

December 4, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: UNT Faculty

FROM: Wendy K. Wilkins, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Request for Proposals - 2009 Research Cluster Competition

The Office of the Provost, in close collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, intends to continue the research cluster process with primary focus on the hiring of world-class faculty. Hiring associated with the first set of funded research cluster proposals is now underway, and should result in the appointment of highly-accomplished, senior research faculty as well as talented and capable junior faculty in some of UNT's most productive and promising areas.

As a result of last year's research cluster competition, which was completed in the summer of 2008, six clusters were chosen to be fully supported, and another two received seed funding (see announcement <http://research.unt.edu/news/announcementsevents.htm>). We believe that continued investment in selected areas is critical to achieving UNT's strategic goal of increased research and creative activities, and to quickly move our institution into the ranks of major public research universities in Texas and the nation. Therefore, we plan to conduct a second research cluster competition, to be carried out during the spring of 2009. The new competition may result in the selection of up to three new research clusters.

Therefore, by means of this RFP, we solicit your proposals for building additional research clusters. We request that proposals articulate the vision of how the proposed cluster would significantly enhance UNT's

- Research mission
- National and international recognition and reputation
- Faculty research productivity (honors, awards, creative works, doctoral production, and/or research funding)
- Collaborations and partnerships
- Faculty diversity
- Movement into niche research/creative areas of distinction, allowing for rapid rise in significance, quality, and visibility of our research and/or creative activities

It is expected that a proposed research cluster

- will be cross-disciplinary and will involve more than one department, preferably more than one college or school;
- will be built on existing faculty expertise and infrastructure, or achievable with a reasonable investment of new resources;
- will yield collaborations with academic institutions, industry, business, government agencies, and/or nonprofit organizations in the D/FW Metroplex, the State, and/or at the national level; and
- will (in areas in which there is opportunity for external funding) lead to initiatives that are self-supporting and preferably funded by federal agencies (including NSF, NIH, DOD, DOE, DOEEd, etc.) or foundations and/or other nonprofit organizations.

A research cluster proposal, in addition to addressing the listed criteria, should include

- a three-year search and hiring plan that makes references to existing faculty positions in the participating departments/colleges/schools and indicates the required new positions (including rank and approximate salary levels);
- projected start-up costs (equipment/instrumentation, post-doc and graduate student support, etc.) and sources for these funds, including funds available at department and college-school level;
- a metric for determining return on investment (ROI), particularly in terms of new research funding; increased doctoral production; increase in numbers/rates of publications, presentations, exhibits, performances; and/or faculty recognition and awards; and
- a statement describing how the proposed research cluster relates to, complements, or improves upon college/school and/or University strategic plan(s).

Please be aware that the 2009 process will give priority to promising areas not requiring substantial new space or infrastructure upgrades or renovations. No major new commitments of this sort can be made until those already approved are closer to completion. Thus, the next investments in research clusters will be directed primarily toward personnel (faculty, graduate students, professional staff, etc.).

Proposals must be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development on or before 5:00 pm, February 16, 2009. Each proposal must include a signature page indicating that each involved department chair and dean has been informed that the proposal is moving forward. A suggestive format for research cluster proposals is available on the website of the Office of Research and Economic Development.

All proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of two department chairs, two deans, two faculty members selected by the Faculty Senate, and two senior and two junior faculty members selected by the Office of the Provost in consultation with the Office of the Vice President for Research. The review process may include a detailed presentation by the proposal group and a question and answer session.

Successful research cluster proposals are expected to be implemented during the summer/fall of 2009 with searches conducted during the 2009-10 academic year for faculty positions to begin in Fall 2010 or later. Some research clusters may be deferred for a later start-up date.

For further details or clarification, please contact either Ruthanne Thomas or Kenneth Sewell (Associate Vice Presidents in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development).