



University of California Research Opportunity

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

January 21, 2009

### **Research Program**

The University of California is pleased to announce a new opportunity to fund UC Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives (MRPI). This opportunity is open to all currently funded multicampus research units (MRUs) as well as to new MRPIs proposed by campus groups. All programs and initiatives funded in this competition will hereafter be referred to as “MRPIs”. Following MRU Advisory Board recommendations ([http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru\\_rfp.html](http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html)), funding decisions will result from a competitive peer review of proposals in response to this call. We anticipate approximately \$12 million/year total will be available for the MRPI program, and these funds will replace, not supplement, current MRU funding.

### **Guiding Principles and Scope of Activities**

Goals of this competition are to facilitate and support outstanding research and cutting edge discoveries that advance a field, impact the lives of Californians, increase UC’s competitiveness, inform public policy and support innovative graduate student research. This opportunity is open to all fields of research. Specific categories of research recommended by the MRU Advisory Board are a) international and area studies, b) arts and humanities, c) social and behavioral sciences, d) biological and health sciences, e) emerging sciences and technology, especially physical sciences and engineering, and f) critical California issues. Proposals will be reviewed by subject matter experts in areas a) – f), and there will also be a comprehensive review spanning all fields to establish the balance of funding among disciplines. All proposals should indicate which category or mix of categories from this list of areas best describes the proposed research.

This competition is intended to support:

- areas in which seed-funding could lead to future extramural funding, especially in areas where UC campuses are underfunded relative to other comparable research institutions;
- areas that are underfunded by the government in relation to their perceived importance to the state or the nation; and
- emerging fields of study, innovative or multidisciplinary research that could increase UC’s research competitiveness.

MRPIs provide stimulus and cohesion for thematic topics important to UC and California and serve as a resource for the UC system. MRPIs can be organized to carry out focused research efforts, to provide competitive grants in important fields of research, or to facilitate high levels of interdisciplinary collaboration and interaction that advances innovative research.

### **Review and Selection Criteria**

The review and selection criteria for success in this competition include:

1. **Excellence:** Highest quality research in compelling and important topics that create or strengthen UC's research capabilities to advance scholarship, student training and knowledge, particularly in areas of importance to California.

2. **Competitiveness and Innovation:** The proposed MRPI should enhance UC's competitiveness in attracting faculty, graduate students, awards, prizes, honors and extramural funding. Proposals should indicate how participants will benefit from complementary strengths among the campuses and labs, or how opportunities will increase through shared resources or administration. Translational and applied research efforts concerned with the ultimate practical application of basic research findings and innovative technologies are especially encouraged in applicable fields. Innovation may be demonstrated by interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches at the cutting edge of two or more fields.

3. **Systemwide Impact and Benefits:** Proposals that identify the impact and benefits to the UC system of the proposed approach will receive highest priority in evaluation. Thus, successful proposals will take into account the following:

- Engagement of faculty, researchers, and graduate students from three or more campuses or national laboratories;
- Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary collaborations that promote new educational curricula, systemwide creative processes, and/or access to the best available resources (national laboratories, medical centers, museums and collections, natural reserves and more)
- Contributions that help position UC for strategic excellence
- Additional benefits to the multicampus approach might be demonstrated through increased efficiency as a result of common facilities or administrative support.

*Note:* A MRPI that proposes to offer competitive grants in an important area of research or to connect campus projects in a multicampus network should indicate how its approach will identify excellence and leverage the impact of research across the system. If allocations to individual recipients are proposed, the proposal must articulate how this allocation of systemwide funds enhances UC systemwide research and could not be better achieved through the funding of collaborative or multidisciplinary approaches.

In addition to the criteria outlined above, five additional factors will be considered in evaluating proposals:

1. Involvement of and benefit to graduate students of the proposed MRPI
2. Plans to secure extramural support, if available, to make the MRPI self-supporting
3. Previous or ongoing collaborations relevant to the proposed MRPI that demonstrate potential to extend the reach or impact of the proposed research or activities
4. A governance structure that ensures systemwide impact and a balanced opportunity for participation and competition for resources across UC
5. Sufficient campus commitment and administrative capacity to support the activities of the proposed MRPI

### **Eligibility & Exclusion Criteria**

1. Proposals should identify a Director and host campus for administering the award. The Director must be a full-time UC faculty member with PI status at the host campus (Exceptions will be considered if justified in the proposal and supported by the PI's campus). The proposal should be submitted through the Director's campus. The host campus must indicate its willingness to provide an

administrative home through a supporting letter from the Vice Chancellor for Research as part of the proposal package. The letter should state a commitment of appropriate campus space and infrastructure. Projects, programs, initiatives, or institutes with other organizational models should indicate their means of logistical support and infrastructure and, where appropriate, document support from relevant campuses.

