



MRU Directors Teleconference

September 15, 2008

AGENDA

- Self introduction: Steve Beckwith
- Vision for Office of Research and Graduate Studies
- Context of MRU Advisory Board report
- Recommendations and RFP (slides)
- Questions
- Next steps: consultation with Academic Senate and Vice Chancellors for Research; issuance of RFP



Recommendations and RFP

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for this competitive review are:

- An MRU can be organized either to carry out a focused research effort or to provide competitive grants in an important field of research. This continues existing practice.
- Each existing MRU will be required to compete for new funding in the open competition, choosing the area(s) that provide(s) the best fit for its mission.
- Proposals submitted by existing MRUs will be subject to the same evaluation criteria as new proposals.
- Funding the maintenance and operation of large facilities will be considered outside of the MRU system.

Focus areas for multicampus research

- International and Area Studies: Interdisciplinary research focused on the major regions of the world and of importance to the nation and to California.
- Critical California Issues: Certain areas of research are of special interest to the state because of the geography and economy of California. Critically identified areas include transportation, marine resources, energy, and the environment, including climate change.
- Arts and Humanities (support for fields that do not receive significant funding from the federal government)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (support for fields that do not receive significant funding from the federal government).
- Biological and Health Sciences (important research areas outside the main focus areas of the National Institutes of Health that would benefit from relatively modest funding).
- Emerging Sciences and Technology (especially in physical sciences and engineering). Support for promising new fields and new ideas within existing fields that will give a competitive advantage in developing new areas of research.



Vision

- How will this proposal improve scholarship and advance knowledge in the field of endeavor?
- How will this proposal advance the research mission of UC?
- How will this endeavor make UC more competitive in the field of expertise? How will it rank against other efforts?



Scope of the proposals

It is up to the proposer to justify both the monetary level of the award as well as the proposed time frame. The proposal should clearly lay out:

- The proposed activities of the program;
- The required level of funding to carry out those activities effectively and efficiently;
- A series of benchmarks for the proposed time period;
- A statement of how the program will either end or transition to non-UCOP funds at the end of the funding period; and
- A statement of methods to be used to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the program.

Selection criteria for successful proposals

- Outstanding Research. The research done in every MRU should be at the level of the best research in the University of California.
- Improvement of UC Competitiveness. The proposed research program should enhance the ongoing research capability of the University in the relevant field and the future competitiveness of participating researchers in seeking extramural funding.
- Advantages of a Multicampus Approach. Proposals must have active participation by faculty from **at least three campuses**. A proposal involving more campuses will receive additional credit in the evaluation. The research productivity of the team of multicampus researchers should be greater than the sum of the individual efforts of the team members. This improvement could result from the breadth of expertise brought to bear on a specific problem. It could also occur through the formation of new collaborations that would only occur through a multicampus institution. Additional benefits might come from increased efficiency as a result of common facilities or administrative support.

Selection criteria for successful proposals

- High-risk, High-Payoff Research. At least some of the multicampus research portfolio should be dedicated to MRUs that take a significant element of risk in their research program, perhaps more risk than federal agencies are willing to accept. Each team that emphasizes this aspect in their proposal should clearly identify the nature of the risk and discuss the potential for a commensurate payoff; that is, for extraordinarily influential results that could transform a field of research.
- Support for Innovative Researchers. UC recruits some of the world's most innovative researchers to its faculty. The multicampus research program should provide opportunities for these people to initiate new lines of research that might not fit the missions of federal funding agencies.

Selection criteria for successful proposals

In addition to the funding criteria outlined above, the following considerations will also be weighed in the evaluations of proposals:

- Commitment of campus matching support, which may be in dollars or in kind;
- Evidence of or plan to secure extramural support;
- Evidence of previous or ongoing collaborations or program development;
- Active plan for encouragement of graduate student involvement.

Eligibility

- Academic senate faculty are eligible to apply. A PI should be selected from among the multicampus faculty group interested in forming a multicampus research program. At least three campuses must have significant faculty involvement. The application should be submitted through the PI's campus. The campus should be willing to act as the host campus and so indicate by including a supporting letter from the Executive Vice Chancellor as part of the proposal package. The letter should state a commitment of campus matching support and appropriate space and office equipment.

