CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Establishing new centers and institutes in the College of Arts & Sciences

ANNOUNCEMENT DATE

26 January 2024

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00PM EST on 15 March 2024. No exceptions will be made for late submissions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OBJECTIVE

The College of Arts & Sciences intends to provide financial, programmatic and administrative resources to establish new units organized for the explicit purpose of pursuing extramurally funded research, scholarship and creative activity (RSCA). New units may also elect to pursue extramural or institutional resources to support related educational and engagement programs. Depending on the nature of the pursuit, new RSCA units might self-identify as a Community of Scholars[1], Center[2], or Institute[3].

Support will be provided to originate wholly new endeavors and to expand or otherwise elevate existing RSCA units in the College. If support is being sought for an existing unit, the endeavor must engender new opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable or unattainable.

All endeavors must be based in the College but can involve partnerships with other Colleges or Schools at the University as well as external partner organizations like Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL).

ELIGIBILITY

Who may serve as Principal Investigator: Tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty can lead a proposal submission as a Principal Investigator (PI). PIs must be fully or predominantly (≥50%) appointed in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Who may participate on a proposal team: Tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty can participate as a Co-PI or Senior Personnel (SP) in a proposal submission. Half or more (≥50%) of Co-PIs and SP must be fully or partially (≥25%) appointed in the College of Arts & Sciences. Other Co-PIs and SP can be appointed in other Colleges or partner organizations.

Limit on number of proposals per PI, Co-PI, or SP: An individual may participate as a PI in no more than one (1) proposal, and may participate in one (1) other proposal as a co-PI or SP. An individual who is not participating as a PI may participate in two (2) proposals as a co-PI or SP. If an individual exceeds the stated limit, the first proposal(s) received (based on the date and time stamp) will be accepted and the remainder will be returned without review.

Limit on number of participants per proposal: No more than five (5) individuals may participate as named investigators in a proposal. If the proposal team exceeds the limit, the proposal will be returned without review.

SUBMISSION TRACKS

Track I submissions: Project teams can elect to solicit support to initiate or elevate a Community of Scholars to establish the basis for developing a Center or Institute in anticipation of a subsequent call for proposals from the College or external funding entity. It is anticipated that a subsequent call of similar intent will be issued at the end of Year 2 or early during Year 3 of this program.

Track II submissions: Project teams can elect to solicit support to initiate or elevate a Center or Institute.

AWARD INFORMATION

Estimated number of awards:

- *Track I submissions*: ≤3
- *Track II submissions*: ≤2

Anticipated award sizes:

- *Track I submissions*: ≤$25,000 per award
- *Track II submissions*: ≤$250,000 per award

Anticipated award disbursement and award period:

- *Track I submissions*: ≤$25,000 will be disbursed during the first fiscal year, to be spent out over two fiscal years.

- *Track II submissions*: ≤$25,000 will be disbursed during the first fiscal year, ≤$100,000 will be disbursed during the second fiscal year contingent on performance; ≤$125,000 will be disbursed during the third fiscal year contingent on performance.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Programmatic support: Teams receiving Track I and Track II awards will work closely with the Office of Research and Creative Activity (ORCA) in the College to:

- build or otherwise engage communities of scholars, practitioners and other prospective partners;
- finalize organizational and governance structures;
- identify key performance benchmarks that align with proposed work plans;
- draft a business plan that details prospective revenues and costs in alignment with proposed sustainability plans to more comprehensively address near and longer term financial, administrative, personnel, space, and facility requirements.

Administrative support: Teams receiving Track I and Track II awards will work closely with a dedicated staff member in the Finance Office of the College to manage all post-award needs such as establishing accounts to access and spend out institutional and other (e.g., extramural) funding.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposal format: All components of the proposal must be formatted with one (1) inch margins, with single-spaced text in 11-point Arial font.

