Fall 2019 Request for Proposals

Research and Economic Development is pleased to announce a new planning-grant program (Ignite) to promote new collaborative research efforts and facilitate the development of interdisciplinary teams focused on preparing competitive, large-scale collaborative proposals for significant external funding. Ignite planning grants are intended to enhance existing areas of excellence, accelerate the development of emerging research strengths, and foster interactions between UNC Charlotte faculty and potential collaborators at other institutions. The program aims to lower and eliminate barriers to building collaborative teams and coordinating, planning, and preparing large, interdisciplinary multi-investigator research proposals by providing funds to (1) convene conferences and meetings, (2) coordinate workshops, (3) support travel costs for potential collaborators from other institutions, (4) hire grant-writing consultants and content specialists, and (5) conduct other proposal-development and team-development activities.

Ignite grants are intended to support and incentivize stronger collaborative relationships among researchers from different colleges and disciplines with the goal of increasing the university’s competitiveness in attracting extramural funding and research support. One expected outcome of the program is the submission of multiple applications and proposals for significant funding from a diversity of sources within the 24-month award period. Thus, these one-time awards are intended to help teams of researchers position themselves to obtain the external funding needed to sustain future activities and research related to the project.

Award Focus and Scope

Ignite awards are designed to build capacity in research areas that are strategically important to the Charlotte region, North Carolina, and the country. There are no predefined themes or priority areas for research. However, proposers will need to fully describe how the research contributes to existing and emerging university research strengths and aligns with national priority areas identified by state and federal agencies and policy offices (e.g., National Science Foundation Big Ideas, NIH Strategic Research Priorities, Office of Science and Technology Policy, and National Endowment for the Humanities Strategic Plan) and/or national organizations and professional societies.

Award Amount and Duration

Faculty and staff teams can apply for one-time grants of up to $50,000 per year for up to two years (24 months; $100,000 maximum direct costs). Facility and Administrative (F&A) costs are not required. We anticipate funding 2-3 awards annually. The second year of funding will be contingent upon the team’s performance and progress during year 1, including their successful attainment of proposed milestones. Annual reports detailing the activities and progress of the planning efforts will be due 45 days prior to the anniversary date of the project. Extensions will not be granted.

The expected start date for FY2020 awards is March 1, 2020.

To help ensure the success of proposals resulting from Ignite awards, successful teams will be expected to partner with the Center for Research Excellence to prepare and submit proposals through the Center’s Complex, Large, Interdisciplinary Proposal Preparation (CLIPP) program.
Who Can Serve as PI?

Full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty at UNC Charlotte are eligible to serve as principal investigator (PI) on Ignite proposals. UNC Charlotte faculty (tenured/tenure-track, teaching, adjunct, and/or research faculty), instructors, post-docs, staff, as well as faculty and researchers from other institutions are eligible to serve as senior personnel. There is no limit to the number of senior personnel on a project.

A faculty member may only serve as PI on one proposal or active award. However, individuals may participate as senior personnel on up to three (3) proposals and/or awards.

Proposal Preparation Guidelines and Requirements

Proposals must be submitted electronically as an email attachment to ignite-planning@uncc.edu by 5 pm EDT on December 10, 2019. All proposal components must be compiled in the order listed below and submitted as a single pdf file. Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

Proposals must contain the following sections in the order and with the headings indicated below (minimum 11 point font, single-spaced, minimum 1-inch margins)

a) **Cover Page** (1 page) with the (1) project title (2) the names, departments, and institutional affiliations of all participating personnel (only one faculty member can serve as PI; remaining team members should be listed as senior personnel), (3) total amount requested, and (4) anticipated duration of the project.

b) **Project Summary** (1 page): A short (2000 characters with spaces) synopsis of the proposed partnership describing the nature of the collaboration, the theme of the proposed research, and the project's potential contribution to existing areas of excellence and research strength at UNC Charlotte. The summary should be written for a general, non-technical audience.

c) **Project Description** (5 pages maximum) describing the goals and objectives of the project and the plan of work, including activities aimed at facilitating and stimulating collaboration among team members and steps that will be taken to assist the team in developing competitive applications for external funding. Proposed activities may include: workshops and planning sessions, stakeholder engagement meetings, collaborator workshops and conferences, team-building training sessions, pilot studies, travel to explore potential collaborations and establish new partnerships, travel to meet and interact with federal and state program officers, and engagement of consultants and grant-writers. The Project Description should include sufficient detail that reviewers can assess the likelihood and feasibility of the proposed plans and how the research contributes to existing and emerging university research strengths and aligns with national priority areas.