Proposal Review

- Proposals will be reviewed and ranked by peer review panels selected by the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) in consultation with the campus Vice Chancellors for Research. The VPRGS will use the rank-ordered list from the peer review panels to produce final prioritized recommendations for research. It is anticipated that the panels will comprise researchers drawn from the University of California, the national laboratories, and external scholars, selected to minimize conflicts of interest and ensure a fair and balanced review.

Proposal content and format (under discussion)

- Program Information: Program title, opening statement describing the vision of the proposal, proposed time frame, keywords, budget requested, and project narrative. The narrative should describe explicitly the benefit of the proposed research program to the University of California and its relevance to California (including state agencies and commissions if appropriate).
- Accountability: Proposed advisory structure, governance, benchmarks, outcomes, evaluation and assessment (as described in Scope of Proposals above)
- For existing MRUs: In addition to project information: brief retrospective of program achievements, budget history, success in securing extramural support, and a strong rationale for the continued benefit of the research program to the University of California.
- Attachments



Research Program Oversight

- Oversight of the multicampus research programs will continue to be the responsibility of the UC Office of the President. Successful awardees will provide annual online reports to the VPRGS on the progress of the program (as measured by proposed benchmarks) and expenditures to date.
- Since these are seed funds intended to lead to self-sustaining efforts, we anticipate no carry-forward balances at the end of the funding cycle. Funds will be released annually after review of previous year budget report.



Your questions



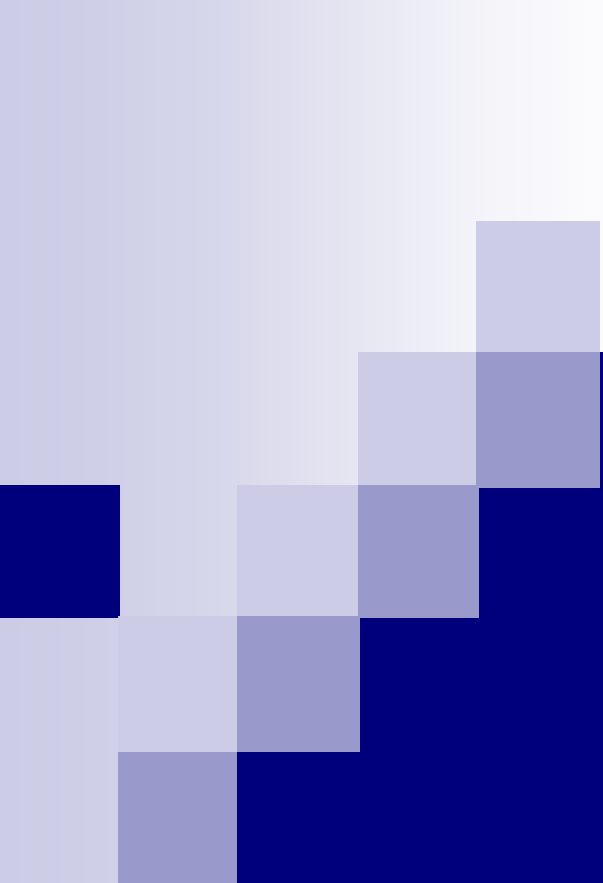
What is the difference between an MRU and an MRG? Will MRGs have to recompete for their current funding?

MRGs are one name for projects that are funded for time-limited periods (usually for three to five years). Time-limited programs do not have to recompete for their current funding but may apply for new funds if they are close to the end of their funding cycle.