Proposal components: Proposals should be written to be understandable by both experts in the topic area and readers from other disciplines. Proposals should include the following components:

- *Summary:* A ≤300 word abstract should summarily describe the nature of the proposed pursuit. The abstract should minimally include information about: Track and scope (i.e., CoS, Center, Institute), topical focus, strategic advantage(s), on-campus community, potential partnerships outside of the College, prospective source(s) and magnitude of extramural funding.

- *Description of pursuit*: A ≤5 page narrative should summarily describe the nature of the proposed pursuit. The narrative should be structured according to the following subsections:

- *Track and scope (i.e., CoS, Center, Institute).* Provide a succinct one-sentence statement, including the name of the prospective RSCA unit.

- *Vision, mission*. Provide a succinct (e.g., 2-3 sentence) statement describing the vision and mission of the prospective RSCA unit.

  - *Vision statement*: description of the overarching aspiration(s) of what the unit aims to achieve or to become; the statement serves as a guide for future courses of action.

  - *Mission statement:* description of how the RSCA unit is different from other units and what the unit will do to achieve its vision. The mission statement describes the unit's core purpose and focus. The vision and mission statements are supportive of one another, where the mission statement is more specific.

- *Alignment*. Provide a succinct (e.g., 2-3 sentence) statement describing how the unit will explicitly support the College's mission.

- *Topical focus*. Clearly define the theme(s) of the work that the unit will focus on, with reference to the most relevant discipline(s) or inter/cross/trans-disciplinary domain(s). The theme(s) should not be too broad (e.g., "the environment") nor too narrow (e.g., "the environment of subterranean ecosystems across the Cumberland Plateau). Clearly define at least one 'grand challenge' within the theme(s) that the prospective unit will be strategically positioned to address.

- *Strategic advantage(s).* Describe why the prospective unit will be strategically positioned to address the theme(s) that will be focused on, with comparisons drawn to at least three (3) national and/or international competitors.

- *Work plan.* Provide a two (2) year (Track I) or three (3) year (Track II) narrative and tabular work plan (e.g,. GANTT chart) detailing specific goals, objectives, activities, and time frames. Objectives must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound). Goals and objectives might focus on a range of different endeavors including but not limited to: research and scholarship including proposal preparation and submission; education, instruction, student engagement; clinical, outreach, or related service(s). The work plan must also describe efforts to document the outputs of proposed activities.

- *Organizational Structure and Governance.* Describes the position(s) within the unit that will provide strategic direction, administrative oversight, and

other activities essential for supporting the unit. Describe any committee(s) or board(s), and their respective function(s). Describe how decisions will be made and describe a succession plan to address the possibility of a change in leadership for any foreseeable or unanticipated reason. Optional: illustrate how the unit will be structured through an organizational chart.

- o *On-campus community*. With some explanation, identify the prospective academic (e.g., Departments) and/or RSCA units (e.g., Centers, Institutes) within and outside of the College (but at the University) that include concentrations of likely participants in the prospective unit.

- o *Potential off-campus partnerships.* With some explanation, identify the off-campus institutions and/or organizations (e.g., Divisions or Centers at ORNL) that are likely to be partners or are likely to be substantively involved in the prospective unit.

- o *Financial plan and sustainability plan*: Succinctly describe anticipated major expenses in the execution of the prospective unit's work plan. Identify the likeliest source(s) of funding (i.e., agency, program office, specific RFPs) for sustaining and/or growing the activities of the prospective unit, noting the anticipated amount(s) necessary to support key elements of the unit's work plan. Summarize a plan for acquiring funding during and following the award period.

- *References*: References should not exceed 2 pages in length. References should be presented in a standard, complete bibliographic format such as Harvard, Chicago, MLA, Vancouver or APA formatting as per the following example:

  Lesen, A. E., Rogan, A., & Blum, M. J. (2016). Science communication through art: objectives, challenges, and outcomes. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, *9*(31), 657-660.

- *Budget:* Using the template available through the submission portal, provide a line-item budget detailing anticipated expenditures for each fiscal year of the award period. Expenditure categories may include (but are not necessarily limited to): personnel, fringe benefits, travel, supplies and equipment, tuition, and other miscellaneous expenses. Proposal team personnel may request compensation in the form of summer salary, stipend support, or funding for course buy-outs.

