



University of California Research Opportunity

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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Submit comments to PARC@ucop.edu. Final RFP Release Date: DECEMBER 10, 2008

Research Program

The University of California is pleased to announce a new research opportunity to fund Multicampus Research Units (MRUs). This opportunity is open to all currently funded MRUs as well as to new MRUs proposed by campus groups. Following the recommendations of the MRU Advisory Board (http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html), funding decisions will result from a competitive peer review of MRU proposals in response to this call. Approximately \$20M/yr will be the total funds available for the MRU program.

Guiding Principles

A major objective is to support research proposals that tackle timely, challenging and societal-relevant problems; having proposals for entirely new MRUs compete with "renewal proposals" for already existing MRUs will serve this purpose. The guiding principles for this competitive review are:

1. An MRU can be organized either to carry out a focused research effort or to provide competitive grants in an important field of research. This continues existing practice.
2. Each existing MRU will be required to compete for new funding in the open competition, choosing the area(s) that provide(s) the best fit for its mission.
3. Proposals submitted by existing MRUs will be subject to the same evaluation criteria as new proposals.
4. Funding the maintenance and operation of UCO, White Mountain Research Station and UC MEXUS will be considered separately from this call.

Focus Areas for Multicampus Research Units

The Advisory Board recommended six categories for MRUs. Proposals may span more than one category. The first two encompass all areas of scholarship, including the arts, humanities, social, life and physical sciences and engineering, whereas the last four concentrate on traditional fields. They are:

1. International and Area Studies: Interdisciplinary research focused on the major regions of the world is of growing importance to the nation and to California. MRU proposals concerned with clearly internationally relevant and "global" research challenges are particularly encouraged (e.g., climate, health, energy policy, sustainability); these proposals should ideally include identified international partner institutions or be driven by the objective to work towards the establishment of desirable strong international research collaborations in the identified fields.
2. Critical California Issues: Certain areas of research are of special interest to the state because of the geography, demography and economy of California. Examples include transportation, marine resources, energy, health and the environment, including climate change.

3. Arts and Humanities: Support for areas in which seed-funding can lead to future extramural grant proposals.
4. Social and Behavioral Sciences: Support for fields in the social and behavioral that do not receive significant funding from the federal government.
5. Biological and Health Sciences: Important research areas outside the main focus areas of the National Institutes of Health that would benefit from relatively modest funding.
6. Emerging Sciences and Technology: Especially in physical sciences and engineering support for promising new fields and new ideas within existing fields that will give a competitive advantage in developing new areas of research.

Deadlines

Proposals are due Friday, April 6, 2009 at 5:00 pm PDT.

Proposals should be submitted electronically, and submission instructions will be available at: http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html

The current timeline anticipates final decisions and notifications for funding in June 2009.

The Office of Research and Graduate Studies will maintain a web page with further information about guidelines for proposals: http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html

Selection Criteria for Successful Proposals

The criteria for funding Multicampus Research Units identified by the Advisory Board include:

1. Outstanding Research. The research should be at the highest levels of international research in the proposed areas.
2. Enhancement of UC Competitiveness. The proposed research program should enhance the ongoing research capability of the University in the relevant field and the future competitiveness of participating researchers in seeking extramural funding.
3. Advantages of a multicampus approach. All participating institutions in a successful MRU proposal will be expected to have a significant number of faculty and researchers committed to the proposed research agenda. Furthermore, a governance structure must be proposed that ensures a balanced allocation of resources to all participating institutions consistent with high quality research.

Proposals must have active participation by faculty from **at least three campuses and may include UC-affiliated national laboratories (Los Alamos, Livermore, Berkeley)**. Proposals involving more institutions will receive higher priority in the evaluation. Proposals should demonstrate that the research productivity of the team of researchers will take advantage of complementary strengths among the institutions and thus be greater than the collection of efforts from individual team members.

Additional benefits might come from increased efficiency as a result of common facilities or administrative support.

4. High-risk, High-Payoff Research. Some of the multicampus research portfolio will be dedicated to MRUs that emphasize research programs considered too risky for federal support. Teams emphasizing this approach should specify the nature of the risk and explain the potential for a high payoff, that is, for extraordinarily influential results that could transform a field of research.

