



**Date:** May 11, 2016

**To:** Faculty, Deans, Chairs, and Directors

**From:** A. Dale Whittaker, Provost and Executive Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Dale Whittaker'.

**Subject:** Faculty Cluster Initiative

In 2014, we created the **Faculty Cluster Initiative**, which was designed to leverage our existing strengths and foster the development of strong, interdisciplinary, and diverse teams focused on solving today's most challenging scientific and societal problems. In our inaugural year, we received 43 pre-proposals, demonstrating innovative faculty-led teaching and research from across our university.

Of those proposals, six clusters were funded and allocated 33 new faculty lines:

- Cyber Security and Privacy
- Energy Conversion and Propulsion
- Genomics and Bioinformatics
- Prosthetic Interfaces
- Renewable Energy Systems
- Sustainable Coastal Systems

**To continue strengthening our faculty and advancing unique areas of excellence, we are announcing the Faculty Cluster Initiative 2.0 and anticipate two to four new clusters will be selected for the 2017-18 academic year.**

The Faculty Cluster Initiative provides us opportunities to enhance and expand UCF's academic strengths, but also to create new distinct areas of impact representing the diversity of faculty at UCF. I believe this initiative will help advance our strategic areas of research, teaching, and service across our university and the larger community. It will provide faculty new resources and opportunities for collective strength through collaboration across disciplines and the ability to devise new ways of teaching our students.

The strength of this initiative comes from faculty depth, the ability to translate depth across disciplines, and the diversity of lived experiences. Its strength also comes from its ground-up approach. That is why **we are asking faculty, with the support of their deans and chairs, to propose which interdisciplinary areas of excellence should be granted faculty clusters in this second round.**

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Cluster proposals should incorporate multiple disciplines and units across UCF, including the biological and physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, technical disciplines, interdisciplinary centers, and professional schools. Ultimately, faculty clusters should foster collaborative and interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach across disciplines and fields, developing new areas of inquiry, application, and creative work. They should harness the power of scale to transform lives and livelihoods for our future.

Funding for the new faculty hires is contingent upon funding available in 2016. The Office of the Provost would again provide 100 percent of the faculty line and 65 percent of the start-up costs. The colleges, departments, and institutes would be expected to cover the remaining 35 percent of the start-up costs for these positions.

A Request for Proposals is attached to this memo with details on the criteria for the Faculty Cluster Initiative and the application process. Pre-proposals and subsequent invited proposals will be vetted by a diverse committee of faculty and administrative representatives from colleges, as well as a select group of external stakeholders.

Pre-proposals are **due at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2016 to [facultycluster@ucf.edu](mailto:facultycluster@ucf.edu)**.

Subsequent evaluation rounds will follow, and successful clusters will be announced at the end of the Spring 2017 semester.

**We will be holding a faculty-wide information session on the Faculty Cluster Initiative at 4 p.m. on Monday, May 23, 2016 in HEC 101.** Any questions about the program or proposal process should be directed to Dr. Christopher L. Parkinson at [Parkinson@ucf.edu](mailto:Parkinson@ucf.edu).

Clustering positions around areas of excellence will enhance our opportunities for recruiting teams of faculty members committed to advancing groundbreaking research and global impact. Thank you in advance for your commitment and creativity in this process.

ADW:dms

**cc:** Christopher L. Parkinson, Professor, Special Assistant to the Provost on Faculty Clusters  
Manoj Chopra, Professor, Department of Civil, Environmental and Construction Engineering

# Faculty Cluster Initiative: Request for Proposals

(updated May 11, 2016)

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Included in the University of Central Florida's five goals are achieving international prominence in research and key programs of graduate study and strengthening undergraduate programs. To help realize these goals, we must establish new models of discovery and learning that blur the boundaries of traditional disciplines and allow for advancement in critical areas of excellence that enhance our unique potential for impact.

The Faculty Cluster Initiative, first introduced in 2014, is designed to foster the development of strong, transdisciplinary academic teams focused on solving tomorrow's most challenging societal problems. Transdisciplinary research combines and builds from discipline-specific theories, concepts, and methods for a comprehensive understanding of the problem being examined and generates readily translatable solutions to the problem.

Areas of focus, developed by faculty with support from department chairs, directors, deans, and vice presidents, should advance knowledge at the intersection of traditional disciplines through transformative, large-scale collaborative efforts in research and teaching. Clusters are expected to be locally relevant while having an impact regionally, nationally, and internationally. They must be innovative, timely, complement, or build upon existing strengths, and, within their research focus, help to develop a critical mass of skills/personnel that gives UCF a competitive advantage.