The Project Description should also (1) outline the participants’ respective areas of expertise and anticipated contribution to the project, (2) describe the nature and success of prior or existing collaborations among group members, and (3) identify the process for identifying additional collaborators that may be needed to expand the capabilities of the team. **Projects that are highly interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary and include unusual and non-traditional combinations of participants from diverse disciplines and backgrounds are highly encouraged.**

d) **Expected Outcomes and Planning Roadmap** (1 page) that includes a projected schedule of activities and a list of anticipated milestones and deliverables during each year of the award. This section should also include a detailed list and analysis of existing and anticipated external funding opportunities that will be targeted by the team and a timeline (with due dates) for application.

e) **NSF-style Biographical Sketches** (2 pages max per participant) for the PI and all senior personnel listed on the cover page.
f) **Budget and Budget Justification** detailing how requested funds will be used to support the activities outlined in the Project Description. Annual and summary budgets should be listed on a single page and formatted using the budget template available [here](#). The Budget Justification is limited to 2 pages.

The following are allowable expenses: travel (including per diem), workshop and training materials and supplies (including meals and coffee breaks), speaker fees, transportation, clerical services, consulting services and fees, computing services, and other expendable materials and supplies.

Ignite awards are not intended to be used for faculty/staff summer salary, post-doc wages, or stipends, and tuition for students. Teaching release time is allowed but should be limited to one course per year per senior personnel. Subawards are not permitted, but personnel external to the university can serve as consultants. Equipment purchases are not allowed.

g) **Current and Pending Support** for all senior personnel (formatted using the standard NSF-format available [here](#)).

h) **References Cited**

i) **Letters of Collaboration** from all non-UNC Charlotte senior personnel listed on the Cover Page. The contents of the letters should be limited to the following statement:

   *If the planning grant submitted by Dr. [insert name of the Principal Investigator] entitled [insert the proposal title] is selected for funding, it is my intent to collaborate and participate in the activities detailed in the Project Description section of the proposal.*

**Review Criteria and Evaluation**

Proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed below, but special consideration will be given to projects that (1) include highly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams and approaches, (2) complement existing research strengths, and (3) align with areas and themes of state and national priority. Preference will also be given to projects that have the potential to enhance UNC Charlotte’s competitiveness for large-scale grants, including but not limited to NSF Science and Technology Center (STC) grants, NSF Engineering Research Center (ERC) grants, NSF Materials Research Science Engineering Center (MRSEC) grants, NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) grants, NSF Convergence Accelerator Grants, DOD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) grants, NIH program project/center grants, and NIH T32 training grants.

Ignite proposal evaluation criteria were adapted from NSF’s Merit Review Criteria and include:

**Intellectual Merit**

- What is the potential for the proposed research to advance knowledge and understanding within the fields and disciplines represented in the project?
- To what extent does the proposed research explore creative and original concepts?
- Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well organized, and based on sound rationale?
- How well qualified is the team to conduct the proposed activity?
- Does the proposed research align with regional, state and national priorities?

**Broader Impacts**

- To what extent does the proposed project encourage new collaborative partnerships among university researchers? Among UNC Charlotte researchers and faculty at other institutions?
- Does the proposed research theme complement and enhance existing and emerging areas of research excellence at UNC Charlotte?
• Does the project include a diverse group of researchers representing a range of disciplines?
• What is the potential of the project to enhance the ability of UNC Charlotte to complete for large-scale grants from federal and state agencies?

Timeline for Review and Award

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<td>December 10, 2019</td>
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<td>February 15, 2020</td>
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Questions regarding this program announcement should be directed to Lesley Brown, Director of the Center for Research Excellence, at labrown@uncc.edu.