

Our world faces many significant challenges related to the constructed environment from the ecological repercussions of human activity to the effects of evolving technology, the economic pressure to deliver projects more efficiently and the human pressures of population growth and globalization, our industry works at the core of the great issues of our time. In 2007, Burt Hill re-established our research initiative in the form of an Applied Research initiative to ensure that we lead the world in meeting these challenges.

Throughout our practice, employees working with these issues every day have the innovative ideas for solving problems and improving lives. To tap this rich vein, and as a vehicle for employee opportunity, Burt Hill earmarks funds each year to support applied research projects undertaken by staff. This program offers all employees the opportunity to pursue research topics of personal interest and develop research skills beyond the scope of a billable project. Last March, we awarded our first grants to four exciting research projects on a range of topics. The program attracted interest from 27 individuals spread out across ten Burt Hill offices. Many of those expressing interest in the program had been with Burt Hill for less than one year, though there were enough Burt Hill veterans to bring the candidates' average length of tenure with Burt Hill up to one year, 11 months. Of these intrepid souls, 17 individuals/partners went on to develop and submit a full research grant proposal, which identified a research question, a methodology, schedule, and budget and identified

how the outcomes of the project would be beneficial to Burt Hill. Liaisons from the ARG, other Burt Hill staff, and outside experts all provided assistance to candidates as they turned their research interests into fully developed proposals

Research topics submitted for the 2008 grant program ranged from nanotechnology and advanced facade systems, to urban composting, prefabrication, planning, and simulation tools. Many proposals tied into sustainable design themes, and several sought ways to improve knowledge sharing across the firm or to expand market our services.

Final proposals were submitted on February 22, 2008, and four grants were selected for funding this year. Aivann Lualhati will be using a statistical method to rate general contractors' compliance to occupational safety standards in Dubai, UAE.; Robert Manna will explore the capacity of crowd simulation software to act as a generative design tool; Ileana Schinder will develop a holistic process to guide higher education clients in the selection of appropriate strategies to become truly sustainable campuses; and Brian Tucker will be working on a comprehensive visual portfolio database that will support greater interoffice connectivity and professional knowledge exchange about our design projects.

The Internal Grant Program is projected to run as an annual program.

