Stellenbosch-UNIANDES Seed Fund

Call for Applications

Partnership Background

Stellenbosch University (SU) and Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES) share a commitment to advancing knowledge through research, innovation, and international collaboration that contributes to addressing complex societal and global challenges. Recognising the value of connecting expertise across the Global South, both institutions have established the SU–UNIANDES Joint Seed Fund to foster new collaborations and strengthen existing ones.

Designed as a catalyst for collaboration, the programme provides seed funding for early-stage initiatives that enable researchers to explore new ideas, establish interdisciplinary partnerships, organize joint workshops, develop pilot activities, and lay the foundations for larger collaborative projects. Beyond supporting individual initiatives, the programme seeks to cultivate enduring institutional relationships, promote reciprocal learning and academic mobility, and create opportunities for future joint research and creation projects, collaborative academic activities, and competitive external funding.

Through this initiative, SU and UNIANDES aim to strengthen a strategic partnership that advances academic excellence while contributing to the development of innovative and contextually relevant solutions to global challenges.

Objectives

Together, SU and UNIANDES strive to build their partnership as a way to consolidate their joint presence in the Global South beyond their immediate geographical context. Through this seed fund initiative, both universities aim to:

- Strengthen SU-UNIANDES partnership through clearly defined joint activities.
- Enable exploratory research and/or curriculum-linked collaboration.
- Seed pilot activities that lead to competitive applications to larger external grants.
- Promote interdisciplinary, challenge-led work relevant to South Africa and Colombia.
- Build pathways toward co-publications, joint grants, postgraduate engagement, reciprocal visits, or longer-term institutional programmes.

Themes

Proposals may address any field of mutual interest where both institutions have built strong capacities. Applications that speak to the following shared priority areas with a comparative or contextualized perspective are particularly encouraged:

- Climate change, biodiversity, environmental sustainability and just energy transition.
- Global and public health.
- Democracy, social justice, equity, migration and inclusive societies.
- Data science, artificial intelligence and the digital society in and from the Global South.

Funding amount and duration

Number of awards: Up to five (5) joint projects in the 2026/2027 cycle, subject to available funds. Projects will be considered for funding on a rolling basis as proposals are received, evaluated and approved.

Per project, the following funding would be applicable:

- ZAR R85,000, for expenses incurred by SU.
- US $6,000, for expenses incurred by UNIANDES.

Project duration: 12 months

Funding will be administered independently by each institution in accordance with its own financial policies and procedures. Funds may only be used to support expenses incurred by the respective institution.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applications must include two Principal Investigators (PIs): one from SU and one from UNIANDES. Both PIs are jointly responsible for the proposal and must each meet the eligibility requirements of their respective institution. Eligible teams may include SU and UNIANDES academic staff, researchers and professional research support staff. Early-career researchers are encouraged to apply. In the case of UNIANDES, applicants must be permanent or fixed-term, full or part-time staff. The PIs' employment contracts must cover the full project period. At SU, the applicants must be employed on a full-time basis.

Eligible costs

Activities / Costs supported:

All requested costs must be necessary for the proposed activities, appropriately justified, and in accordance with the financial policies of the applicant's institution.

- Travel and visa costs. Flights in classes higher than economy are not allowed. SU Staff travelling must adhere to the internal Travelling and Subsistence policy.
- Accommodation, food expenses and local transportation costs (Each institution will support visiting participants by providing a list of recommended accommodation options either on campus or nearby, depending on whether the visit takes place at their institution)
- Reasonable event/workshop costs (activities should be held on campus or justification provided for alternative locations).
- Research support (e.g. access charges, virtual platforms, consumables, transcription costs, research assistant hourly rates), not typically exceeding 20% of the total project budget.

Activities / Costs not supported:

- Salaries, salary supplementation or bonus.
- Conference attendance without a clear partnership-building purpose.
- Retrospective costs or activities already funded from existing budgets.
- Tuition fees for undergraduate or postgraduate students.
- Non-SU or UNIANDES staff expenses (including travel and accommodation)

Evaluation Process and Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on a rolling basis as complete applications are received.

Eligible proposals will be jointly reviewed by a joint selection committee, determining whether the proposal will be funded. Only proposals supported and selected jointly will be eligible for funding.

Applicants will normally be notified of the outcome of their application within one (1) month from confirmation that the application is complete and eligible for evaluation.

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the objectives of the Joint Seed Fund.
- Strength and complementarity of collaboration between the two institutions.

- Potential to generate long-term collaboration, external funding opportunities, and/or broader academic impact.
- Feasibility of the proposed work plan and use of the requested funding within the proposed 12-month project period.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI): Proposals that incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences into the project.
- Proposals that also include young researchers / emerging scholars as part of their team composition.

Research Integrity and Ethics Requirements

Projects must comply with the applicable research integrity and ethics policies and procedures of both SU and UNIANDES. Where required, applicants are responsible for obtaining the necessary ethics approvals before commencing any research activities involving human participants, animals, personal data, or other regulated research.

Submission of applications

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis from 23 September 2026. The call will remain open until the available funds have been fully committed or until otherwise communicated by SU and UNIANDES.

Each joint proposal must be submitted once, by the UNIANDES PI through the UNIANDES institutional platform Platypus, under the Internal and Joint Calls module. This single submission will constitute the formal application to the SU–UNIANDES Joint Seed Fund on behalf of both Principal Investigators and will be shared with Stellenbosch University for the corresponding review and evaluation process.

Applications must include:

- Completed Application form with Project Summary.
- Two short CVs from the two PIs.
- Two institutional letters of support, one from each participating institution (SU and UNIANDES), confirming institutional support for the proposed collaboration.
- Detailed project budgets, using the Seed Fund Budget Tables (Excel template).

The evaluation period will begin once the application is confirmed as complete and meets the eligibility requirements of the call. Applicants may be contacted if clarification or additional documentation is required before the proposal proceeds to evaluation.

Reporting

- Complete a joint survey at the end of the funding period.
- For UNIANDES, a final technical and financial report must be submitted within one month after the completion of the project.

Notes

- Applicants are encouraged to include audiovisual material in the final report, where appropriate, to document the implementation process and the outcomes of the project. Explicit consent must be obtained before photographing or recording identifiable individuals, in accordance with the University's Personal Data Protection Policy.
- Any unspent funds remaining at the end of the project must be returned to the Vice Presidency for Research and Creation at Universidad de los Andes and/or to the relevant office at Stellenbosch University, as applicable.
- SU and UNIANDES may contact you for up to three years after the completion of your project in order to gauge the longer-term impact of the funding.

Contact Information

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