October 23, 2013

FACULTY, DEANS AND DIRECTORS

Re: UCI Campus Initiative to Identify and Support Interschool Excellence: Request for Proposals

Dear Colleagues:

In order to ensure our ongoing ascendancy among the ranks of globally preeminent research universities, we must have effective processes for identifying and supporting areas of interschool excellence. Disciplinary and school-based strength will remain foundational for our academic mission. At the same time, greater coordination of promising new multidisciplinary research and educational programs will enable us to more effectively address complex social challenges, make distinctive contributions to important and/or emergent fields of inquiry, and develop innovative academic programs.

After extensive consultations with faculty, deans, and the Senate, I am pleased to announce a new campus initiative that is designed to provide up to three years of support to teams of engaged faculty from across multiple schools who are committed to developing new areas of interschool excellence. Funding can be used to support any legitimate academic purpose, including specialized administrative support, teaching release, research collaborations, workshops or conferences, student participation, collaboration with the academic units on new graduate concentrations or emphases and undergraduate minors, coordination of grant applications, and outreach and community engagement. Proposals may focus on any one of those activities (or others), but the intent of this program is to support initiatives with a wider range of activities than can be accommodated by ORUs or campus and school research centers.

Successful proposals will receive funding of up to $150,000 a year. General administrative staff support will be provided by the Provost’s Office as needed. Funded projects will be subject to annual review; sustaining the activity beyond three years will require participants to attract external research funding and/or to develop high quality academic programs with substantial enrollment. Proposals may be submitted by groups of faculty, departments, centers or institutes, and academic deans. Deans of the relevant schools will have an opportunity to comment on the proposals, and also to indicate whether additional school-based resources will be made available. Endorsement by the pertinent chairs and deans is not required, but they should be consulted and their comments appended to the proposal when it is submitted.
In fewer than 10 pages proposals should:

- identify the Team Leader(s) and campus-wide participants,
- discuss the importance of the research theme and/or educational innovation,
- explain how UCI is positioned for global leadership in this area,
- describe a structure of faculty governance and oversight,
- recommend how the success of the proposed activity should be assessed for purposes of year 2 and year 3 funding.

Each team-based proposal should be submitted to the Office of the Provost at provost@uci.edu no later than January 17, 2014 for funding in this academic year. This call may be repeated next fall pending available funding and the range of quality proposals this year.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Academic Planning Group, which will provide guidance on the importance of the activity, the possibilities for achieving leadership in the proposed area, the extent to which there is diverse faculty participation, the commitment of the leadership, the effectiveness of the plan, and whether it is likely to evolve into a more self-sustaining activity after three years. In making final award decisions I will supplement the peer-review process with considerations of the balance of topics, with the goal of including themes that permit widespread faculty participation. My preference is to provide higher levels of support to a smaller number of very ambitious proposals, but it is possible that the review process may lead to less generous funding of a higher number of proposals.

Questions about this initiative that arise before December 1 should be addressed to Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning Michael Clark at mpclark@uci.edu. After December 1 Al Bennett will be joining my office as Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives, and will serve as contact point from that point forward.

Howard Gillman
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor