



MEMORANDUM

CLUSTER HIRING INITIATIVE

To: URI Faculty and Deans
From: Donald H. DeHayes, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Date: August 25, 2014
Subject: Faculty Cluster Hire Initiative

The Office of the Provost at the University of Rhode Island is pleased to announce the latest opportunity presented by the interdisciplinary faculty cluster hiring initiative to fund one new cluster proposal. The development for this new initiative originally occurred in collaboration with faculty from the Academic Summit planning committee and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee with input from faculty from each of the colleges provided at college faculty meetings. In 2012, four clusters were selected, one from each theme listed below, from a group of proposals and each was tasked with hiring three tenure-track faculty across multiple departments within the respective cluster topic. An additional cluster in neuroscience was been funded in 2013 to capitalize on an opportunity relative to a major gift to the University. Any and all interested faculty are encouraged to work with other faculty to submit a proposal for a new cluster topic - all topics must fall within a specific strategic theme area of the Academic Plan (listed below). Cluster topics should help position the University for excellence in areas of existing or emerging societal importance and potential for URI contributions relevant to learning and discovery. Multiple proposals for each theme area are encouraged and expected, although funding only exists to support one compelling new proposal. **The deadline for submission is Friday, October 17, 2014 to uriofficeofprovost@gmail.com.** A panel of URI faculty & staff will be formed to review the submissions and make recommendations in regard to the newest cluster.

Four Theme Areas of the University of Rhode Island Academic Plan

Liberal Learning and Scholarship for the 21st Century
Science & Technology
Environment and Green Economy
Health and Wellness

*To view the full URI Academic Plan: *Charting our Path to the Future toward a Renewed Culture of Achievement 2010-2015* go to:
<http://web.uri.edu/academic-planning/academic-plan/>

Goals for the URI Cluster Hiring Initiative

The cluster hiring initiative emerged from the President's Transformational Goals and the University's Academic Plan, *Charting Our Path To the Future*, to help position URI as a prominent learning-centered research university relevant to societal issues of the 21st century.

Some of the most exciting and important advances in the globally connected world are at the interface among disciplines and require inter- and multi-disciplinary collaborations and the integration of concepts from many different areas. The University of Rhode Island continues its commitment to advancing learning and discovery by building on our strengths in core disciplines, while also seeking to advance new and exciting ways to work in cross-disciplines at the forefront of student learning and research, scholarship and creative activities. The University's new Cluster Hiring Initiative is intended to support the expansion of knowledge and its application arising increasingly from more than one discipline, enhance cross-disciplinary student learning, and benefit our state's economy, and as such the cluster is expected to produce/teach at least one new interdisciplinary grand challenge and honors course each year.

The Cluster Hiring Initiative is not a replacement for our regular strategic hiring process, but an incentive process to facilitate interdisciplinary strategic hiring by providing salary support for clusters of faculty positions that relate directly to important interdisciplinary themes.

The overall goal of the URI Cluster Hiring Initiative is to:

Strategically invest in faculty in areas of extant and potential university strength and prominence, and further enhance the magnitude and impact of learning and discovery in areas critical to student learning and important to address contemporary and future societal challenges and opportunities. Cluster hires will enhance the magnitude and impact of URI research, scholarship, and creative work as well as academic quality and value in relation to the student experience.

Specifically, the objectives of the Cluster Hiring Initiative are to:

- Strategically invest in cross department/college interdisciplinary areas that reflect and strengthen the interests and expertise of existing faculty and focus on challenging, emerging, and relevant societal issues that transcend borders among disciplines.
- Bring together URI faculty and expertise in a collaborative manner to build strong clusters of teacher/scholars in areas that are of ongoing vital importance to Rhode Island, the nation, and the world.
- Enhance the visibility of URI in the higher education marketplace by promoting a model of investment aimed at elevating the university's competitive position in areas of academic strength and societal importance.
- Create new interdisciplinary and experiential learning opportunities and curricular offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

(Funds for this initiative are allocated in the FY 2015 budget).