We welcome cluster proposals that integrate all areas of the university, including the biological and physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, technical disciplines, interdisciplinary centers, and professional schools. Clusters foster collaborative and transdisciplinary research, education, and outreach across disciplines and fields, developing new areas of inquiry, application, and creative work. They should harness the power of scale to transform lives and livelihoods.

UCF has many strengths, and the Faculty Cluster Initiative provides the opportunity to enhance and expand these strengths and to create new distinct areas of impact representing the diversity of faculty at UCF. **Cluster proposers should plan for hiring three to five highly promising faculty at any rank, and explain how these hires contribute to the above goals.** Individuals comprising the cluster should have diverse backgrounds (disciplines, funding availability, life experiences, etc.), and each must contribute, through their own unique expertise, to the intellectual core of the cluster.

The Faculty Cluster Initiative has been integrated into UCF's anticipated hiring plan for 2017-18. In the upcoming academic year, UCF leadership is seeking faculty input to help define areas of

excellence through innovative cluster proposals. Approximately 10 to 20 new cluster positions could be available to increase scholarship and creativity. The Office of the Provost will provide 100 percent of the cluster faculty salary lines and 65 percent of the start-up costs. Colleges, departments, and centers/institutes will be expected to cover the remaining 35 percent of the start-up costs for these positions.

Faculty groups are encouraged to develop proposals for *academic* clusters based upon the following considerations:

- Ability to achieve national or international preeminence in proposed cluster area;
- Alignment with UCF's goals and the university's 2016 Collective Impact Strategic Plan;
- Potential to affect the interdisciplinary area of proposed excellence;
- Ability to strengthen the preparation and success of our graduate and undergraduate students;
- Potential to build on existing areas of excellence at UCF, while promising innovative and previously unexplored areas of scholarship;
- Potential to attract new and sustainable resources from diverse sectors to sustain the scholarship or creative activities of the cluster;
- Inclusion of multiple colleges/centers/institutes; and
- Demonstration of a balanced hiring plan that includes a strategic vision for attracting diverse faculty (ethnicity, gender, rank, life experiences, etc.).

### **Application Process**

***Please note: An informational session will be held on Monday, May 23, at 4 p.m. in Room HEC 101 and another on Tuesday, Aug. 30, at 3:30 p.m. in HEC 101.***

The request for proposals follows a two-step process: (1) a pre-proposal; and (2) an invitation to prepare a final proposal, including an in-person presentation.

Pre-proposals and subsequently invited final proposals will be vetted by an evaluation panel of diverse faculty and administrative representatives from colleges, as well as a select group of external stakeholders, co-chaired by Drs. Christopher Parkinson and Manoj Chopra. Please note that an invitation to submit a full proposal does not guarantee that the cluster will be selected for funding. Additionally, if you have a cluster idea, we strongly suggest that you start a conversation with the administrators who would support the cluster (chairs, directors, deans, and/or Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies), as their participation and support in the proposal are paramount.

### **Pre-proposal Format:**

The pre-proposal can be no more than four single-spaced pages, 12-point font with 1-inch margins. It must have a cover sheet (page 1) and three additional pages that include the following:

- Cover sheet, 1 page maximum**

  - Name of cluster
  - Cluster leader (no more than two names)
  - Participating units
  - Participating UCF faculty
  - Names and emails of 3-5 potential external reviewers who are experts in the proposed area
  - Participating dean's and, if a center/institute, the VP of Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies' signatures
  
- 1 page maximum**

  - 250-word summary of the idea written for the public
  - 250-word summary of the idea written for the field of expertise
  
- 1 page maximum**

  - Short- and long-term cluster objectives incorporating potential impact on research and teaching (no more than half-page total)
  - Description of the alignment between cluster objectives and department/institute/center, college, and university's Collective Impact Strategic Plan (no more than half-page)
  
- 1 page maximum**

  - A graduate and undergraduate curriculum statement explaining how the cluster activity will integrate into, and improve upon, a teaching curriculum (no more than half-page total)
  - A proposed hiring plan (detail specific areas and faculty ranks; do not include the names of targeted individuals; no more than half-page total)

- Pre-proposals must be accompanied by **one** joint letter of support written and signed by all the relevant chairs and/or directors.

  - The joint letter from the chairs/directors should explicitly address the department or school's interdisciplinary collaboration readiness – defined as its commitment to accepting, and fairly evaluating, the scholarship of interdisciplinary research and faculty operating on the edges of a discipline, or crossing over traditional disciplinary boundaries, as well as its support of the interdisciplinary curricula associated with the cluster.
  - It is important that the joint letter details the plan for shared administrative support for the cluster (IT support, travel, purchasing, etc.).
  - PLEASE NOTE: Although no letter is required at the pre-proposal stage from participating unit, deans, or Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, their signature on the cover page is required. It is imperative that discussions take place concerning the joint understanding of everyone's commitment to share resources and physical infrastructure in order for the proposed cluster to be successful if selected.

