Call for Proposals

2015-2016 Faculty Cluster Hiring Initiative

An important outcome from the Visioning Future Excellence process is the recognition of the vital role of cluster hiring of faculty to enhance existing strength and build critical mass of faculty excellence in a number of areas across colleges and disciplines. We are pleased to invite proposals for the second round of the cluster hiring initiative. In this second round, we are focusing on 8 sub-themes selected from within the six VFE themes (http://oc.illinois.edu/visioning/themes.html). The 8 themes selected for this round are:

1. Big Data
2. Food Security and Safety
3. Healthy Aging
4. Migration, Diaspora and Governance
5. Neuroscience and Cognition
6. Human Behavior and Decision Making
7. Smart Infrastructure
8. Society and Technology

Please note that these themes replace those that are the focus of AY 14-15 cluster hire program.

We encourage units across campus (faculty and chairs/heads) to work together to assess our current strengths in each theme and develop cluster hiring proposals. We particularly encourage clusters that cross disciplinary areas in innovative ways (e.g., humanities and sciences; arts and engineering; social sciences and medicine). We anticipate that proposals will typically be submitted by department heads or deans, but proposals from any faculty member will be considered if departmental and College letters of support are included.

After consulting with academic leaders, we are pleased to invite proposals under either of two models for cluster hiring:

1. Enhancing Existing Strengths: Units/faculty are invited to submit cross-departmental proposals to hire up to two key faculty (possibly one at the senior level and one at the mid-career or junior level) who have the potential to help energize and integrate an existing area of campus strength among our current faculty.
2. Creating Critical Mass: Units/faculty are invited to submit cross-departmental proposals to hire 4 or 5 new faculty of different ranks to provide the nucleus for a new and emerging cluster in one of the above areas.

An online system will be available by March 15 to enter proposals for clusters within any of the above themes under either of the two models. Each cluster hiring proposal is expected to provide a brief (1 page) overview of existing strengths in the selected cluster area of scholarship. In addition, each proposal should address in reasonable detail each of the following questions:
1. How does the cluster connect to existing strengths?
2. How would the proposed cluster enhance faculty strength in each participating unit and across participating units?
3. How would the cluster enhance our curricular offerings and student experience (especially for undergraduates) at Illinois?
4. What are the possible external funding opportunities and resources that the cluster can compete for and access?
5. How would the proposed cluster enhance the reputation and visibility of our campus?
6. How would the hiring units collaborate through the hiring process to ensure that the cluster takes full advantage of the synergy among the relevant faculty?
7. How would the hired faculty collaborate to ensure that the cluster fulfills its promise?

The proposal will also require that each proposed hire in the cluster be described briefly, including the departmental home, the rank of the proposed hire, and the anticipated synergy of the individual hire within the cluster and with the broader campus.

Proposals will be required to include letters of support from the head/chair and dean of each participating department and college, both confirming support and indicating that if the cluster were selected by the Provost, then the department and college expect to include the position in this year’s hiring plan. **Failure to include letters of support for each hire from department heads/chairs and colleges will automatically exclude that hire from consideration as part of the cluster.**

Each proposed cluster also must have an identified faculty leader on campus, as well as at least one dean who will take responsibility for coordinating activities if the cluster is selected.

The Office of the Provost and the OVCR will provide support for salaries, programming, and start-up costs:

1. **Salary:** The Office of the Provost will cover 20% of each cluster-hire salary (up to $40,000). This amount will revert back to the Provost’s office upon the departure of the hire from campus.
2. **Start-up packages:** The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research will cover 20% of the cash portion (excluding renovation costs) of any start-up package for each hire, up to $50,000 at least.
3. **Programming Support:** The Office of the Provost will provide the faculty leader of each cluster with $30,000 per year for two years. This support will help to identify and coordinate collaborative opportunities, including research projects, external funding opportunities, marketing and recruiting efforts, and curricular initiatives.

Faculty hires that are added to the cluster after the original proposal is submitted may be included in the organization of the cluster, but will not be eligible for the above support from the Provost’s Office or the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research.
The proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of representative faculty and directors of the campus-wide interdisciplinary research institutes. This committee will make recommendations to the Provost, who will make final selections in consultation with the Vice Chancellor for Research. The selection criteria will be the anticipated impact of the proposed clusters on our campus missions.

The proposals must be submitted online by April 15, 2015. We expect the selection process to be completed by May 15, 2015 so that units and colleges can incorporate the selected clusters in their hiring plans for AY 15-16.

If you have questions, please contact Vice Provost Abbas Benmamoun (benmamou@illinois.edu).