000 and hosted the camp July 28 - August 1, 2025. Our camp hosted 17 students from 9 school districts surrounding the UCM campus.   It was a huge success. The total cost of our camp was $11,906.   We used department and college funds to make up the difference in cost after grant funding. Food costs and paying camp counselors made up most of the budget.

A major goal of this project was to introduce students and their families to UCM and all that it can offer them. We introduced students to many faculty members and areas of campus, all who talked to them about all types of majors and careers they can consider in STEAM fields. The faculty planned engaging activities for the campers.   We also showed students fun areas of campus such as the airport, Pertle Springs, UCM Farm, the rock climbing wall, etc.   Another goal of this project was to host the camp at zero cost to rural school attendees who lack access to camps like this due to both their location and their families' abilities to pay the cost for camps. If we were to charge for our camp this would cost families approximately $700 a week to cover costs. Using the anchor school model and positive momentum along with what we learned from Summer 2025, we would like to host the camp again in Summer 2026.   We would add a second, middle school-aged focus camp. We have learned that we would have significant cost savings with having at least 50 campers on campus, as this can open the dining halls for lunch, which is the most affordable lunch option.

Here is a POWERFUL quote from a parent we received about STEAM Camp - I can't sing the praises of UCM's STEAM camp enough. My son was exposed to an incredible range of topics-- aviation, neuroscience, agriculture, robotics, music, biology, and more. Every day, he was inspired to explore new fields he probably would have never considered. Each of the activities provided was hands-on, engaging, and most importantly, fun for the kids. The faculty clearly took the time to deliver content at an approachable level and made him feel like his ideas mattered and that he belonged in spaces like labs, studios, and university classrooms. My son left the camp with broader horizons and ideas about what he could do and accomplish. The encouragement and confidence this experience gave him were truly priceless. I want to commend the organizers for creating these opportunities for the kids and for the incredible care they took of them throughout the week.

Highlander Curtains Replacement $50,000

Project leader: Ashley Miller-Scully, Division of Theatre & Dance

The new Highlander curtains have been ordered, but are delayed in production. We anticipate delivery at the end of October and hope to have them hung and in use for our upcoming November play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. These new curtains meet industry and safety standards and will serve as a wonderful upgrade and addition to this beautiful theatrical space on campus. They will be enjoyed by our students and audiences for many years to come.

Communication Disorders Upgraded VALT Camera System for Enhanced Clinical Training and Observation, $34,802

Project leaders: Ryan Peterson and Tim Welch, Department of Human Services

The new camera system was purchased and installed over the summer. The new system is currently being used by faculty and staff. The clinic upgraded the current video observation system with the VALT (Video Audio Learning Tool) system. The system provides a high-quality platform for recording and managing video observations of clinical sessions. This innovative system improves the clinic's ability to support student learning, provide faculty supervision and increase client outcomes. Upgrading the VALT system allows supervisors to provide in the moment feedback to students during clinical sessions. The system includes a new cloud server, a new suite of cameras and user-friendly tools for recording, reviewing and analyzing clinical interactions, which ensure we provide the highest-quality educational experience for our students and clients.

James C. Kirkpatrick Library Shuttle Bus Shelter, $27,136

Project leader: Janette Klein, Dean, James Kirkpatrick Library

With support from the UCM Academic Affairs Opportunity Fund, a new dedicated shuttle bus shelter is being installed to serve students commuting to and from the Missouri Innovation Campus (MIC) in Lee's Summit.

The shelter provides multiple benefits for students:

- Increased visibility of shuttle bus arrivals and departures.
- Protected space to wait during hours when the library is closed.
- Convenient proximity to the shuttle's loading and unloading area that is protected from inclement weather.

As academic programs at MIC and the Summit Tech Campus continue to grow, and more students take advantage of these opportunities, the shuttle bus shelter represents UCM's commitment to creating a supportive student experience and ensuring safe, accessible, and equitable transportation options for all.

While initial construction delays occurred, the location now includes a fully poured concrete pad and is designed to be fully ADA-compliant. Final installation of the shelter structure at the southeast entrance of the James C. Kirkpatrick Library is scheduled for completion by the end of September.

The shuttle bus shelter is expected to enhance the overall commuter experience by providing a safe, reliable, and weather-protected waiting area. By improving both accessibility and convenience, this project supports UCM's broader goals of student success, retention, and opportunity for all learners, particularly those balancing long commutes with their academic commitments.

JCKL Student Parent Support Initiative (Family Study Room), $26,742

Project leaders: Maya Kucij, Assistant Dean, James C. Kirkpatrick Library; Sara Evans, Subject Librarian to the College of Education; and Janette Klein, Dean, James C. Kirkpatrick Library

Thanks to the funding received for this initiative, a former computer instruction room on the 2nd floor of JCKL has been transformed into a welcoming, family-friendly study space designed to support student parents. To ensure that student voices guided the design, a Student Parent Advisory Board was convened in the Spring of 2025.

The completed Family Study Room combines family-friendly design with academic resources, creating a balanced environment for both parents and children. Features include:

- Child enrichment resources, including interactive toys, books, and activity centers like a play kitchen.
- Furniture and supports such as a child-sized table and chairs, a rocking chair, and a baby swing.
- Installation of child step stools and changing tables in nearby restrooms.
- Academic technology with two computer terminals and a scanner, giving student parents convenient access to research, coursework, and document management while supervising their children.

This space can be reserved by UCM students, faculty, and staff accompanied by children for up to four hours per day. A key is available for checkout at the first-floor Information Desk.

By offering both a safe play space for children and dedicated technology for academic work, the Family Study Room empowers student parents to stay engaged in their studies while caring for their families.

The Family Study Room will be an important support for student parents, helping them remain academically engaged in a supportive environment that reduces barriers to academic success while balancing caregiving responsibilities. By reducing barriers to study and providing access to both child-friendly resources and essential academic tools, the initiative advances UCM's commitment to student success, persistence, and an inclusive campus environment by addressing the unique needs of non-traditional and caregiving students.

The grand opening celebration will welcome students, children, faculty, staff, and community members to tour the space, enjoy refreshments, and learn more about how UCM supports student parents. To raise awareness of this important addition to the resources and services provided by JCKL, announcements will be shared through targeted social media, UCM Daily, UCM Weekly, and a press release from IMC.