Request for Proposals Format - RFP

URI Cluster Hiring Initiative

The overall goal of the URI Cluster Hiring Initiative is to:

Strategically invest in faculty in areas of extant and potential university strength and prominence, and further enhance the magnitude and impact of learning and discovery in areas critical to student learning. It is important to address contemporary and future societal challenges and opportunities. Cluster hires will enhance the magnitude and impact of URI research, scholarship, and creative work as well as academic quality and value in relation to the student experience.

**See Goals for the URI Cluster Hiring Initiative above for further explanation*

Successful proposals will:

- Address contemporary and future societal challenges and opportunities;
- Enhance the magnitude and impact of URI research and/or scholarship or creative work, and student learning;
- Bring together faculty and expertise from different disciplines (colleges, programs, etc.) to address issues of ongoing vital importance to RI, the nation, and the world.
- **The deadline for submission is Friday, October 17, 2014 to: uriofficeofprovost@gmail.com**

A. Collaborative

1. Identify a Cluster Topic (choose 1 within one of the 4 Theme Areas of the Academic Plan) and indicate the *title of your cluster project*
Liberal Learning and Scholarship for the 21st Century
Science & Technology
Environment and Green Economy
Health and Wellness
2. *Overview* (no more than 1 page). Briefly describe the primary focus and goals of your proposed Collaborative indicating what the cluster topic means relative to this proposal. Also, describe the societal challenges and opportunities that this Collaborative will address and how these are best addressed by interdisciplinary work?
3. *Background and Plan* (no more than 3 pages).
 - a. Describe the conceptual and organizational background of the Collaborative. What will it address? Discuss the scope and breadth of the project relative to the goals (stated above and on the accompanying document, "Goals for the URI Cluster Hiring Initiative").
 - b. Explain how the Collaborative is interdisciplinary in nature (not just participants) and how this will be demonstrated in activities and outcomes. An annual progress report would be expected as well relative to addressing the progress on the expected goals/outcomes.
 - c. Provide a plan or model for organizing and assessing the effectiveness of the Collaborative. What outcomes of this Collaborative would be indicators of success?
 - d. Identify opportunities to create new or expand current research, teaching, student learning, external funding, and/or community outreach, as applicable, if this proposal is funded.
4. *Collaborative members and signatures*. List individuals expected to be involved in the Collaborative, with position/department and contact information and a one-paragraph description of relevant strengths and research/teaching/service of each individual and expected contributions to the Collaborative goals and problem-solving.

The first listing will be the primary contact person. Use the following format for each person.

 - a. Name, Department/Position:
 - b. Email/Telephone:
 - c. Strengths, background and expected contribution:
 - d. Signature:

B. Cluster Hire Proposal

1. *Cluster hire examples* (one paragraph each): Describe up to three sample faculty positions that would be part of the new cluster and would best complement or work together with the Collaborative, and address other campus and community needs for teaching, research, and outreach.
2. *Existing resources and ability to attract strong candidates*: Briefly identify currently available resources that will support the cluster hire (including start up needs) and will help your Collaborative attract the strongest candidates possible.
3. *Leveraging the cluster hires*: Identify three ways cluster hires will create value for your Collaborative and the University, particularly in terms of the Academic Plan goal of interdisciplinary synergies.
4. *Potential hiring process*: It is envisioned that a single search with an interdisciplinary search committee would seek candidates for the 3 positions in the cluster. The expectation is that a cluster would include faculty from different departments and/or colleges. Departments must be willing to accept an appointment that emerges from the search process. Identify the departments in the cluster that are willing to accept appointments as recommended from this interdisciplinary search process.

C. The Collaborative Future (no more than one page).

1. Describe plans to sustain and grow this initiative after the immediate Cluster Hire.
2. Provide a vision for how this initiative will unfold over time.

D. Appendices (up to ten pages). Provide any relevant work to support the proposal.

All proposals must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 17, 2014 to: uriofficeofprovost@gmail.com