

Solicitation to Establish the First Cohort of University Strategic Organizations (USOs) on the Norman and Tulsa Campuses

Proposal Deadline: 5 pm on 1 March 2008

Estimated Number of Awards in 2008: 4 to 6

Anticipated Start Date: 1 July 2008

Anticipated Funding Amount: Up to \$75,000 per year for 5 Years

Synopsis

During spring 2007, a Task Force was commissioned by the Norman Campus Vice President for Research to evaluate existing policies regarding centers, institutes and consortia on the Norman and Tulsa Campuses. The Task Force made a number of recommendations, from which a new policy has been developed. Changes include discontinuation of the Double SRI (Sponsored Research Incentive) Program, the replacement of “approved centers” by University Strategic Organizations (USOs), funding to support USOs, and the creation (and seed funding) of research organizations at the college and departmental levels.

Proposals are hereby solicited for creating the first round of University Strategic Organizations (USOs). Any non-academic unit or informally organized activity is eligible to apply for USO classification; however, those having the greatest likelihood of selection are longstanding entities that reflect core strategic directions of the University. Owing to their strategic importance, USOs will receive a portion of their funding as *ongoing base support* from the Office of the Vice President for Research (up to \$75,000 per year for 5 years in this first round), though in all cases the majority of their funding will come from external sources. New or existing organizations created by statute (e.g., State or National Surveys) are considered strategic to the University and receive USO designation automatically from the Vice President for Research. Although they too are eligible for base funding, priority will be given to organizations having no base budget.

1. Value and Classification of Organized Scholarship Units

Organized scholarship units, or structured organizations that perform research, education, outreach and creative activity exclusive of academic departments, are important components of the university scholarship enterprise because they are of sufficient size, duration, administrative organization and scope to address intellectual or creative challenges that lie beyond what can be achieved by other means. Such units have special value within academia because they can drive fundamental change in research and education, build collaboration across fields and institutions, involve industry and government in creative ways, stimulate new modalities of academic administration, help create new facilities and instrumentation, and frequently lead to spin-off technologies and

companies. Further, they tend to be exceptionally important in both faculty and student recruiting and can help build prestige for the University nationally and internationally.

OU subscribes to the philosophy that faculty should be given a free hand in proposing appropriate organizational structures to maximize their likelihood for success in scholarly endeavors. It also recognizes that effective practical implementation of this philosophy requires strategic planning, meaningful guidance and its effective communication, and appropriate oversight.

To maximize flexibility while ensuring clarity of structure and process, the University of Oklahoma defines two types of organized scholarship units. This terminology is applied to all such units regardless of their designation as a center, institute, consortium, facility, laboratory, etc.

- College-Departmental Organizations (CDOs) are created solely at the discretion of one or more departments, schools, colleges, and/or other existing organizations and are supported principally by funds from those organizations and perhaps by organizations external to the University. CDOs are the principal though not exclusive mechanism by which the early stages of non-traditional, creative activities of imaginative people are encouraged and accommodated. Sometimes referred to as “skunk works” in the business literature, such activities tend to be transformative in character because of their inherent flexibility. The establishment, naming, administration, review and continuation of CDOs rest entirely with the funding organizations. A Competitive College Investment Fund (CCIF) is being created to seed fund CDOs and will be described in a subsequent solicitation.
- University Strategic Organizations (USOs) typically are established units involving multiple disciplines, as well as mature linkages with industry and government, that represent core strategic activities of the University. Like CDOs, USOs are expected to promote the incubation of creative ideas and innovative/disruptive technologies, though within a somewhat more mature, structured framework and mission directly aligned with University and/or State strategic research directions. Owing to their strategic importance, USOs receive a portion of their funding as *ongoing base support* from the Office of the Vice President for Research, though in all cases the majority of funding will come from external sources. All OU centers, institutes and consortia, including those formerly designated as “approved centers,” are now classified as College-Departmental Organizations. Those wishing to seek USO designation must do so via the process outlined herein.

2. Eligibility and Expected Number of USOs to be Funded in the First Competition

Any non-academic unit or informally organized activity is eligible to apply for USO classification. However, those having the greatest likelihood of selection are longstanding entities that reflect core strategic directions of the University. New or existing

organizations created by statute (e.g., State or National Surveys) are considered strategic to the University and receive USO designation automatically from the Vice President for Research. Although they too are eligible for base funding, priority will be given to organizations having no base budget.

This solicitation is the first of a **yearly competition, usually initiated in early winter**, to establish USOs. Depending upon resources requested and available funds, **four to six awards are expected to be given in this first round.**

2. Proposal Contents

To apply for USO designation, a proposal (**maximum of 12 single-spaced pages in 12-point font** excluding biographical sketches) containing all of the following must be submitted by **5 pm on 1 March 2008** (see §4 for submission instructions):

