

## **Request for Proposals for Strategic Investment in Graduate Education, Research, and Creative Activities**

The Graduate Education and Research Board (GERB) announces a Request for Proposals for strategic investment in graduate education, research, and creative activities.

**Rationale:** A central goal of Vision Ohio is to build nationally prominent graduate programs at Ohio University. In order to realize that goal, it is essential to make strategic investments in carefully selected programs and initiatives. To do so will help move the university to a more prominent position among peers, foster partnerships, and increase external funding. In addition, such investments build a strong foundation for distinctive graduate education, research, and creative activity. The five areas selected for investment have already been identified in Vision Ohio. They build upon existing areas of strength and national recognition, provide service and support to meet the needs and goals of the region and state, and offer the opportunity to enhance the support of the university.

This competition is open to all Ohio University faculty members. Proposals may be submitted by faculty from within a single department or school, an established institute or center, or from a collaboration of faculty (such as a program within a department) with other academic units.

**Foci for Strategic Investment:** Ohio University will make special investment within five areas of graduate education, research, and creative activity over the next five years. This special investment will involve funding initiatives that meet designated criteria and that offer the opportunity to achieve national or international prominence and distinction. Interdisciplinary initiatives are encouraged, especially those that include faculty from many departments and schools, allow the development of a critical mass of individuals to enhance the possibility of success, and provide opportunities for synergies that go beyond specific projects. Strong proposals that emerge from a single discipline are also encouraged.

The character of this investment will differ across proposals but may include faculty, technical staff, equipment, small-scale renovations, or other kinds of support that offer a reasonable and demonstrable opportunity for programs to achieve or enhance national or international prominence and distinction. The five areas are

**Health and wellness**

**New technologies: basic research and development**

**Energy and the environment**

**Social, economic, and cultural development**

**Arts and Humanities**

## **Criteria for Determining Strategic Investments**

Fostering a distinctive graduate education, research, and creative emphasis for the university as part of the academic plan necessitates funding decisions at many levels. Vision Ohio has identified the following criteria to guide those investment decisions. *All proposals under this competition are expected to satisfy the Criterion of Excellence.* Evidence of the ability of the proposed initiative to help a program or unit achieve or enhance national prominence and distinctiveness is an essential element of any successful proposal. Faculty must supply measurable criteria (metrics) which they expect to document the current level or degree of “national prominence” and which they expect to apply periodically (at least annually) to measure the extent to which the funding has brought them to higher national prominence.

In addition, successful proposals must satisfy some of the Criteria of Opportunity. It is more important for a proposal to be exceptionally strong in one or two of the criteria than it is for a proposal to satisfy all five criteria.

The criteria fall into two broad categories: excellence and opportunity.

### **Criterion of Excellence**

- Documentation of demonstrated quality, national prominence, and distinctiveness of the proposing unit or team. Faculty members submitting an initiative must be able to demonstrate that they (or the individuals comprising the team) are already nationally recognized or have the ability to be so recognized. Evidence of this recognition can come in many forms.

### **Criteria of Opportunity**

- An indication of the opportunities for economic or social development that can result from the program or initiative. This could take the form of evidence of an ability to contribute significantly to regional, state, national, or international development.
- An indication that the program or initiative will produce significant scholarly or creative achievements.
- An indication of the program or initiative’s ability to attract external funding.
- An indication of the program or initiative’s cost effectiveness as evidenced by some ratio of investment cost to predicted outcome.
- Documentation of student demand and contributions to the educational mission of the university. Programs or initiatives might show that investment will bring better graduate students or significantly enhance the educational experiences of existing students.

## **The Process for Determining Strategic Investments in Graduate Education, Research, and Creative Activities**

Strategic Investments will be made in a limited number of the five foci of research and graduate education. There will be two types of investment:

**1) Major Program Initiatives:** These will be an initial competition for significant investments designed to move areas where there is already considerable strength to a position of national prominence or enhance national prominence where it already exists. The evaluation criteria will be those in Vision Ohio. All centers, institutes, and academic programs are eligible to submit proposals.

We anticipate that approximately \$2 million will be available in the first round. These awards can be augmented with funds from other sources.

Continuing and/or one-time-only funds can be requested for a wide range of purposes including new faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate stipends, new equipment, renovations, supplies, travel, and library or other structural resources.

Funding could begin as soon as July 1, 2007.

**2) Strategic Investments in Future Growth and Program Enhancements:** There will be a second competition to provide seed money for promising new initiatives or to take advantage of unique opportunities. This competition will provide one-time-only funds for between 3 and 5 years

The RFP for the competition will be announced by fall 06.

### **Submitting a Proposal for a Major Program Initiative**

Units interested in submitting a proposal for a major program initiative must prepare both a letter of intent and a full proposal. The material to be included in each is described below.

#### **Letter of Intent**

This is a brief description of the proposal. Submission of a letter of intent does not obligate anyone to submit a full proposal. However, a proposal may not be submitted unless a letter of intent has been received by the required date.

The letter of intent is submitted to the appropriate college dean.