2. Funding the maintenance and operation of UCO, White Mountain Research Station and UC MEXUS are exempt from the competition this year; they will be considered separately from this call. All other existing MRUs are required to compete for funding in the open competition, and will be subject to the same evaluation criteria as new MRPI proposals.

### **Application Requirements**

Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (described below). LOIs will be used to assist in the administrative preparation of the peer review. No pre-selection will be based on Letters of Intent.

### **Letters of Intent**

All applicants must submit a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) of one page to be considered in the full competition. The LOIs must be submitted online by **Monday, March 16, 2009 at 12:00 noon** with a copy to the host campus Vice Chancellor for Research. Submission instructions will be available at: [http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru\\_rfp.html](http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html) in January.

The LOI should include the following information:

- 1) Name, title and affiliation of the proposed Director;
  - 2) Host campus;
  - 3) Campuses/national labs that will have a significant role in the proposed research, including brief description of any specialized facilities or resources relevant to the proposed activities;
  - 4) Brief description (in abstract form) of proposed scope of research and activities, and disciplinary field emphasis.
  - 5) Proposed start date and anticipated number of years of support (2-5 Years) to be requested.
- Proposals from current MRUs requesting support to extend activities under this new MRPI funding opportunity may propose start dates of July 1, 2009. All newly constituted MRPIs should propose start dates of January 1, 2010, or July 1, 2010 as most appropriate for their proposed activities. The UC Office of the President will make final determinations of award start dates of successful proposals based on the availability of funding, but no later than July 1, 2010.

### **Proposal Review**

Proposals will be evaluated by expert reviewers empanelled by the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) in consultation with the Vice Chancellors for Research and the Academic Council Chair. Panels will be composed of faculty and researchers drawn from the University of California, the national laboratories, and non-UC research institutions. Reviewers will be selected for their expertise in the areas of scholarship identified under "Guiding Principles and Scope of Activities." Review assignments will be made to ensure a fair and balanced review and to minimize conflicts of interest.

### **Scope and Content of the Proposals**

Both LOIs and Proposals must be submitted electronically. Submission instructions and further information will be available at: [http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru\\_rfp.html](http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html).

Proposals should be limited to seven (7) pages single spaced, and include the following components:

1. Proposed Program and Activities (5 pages): The activities and goals of the program, and the contribution of the proposed activities to advancing outstanding research, enhancing UC's competitiveness, and providing systemwide benefit and impact. The narrative should explicitly identify the benefit of the proposed research program to the University of California and its importance to California (no more than 5 pages, including tables and figures). Existing MRUs may include a 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 (no more than an additional half a page total).

2. Accountability (1 page total): An explanation of the methods to be used to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the program, including a series of benchmark, outcomes, or evaluation tools for accomplishing the goals within the proposed time period, or milestones by which success can be evaluated. Applicants may also include description of proposed advisory structure and governance to ensure systemwide impact and success of research.

3. Timeframe and Budget (one-half page): The award period, and level of funding needed to carry out activities effectively and efficiently, and a description of how the program will either end or transition to non-UCOP funds at the end of the funding period, if appropriate. *Applicants must justify both the monetary level of the award and the proposed timeframe to make a significant impact in the field. This time frame may be flexible, spanning 2-5 years, depending on the approach and timeline of the research, and successful MRPIs may reapply for additional funds at the end of their award period.*

4. Attachments may include: Literature cited (2-page limit), key personnel (co-investigators and collaborators and their institutions), curriculum vitae for principal investigator/director, if appropriate, itemized budget (including other sources of funding), budget justification, letter of campus support from campus Vice Chancellor for Research (required); other supporting appendices as appropriate. Existing MRUs may also include a separate appendix giving a more extensive list of accomplishments using prior MRU funding than the half-page summary in section 1.

### **Timeline, Selection Schedule and Submission Deadlines**

Monday, March 16, 2009: LOIs due at 12:00pm (noon) PST.

Wednesday, April 15, 2009: Proposal submission deadline at 12:00pm (noon) PST.

June 2009: Announce results of competition; Establish timetables for funding new MRPIs

### **Research Program Oversight**

Oversight of the multicampus research initiatives and multicampus research units 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. Funds will be released yearly after review of annual reports. No carry-forward balances at the end of the funding cycle will be permitted.

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