- *Budget Justification:* In a narrative format not to exceed one (1) page, provide detailed justifications of all proposed expenditures.

- *Biosketch(es)*: A biosketch should be provided for each member of the proposal team. Biosketches can be generated by SciENcv, not to exceed two (2) pages in

length. Alternatively, a one (1) page biosketch can be provided that includes the following information:

- *Contact information*: name, on-campus address, and email address
- *Education*: Institution(s), degree(s), and date of degree(s) earned for baccalaureate and/or graduate degree(s)
- *Academic and professional position(s)*: For the most recent ≤4 positions since the most recent degree earned: Institution or organization, appointment (i.e., title of position), starting and end dates of appointment (write "present" for the end date of a current appointment).
- *Relevant RSCA products:* List a total of ≤5 citations for publications and/or descriptions (title, location, run dates) of creative pursuits (e.g., exhibition or production) most relevant to the proposed pursuit.
- *Relevant synergistic activities*: List ≤3 other activities most relevant to the proposed pursuit

BUDGETARY INFORMATION

Additional institutional sources of support: Voluntary commitments of additional institutional support (e.g., unit-level support or support from a partner organization) are encouraged but not required.

Commitment(s) of additional support from existing or anticipated extramurally funded sources (e.g., a grant, a contract, a fellowship, etc.) is not permitted. However, investigators can elect to provide information on existing or anticipated extramural funding that might complement or bolster prospective College funding. This information should be provided in the "*Financial plan and sustainability plan"* section of the proposal.

In the event that additional institutional support is available, the following information should be provided as a concise addendum to the budget and budget justification:

- Amount(s) of additional support
- Source(s) of additional support
- Form(s) of additional support (e.g., direct, in-kind, etc.)
- Period(s) of availability (i.e., when might the additional support be available?)
- Anticipated expenditures (i.e., how will the additional support be used to complement or bolster College funding?)

Indirect costs (F&A): Indirect costs are not an allowable expenditure.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A proposal cover page must be completed and a single .pdf file attachment (inclusive of all proposal documents) must be submitted through the online portal accessible at:

https://tiny.utk.edu/COS_Center_Institute_Proposals

Complete submissions must be received by 5:00pm EST on 15 March 2024.

Questions about the call for proposals or submission process should be directed to:

Michael Blum, Associate Dean of Research and Creative Activity, College of Arts & Sciences. Email: mblum@utk.edu

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Anticipated proposal submission, review, and disbursement timeline*:* Shortly after the formal call for proposals is issued, all faculty in the College will be invited to attend informal informational meetings that will be held on 5 February and 8 February 2024 (announcement forthcoming). The intention of the meetings is to provide prospective applicants: guidance on the nature and objectives of the funding opportunity; an opportunity to discuss prospective ideas that might serve as the basis of proposals; and an opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals interested in pursuing support. Submissions will be reviewed shortly after receipt, with teams notified of review outcomes before the end of the Spring 2024 semester. Funding will be made available shortly after 1 July 2024.

Review process. Each proposal received by the College will be acknowledged and assigned to three (3) individuals for assessment and evaluation based on standardized metrics. Reviewers will be an academic administrator and/or a faculty member of the College not participating in any proposal submission(s). Individuals will be selected by ADRCA Blum, who will oversee the review process. Each reviewer will be assigned an equivalent number of proposals to review, with assignments made to avoid potential conflicts of interest. One or more review panels will be convened to discuss proposal submissions and make recommendations for awards. College leadership will then review recommendations and decide on awards to launch a robust and diverse portfolio of pursuits.

Selection criteria: Akin to the NSF review process, reviewers will be asked to consider: what proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits might accrue if the proposed pursuit is successful.