## The Proposal

Proposals for the Major Program Initiative competition should be no longer than 20 pages (excluding appendices) and include the following information:

- 1) Executive Summary
- 2) Description of the Focus Area
  - The area to be enhanced
  - The participating units
  - Rationale and significance of the proposal
  - Link to Vision Ohio criteria (and rationale)
  - Link to college(s) strategic plan (and rationale)
- 3) Structural Framework
  - Management of the program
  - Space to be used and space needed
- 4) The Initiative
  - Past performance of faculty involved
  - Explanation of enhancements to a graduate program or programs
  - Anticipated long term viability and impact of the proposal
  - Five year budget plan
- 5) Recommended External Reviewers
  - The names and brief bios of individuals who might be appropriate to serve as an external reviewer for this proposal.
- 6) Metrics of Success

Metrics are discipline specific and will vary from proposal to proposal. The proposer must justify why the metrics chosen will effectively measure progress towards the achievement of national prominence or the enhancement of national prominence where it already exists. It is acceptable to show growth in student numbers as a goal, but measurable indicators of the quality of the program must also be included.

- Clear, quantitative, and progressive metrics are required for the first ten years of funding in order to assess the effectiveness of the program. The metrics provided must be consistent with the goal of enhancing national prominence.
- In addition, the metrics provided must also be timely. For example, NSF graduate program reviews are on five-year cycles, and it may take two cycles before significant improvement in reputation is reflected in the NSF statistics. Therefore, the proposer must choose other more easily gathered metrics that show progress is being made towards the ultimate goal of better NSF rankings.

For example, if a unit wishes to use publications as a goal, it may choose to add weight to certain journals because they are acknowledged to be best in the chosen field. To quantify properly the use of publications in program assessment, the proposer needs to provide a roster of proposed participants and then quantify the present rate of publication before the enhancement based on weighted points for journal quality. Once the baseline is established, the proposer then estimates the proposed increase through time as enhancements take effect. Newly added faculty would be counted in the increase as they are hired and then become productive. Using a roster to track participants will allow for people leaving and joining the effort through the passage of time. The proposer may wish to take note of review articles and other awards such as editorships, which will accrue later in the enhancement as people acquire outstanding reputations. This shows the progressive nature of the metrics as the program matures.

Future funding decisions, including continuation of support, will be affected if funded initiatives do not achieve agreed upon metrics.

### **Timetable for Selecting Major Program Initiatives to be Funded**

**May 26, 2006** - GERB announces the RFP

**May 26, 2006 – October 2** – Academic units, centers, institutes, and interested faculty develop plans and discuss them with Deans and Associate Deans for Research. It is anticipated that these discussions will take place prior to the submission of letters of intent. Indeed, proposal ideas for strategic investments should be discussed with the Deans of all the colleges involved *well in advance of the submission of a letter of intent*. It is anticipated that these conversations will help identify links to other projects across campus. Faculty involved must strive to form strategic plans that involve other disciplines within and outside colleges as appropriate, and have those plans and collaborations in place before the letter of intent is submitted.

**October 2, 2006** - Units submit formal Letters of Intent to their Dean's Office.

Letters of intent will be very brief including only a description of the initiative, the units and faculty involved. Letters must show approvals from Chairs and Directors.

**October 9, 2006** – Deans forward all letters of intent to GERB. GERB will post them online for perusal across campus. This will allow all faculty to review the letters and see if additional linkages and collaborations can be made.

**Mid October** – GERB will meet with the Academic Leadership Council to review and discuss the progress of the strategic investment process.

**November 17, 2006** – Proposers submit complete proposals to the academic Dean of each appropriate College. Only Colleges with graduate degree programs (Arts and

Sciences, Business, Communication, Education, Engineering and Technology, Fine Arts, and Health and Human Services) are eligible to apply. *Multi-College proposals must be submitted to the dean of EACH/ALL college(s) involved in the collaboration.*

Each dean will review every proposal that he or she has been asked to endorse and select which of them will be recommended for final consideration by GERB. In doing so, deans will consider the overall strength of the proposal, the likelihood that the funding will help the unit to achieve national prominence, and the degree to which the proposals are aligned with the College's priorities.

**January 8, 2007** - Each dean can submit up to two proposals to GERB for final consideration (the College of Arts and Sciences can submit three). One of those proposals (and two from Arts and Sciences) can be drawn from within the college. The other proposal must involve an inter-college collaboration. When an inter-college proposal is submitted, it must be endorsed and submitted by the dean of each participating college. Inter-college proposals count as a submission for both/all participating colleges. Only proposals that have been submitted by a dean will be considered in the final review by GERB. Dean's recommendations are due to the Office of Graduate Studies by 5:00 p.m. on January 8, 2007.

**Early January 2007** – GERB will review the proposals and the deans' recommendations. Its members will rank the proposals and send the top proposals (those designated for potential funding) out for external review. Experts will be asked to provide an evaluation of proposals and identify areas of concern. Proposing units will be notified of the progress of their proposal.

GERB will keep the Provost and the Academic Leadership Council informed at each stage of the review process.

**March 5, 2007** – Reviews are due back from external reviewers.

**April 2, 2007** – GERB will provide selected proposing units with written questions regarding the proposals that emerge from the external reviews or from GERB deliberations.

**April 16, 2007** – GERB will ask proposing units to appear as a small group (six maximum), in order to respond to questions that emerged during evaluation process.

**Early May** – GERB meets with the Academic Leadership Council. The purpose of this meeting is for GERB to discuss the review process with Council members.

**May 7, 2007** - GERB sends funding recommendations to Provost.

**May 14, 2007** - Provost announces strategic investments.

Funds will be available to selected initiatives on July 1, 2007.