5. Support for Innovative and Translational Research. The multicampus research program can provide opportunities for UC researchers to initiate lines of inquiry developed to fit federal funding programs that emphasize innovation. Translational research, i.e., research combining basic research efforts in physical or engineering sciences, for example, and applied research efforts concerned with the ultimate practical application of basic research findings and innovative technologies, is especially encouraged.

In addition to the criteria outlined above, four additional factors will be used to evaluate proposals:

1. Commitment of campus matching support, which may be in dollars or in kind;
2. A plan to secure extramural support;
3. Previous or ongoing collaborations for program development;
4. Involvement of graduate students.

Eligibility

Full time UC faculty with PI status may apply as project directors. (Exceptions to policy will be considered for non-tenured or non-faculty directors if justified in the proposal and supported by the PI's campus). At least three campuses and/or UC-affiliated national research laboratories must have significant faculty or researcher involvement. The application should be submitted through the proposed director's campus or lab. The campus should be willing to act as the host campus and so indicate by including a supporting letter from the Executive Vice Chancellor as part of the proposal package. The letter should state a commitment of appropriate campus space and office equipment.

Proposal Review

Proposals will be evaluated by peer review panels selected by the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) in consultation with the campus Vice Chancellors for Research. The VPRGS will use rank-ordered lists from the peer review panels to prioritize programs for funding. It is anticipated that the panels will comprise researchers drawn from the University of California, the national laboratories, and external scholars, selected to minimize conflicts of interest and ensure a fair and balanced review.

Scope of the Proposals

The proposer must justify both the monetary level of the award and the proposed time to make the MRU self-supporting. This time frame may be flexible within 2-5 years, depending on the focus of the research, and successful MRUs may reapply for additional funds at the end of their award period. The proposal should clearly present:

1. The activities of the program;
2. The required level of funding to carry out those activities effectively and efficiently;
3. A series of benchmarks for the proposed time period, and metrics or milestones by which success can be evaluated;
4. A description of how the program will either end or transition to non-UCOP funds at the end of the funding period; and
5. An explanation of the methods to be used to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the program.

Proposal Content and Format

Proposals will be limited to 6 pages including tables and figures, but not including references and curriculum vitae. Key fields in the electronic submission form will include:

1. **Program Information:** Program title, opening statement describing the vision of the proposal, proposed time frame, abstract, keywords, budget requested, and project narrative. The narrative should describe explicitly the benefit of the proposed research program to the University of California and its relevance to California (including state agencies and commissions if appropriate).
2. **Accountability:** Proposed advisory structure, governance, benchmarks, outcomes, evaluation and assessment (as described in Scope of Proposals above).
3. **For existing MRUs:** In addition to project information: brief retrospective of program achievements, budget history, success in securing extramural support, and a strong rationale for the continued benefit of the research program to the University of California.
4. **Attachments:** Literature cited (2-page limit), key personnel (co-investigators and collaborators and their institutions), curriculum vitae for principal investigator/director, itemized budget (including other sources of funding), budget justification, letter of campus support from campus EVC.

Proposed Review and Selection Schedule

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| October 2008: | Final recommendations from MRU Advisory Board Review of report by Academic Senate, Vice Chancellors for Research and MRU Directors. |
| November 2008: | Develop final RFP following consultation with Vice Chancellors for Research, Academic Senate and the UC Community. |
| December 8, 2008: | Comment Period Ends |
| December 10, 2008: | Release Final RFP |
| April 6, 2009: | Proposals due |
| June 2009: | Announce results of peer review; establish timetables for funding new MRUs and any shifts in funding existing MRUs. |

Research Program Oversight

Oversight of the multi-campus research programs will continue to be the responsibility of the UC Office of the President. Successful awardees will provide annual online reports to the VPRGS on the progress of the program (as measured by proposed benchmarks) and expenditures. Because funding is intended to lead to self-sustaining efforts, we anticipate no carry-forward balances at the end of the funding cycle. Funds will be released yearly after review of annual reports.

For Questions about this Research Opportunity, please contact PARC@ucop.edu.