Reviewers will be expected to adhere to two overarching selection criteria modeled after those set by the NSF, as follows:

- *Intellectual Merit*: The proposed pursuit should be of the highest quality, well justified, and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
  - Pursuits should strive to create new knowledge and enable breakthroughs in understanding across strategic areas of the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, mathematics, and/or combinations thereof.
  - To what extent does the proposal suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative pursuits?
- *Broader Impacts*: A proposed pursuit should contribute to achieving societal goals through the work that the prospective unit will undertake, or through associated efforts complementary to that work.
  - Pursuits should strive to advance health, cultural vitality, prosperity and/or welfare for the good of society.

Additional criteria specific to this call will include the following:

- A proposal must present a compelling vision and mission, focusing on a topic that is already- or can readily become- of strategic advantage, thus engendering the national and international reputation of the College and University.
- The topic should allow for strategic development over near-term and longer-term time horizons.
- A proposal must present a compelling work plan and strategy, including a well-defined trajectory for establishment and maturation of the prospective unit to achieve national and international impact.
- A proposed work plan should be well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale.
- A proposed work plan should include clearly stated goals with specific descriptions of the activities that have readily documentable outputs.
- A proposed pursuit must involve a substantial (in number and intellectual breadth) segment of the faculty, staff and students in the College and perhaps also elsewhere at the University and/or in partner organizations.
- The proposal team must be well qualified to achieve the proposed pursuit; individuals must be well recognized for technical leadership in the proposed topic and must be capable of coordinating activities of a larger technical community in the College and perhaps elsewhere at the University and/or in partner organizations.
- A proposed work plan must be achievable with the resources that will be made available and must be achievable given current and anticipated constraints (e.g., space limitations). Consideration will be given to whether strategic partnerships are in place or are possible to address likely challenges.
- A sustainability plan must lay out well-defined, regular, and substantive opportunities for future funding that significantly exceeds the initial investment(s) made by the College and/or University.
- Proposed financial and sustainability plans must adequately account for resource availability and constraints, with expectations of anticipated future support set

accordingly. Consideration will be given to whether strategic partnerships (e.g., academic-industry) are in place or are possible to progressively grow funding opportunities into the future.

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DEFINITIONS

[1]**Community of Scholars.** Also sometimes referred to as Research Coordination Networks (RCN), a Community of Scholars (CoS) is designed to foster communication and promote collaboration among participants with diverse expertise and who share a common interest in a new or developing area of research, scholarship and/or creative activity (RSCA). The goal of a CoS is to advance a field or create new directions in RSCA pursuits by supporting groups of investigators to communicate and coordinate their research, engagement, training and educational activities across disciplinary, organizational, and geographic boundaries. A CoS provides opportunities to foster collaborations, including international partnerships where appropriate, and to address interdisciplinary topics of interest. A CoS should promote the pursuit of innovative ideas for implementing novel networking strategies, collaborative technologies, training, broadening participation, and/or development of community standards for data and meta- data, among other possible topics of interest.

[2]**Center.** Smaller entities than Institutes, Centers should have a highly specific research focus or theme (possibly interdisciplinary) that anchor a vision and mission. Centers should have ongoing funding that includes multiple grants or contracts, or a commitment of internal funding. Centers typically involve faculty and staff from one or more departments, colleges, or units engaged in dedicated research, scholarship or creative activity (RSCA). A Center provides an organizational base for RSCA pursuits in a given academic area or closely related areas and serves as a vehicle for RSCA involving persons from a variety of internal administrative structures. The "Center" structure may facilitate efforts of a College or University to obtain extramural funding in specific areas. It may serve as a formalized link between the academic communities, professional communities, and public constituencies in the area(s) of focus.

[3]**Institute.** An Institute is an organization intended for research, scholarship and/or creative activities (RSCA). The RSCA pursuits should be extensive in scale, have substantial external funding or endowment, involve at least two departments, and be directed by senior faculty. The program of an Institute is broader in scope than that of a Center. It is typically interdisciplinary in nature and associated with a physical and organizational infrastructure for RSCA pursuits. It might engage faculty and staff from multiple units who depend on a set of common facilities for their work. An institute may house within it one or more Centers.