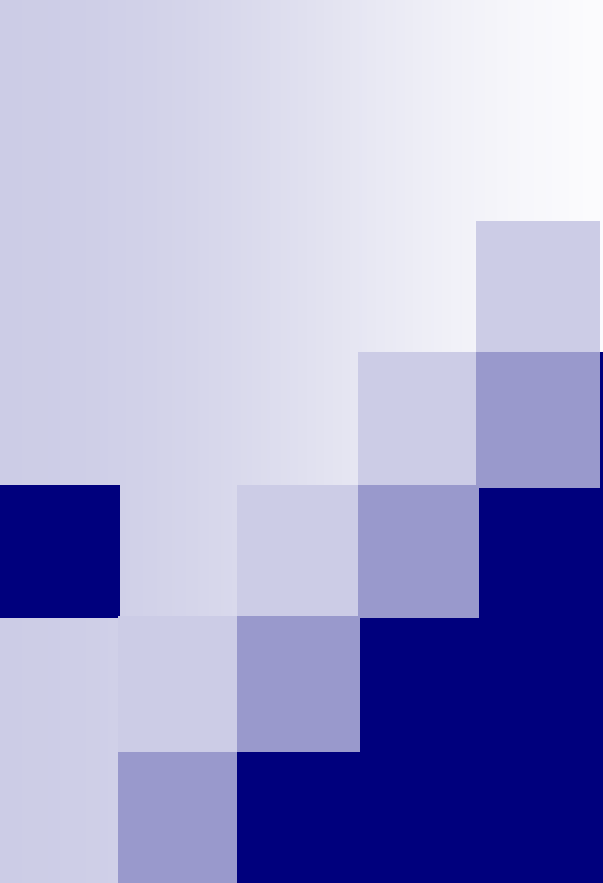
Can an MRU compete in more than one category?

Yes. It is likely that many proposals will fall within two areas or more. These proposals will be distributed among review panels to create balance.



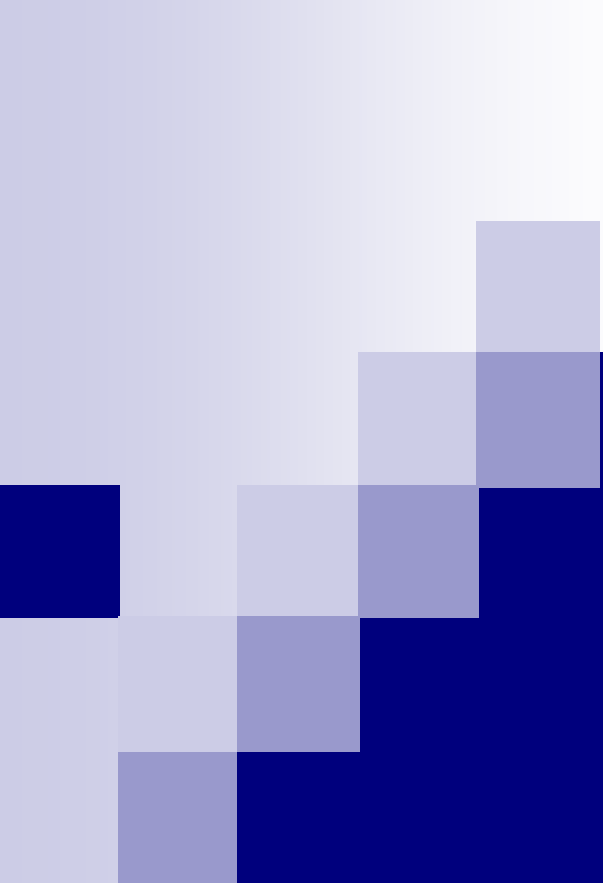
Will previous reviews of extant programs be taken into consideration or just what is submitted in response to the RFP?

The proposal should be forward-looking and strategic in its orientation. Proposals may cite past success as a potential indicator of future promise.



How important will the age of an existing MRU be in deciding whether to renew its funding, and is there an implicit (or explicit) “sunset strategy” for older MRUs contained in the evaluation criteria?

The challenge for older MRUs is to present a compelling, forward-looking strategic case for funding. The fact of many years of previous funding is not such an argument.



What does it mean that UCOP funds will be dedicated to areas that the federal government is unlikely to support? Does this mean that you would prioritize UCOP investments in underfunded federal initiatives that have the potential to grow?

Yes, the funding is intended to seed activities that may be too early to be on the radar screen for federal funds. The intention is to help faculty groups prepare for eventual extramural funding opportunities.