**Pre-proposals must be emailed to [facultycluster@ucf.edu](mailto:facultycluster@ucf.edu) by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2016. The pre-proposal documents (pre-proposal & chair/director letter) should be one (1) PDF file named “(Last name of Lead).pdf.”**

Pre-proposals will be evaluated by the evaluation panel, which, will include faculty and community stakeholders who will be nominated by the deans, Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, chairs, and university faculty and selected by Provost Whittaker and his team. Successful pre-proposal applicants will be notified **by close of business on Thursday, Nov. 10, 2016** and provided with feedback to help in the preparation of their full proposals. There will be a workshop on **Wednesday, Nov. 16, in HEC 101** for all finalists to help them understand the requirements of the proposal.

#### Final Proposal Format:

- The final proposal can be no more than 10 single-spaced pages, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins, and will include all the elements requested in the pre-proposal. In addition, final proposals are required to provide detailed plans on how the cluster will achieve the following:
  - National or international prominence;
  - Integration with the university’s new Collective Impact Strategic Plan;
  - Scholarly and creative works that can help address challenging societal problems facing us in the coming century;
  - Enhanced capacity to develop a robust, diverse, and recurring funding base that is commensurate with the proposed scholarly area;
  - Scholarly output that would have an influence across multiple disciplines;
  - Strengthened undergraduate/graduate education at UCF (i.e. increase quality of our student body and increase the number of research degrees); and
  - Proposed recruiting strategy for the cluster.
  
- A biosketch (required only in the final proposal application) for each UCF-affiliated cluster faculty member. (Use provided template, does not count toward page limits.)
  
- Original or revised letters of support from relevant chairs, directors, deans or the Vice President of Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (limited to 2 pages of text, plus a signature page):
  - The joint letter of support from the department chairs/school directors should provide a description of the department/school faculty and their faculty’s interest in participating in the hiring process and willingness to learn to evaluate scholarship outside the department’s normal expectations. This letter should also clearly explain the relevance of the hire to departmental strategic priorities

and include rationale for the department’s role in the curriculum supported by the cluster (limited to 2 pages of text, plus a signature page).

- The joint letter of support from the deans or Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies should elaborate on a plan for supplying their portion of the cluster start-up requirements, including core infrastructure and equipment needs. This letter should also include potential shared space and pooling of start-up support, along with a space plan elaborating the likely space needs for the cluster and how these needs might be met by the sponsoring colleges and departments. Where space needs cannot be met, the department and the college should detail the amount and kind of space required and why the need cannot be met (limited to 2 pages of text, plus a signature page).

**Final proposals must be emailed to [facultycluster@ucf.edu](mailto:facultycluster@ucf.edu) by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 3, 2017. The final proposal documents should consist of two separate PDF files (1. proposal, 2. Letters); please differentiate the two documents with the following file names “(Last name of Lead)\_proposal.pdf” and “(Last name of Lead)\_letters.pdf.” Successful clusters will be announced by the close of business **Friday, May 12, 2017**. Please note, this initiative is subject to availability of funding.**

For more information, please see the FAQ page available on <http://ucf.edu/research/clusters>, beginning on **Monday, May 23, 2016**.

Additional questions regarding proposals should be directed to Dr. Christopher L. Parkinson at [facultycluster@ucf.edu](mailto:facultycluster@ucf.edu).

#### TIMELINE

23-May-2016	FCI 2.0 Program Workshop: 4-5pm, HEC 101
30-Aug-2016	FCI 2.0 Program Workshop: 3:30-4:30pm, HEC 101
14-Sept-2016	FCI 2.0 Pre-proposal due to chairs
21-Sept.-2016	FCI 2.0 Pre-proposal due to <a href="mailto:FacultyCluster@ucf.edu">FacultyCluster@ucf.edu</a>
10-Nov-2016	Notification of Pre-proposals to move forward
16-Nov-2016	Final Proposal Workshop: 4-5pm, HEC 101
27-Jan-2017	Final Proposals due to chairs and deans for letter writing
3-Feb-2017	Final Proposal and letters from chairs and deans due to <a href="mailto:Facultycluster@ucf.edu">Facultycluster@ucf.edu</a>
February 2017	Oral Presentation of Final Proposal
15-Apr-2017	Rankings submitted to Provost’s Office
12-May-2017	Announcement of FCI 2.0 funded clusters