- a. **Mission and Rationale (up to 2 pages).** Describe the mission/vision of the proposed USO including a brief history of its accomplishments (especially important for formerly “approved” centers), how it proposes to accomplish work that otherwise would not be possible, how it will interact, as appropriate, with other organizations both internal and external to the University, and how it differs from and/or is complementary to other organizations locally and nationally.
- b. **Congruence with University Strategic Goals (up to 1 page).** Describe the congruence of the proposed USO with University strategic goals as well as the expected value added to the local scholarship enterprise. This section also should address, if appropriate, congruence with State and National goals as well as a summary of previous success in external funding during the past 3-5 years.
- c. **Program of Research (up to 3 pages).** Present a strategic plan of research including specific objectives, milestones and priorities/phases as appropriate, along with expected outcomes and impacts. Of particular significance is the manner in which the research plan builds upon or enforces strategic research directions of the University.
- d. **Leadership and Governance (up to 1 page).** Describe the proposed governance model to be used, qualifications of leaders and other participants, programmatic linkages to departments, schools, colleges or other units, split appointments, etc. Also, discuss proposed membership of the Advisory Committee (see §3).
- e. **Special Requirements (up to 1 page).** Discuss any special requirements associated with the proposed USO including space, renovation, equipment, transportation, hazardous materials, supercomputing and data, etc. If organization needs cannot be met by existing resources, a justification for those proposed with base funding must be provided in the Financial Plan (see below).
- f. **Financial Plan (up to 2 pages).** Present a financial plan for the first three years including, for each year, anticipated funding sources and amounts, planned expenditures, leveraging or cost sharing, personnel costs, equipment, facilities, space rental, etc. For years four and five, present only an estimated dollar amount of incoming funds and expenditures. Base funding requested from the University can be used for anything deemed necessary (e.g., salary release, graduate and

- undergraduate student stipends, technical, clerical and administrative support staff, permanent equipment, travel, publication costs), subject to University policies and procedures, but this use must be justified and weighed against other sources. Requests for base funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research cannot exceed \$75,000 per year.
- g. **Metrics for Assessing Outcomes and Impacts (up to 1 page).** Provide a set of metrics, both qualitative and quantitative, by which the proposed USO, once established, wishes be evaluated as part of the merit review process (see §9). Possibilities include but are not limited to the following:
- Number and quality of refereed publications
 - Number of external, peer-reviewed grants (research, teaching, training) and/or Congressional initiatives
 - Number of large interdisciplinary grants
 - Funding from or meaningful linkages with private industry, private foundations, or other non-government organization foreign and domestic
 - Collaborations with individuals from other institutions
 - Juried creative endeavor
 - Licenses, disclosures, patents
 - Number of degrees produced
 - Impact on diversity enhancement and workforce development
 - Creation of new initiatives and areas of scholarship
 - National and international partnerships
 - Public education programs
 - Major conferences initiated or managed
 - Number of invited talks nationally and internationally
 - Extension of scholarship to undergraduate and K-12 levels
 - Healthy/effective linkages with related academic programs
 - Healthy/effective linkages with other USOs
 - Healthy/effective linkages with relevant State and Federal agencies
 - External collaborators and extended visitors
 - Assistance/mentoring given to students and early-career faculty
- Most importantly, the metrics should establish that the activities of the USO and related benefits to the University could not be achieved in its absence.*
- h. **Broader Impacts (up to 1 page).** Describe potential broader impacts of the proposed activity beyond achievement of core scholarship goals. Possible items to consider are broadening the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups, linking traditionally disparate disciplines, linking government, academia and industry, enhancing infrastructure for scholarship and instruction, stimulating economic development, improving quality of life, enhancing Oklahoma's or the Nation's overall competitiveness, and workforce development.
- i. **Biographical Sketches (pages as needed).** Include biographical sketches of key personnel as appropriate (2 pages per person; NSF format is appropriate).

3. Advisory Committee

Each USO is required to have an Advisory Committee, chaired by an individual external to the USO, which meets at least yearly and participates in strategic planning, budgetary evaluation and assessment of overall organizational effectiveness. Typically composed of regular faculty who are not formally aligned with the organization but whose expertise is deemed relevant to center foci, the committee ideally should include external members as well, especially from industry, with all costs of such participation paid by the USO. The Advisory Committee is expected to play a key role in major center evaluations (see §6).

4. Proposal Submission and Review

A PDF file of the proposal must be submitted electronically, by **5 pm on 1 March 2008**, to Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Associate Vice President for Research at **kkd@ou.edu**. No “Infosheet” or routing are required. The proposal will be reviewed by the cognizant dean(s), Vice President for Research and Research Cabinet, with peer experts consulted as appropriate. The Vice President for Research and Provost (Vice President for Research and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in the case of Tulsa Campus activities) have authority for approving the proposal, which then will be forwarded to the President for final approval and subsequently provided as an information item to the Board of Regents. In accordance with University policies on the appointment of administrative personnel and title changes, the appointment of a director and other administrative personnel must be submitted to the Board of Regents for approval.

5. Review Criteria and Notification

Proposals will be evaluated based upon the following criteria, listed in arbitrary order:

- Technical and/or creative merit of the activities proposed
- Rationale and necessity of the organization for achieving the stated goals
- Congruence with University strategic goals and potential for enhancing the scholarship enterprise
- Viability of the proposed governance model and qualifications of the leadership team
- Nature and value of existing or proposed linkages with other organizations
- Soundness of the financial plan and rationale for support requested
- Potential for fiscal and programmatic sustainability
- Likelihood of success in making meaningful impacts beyond the scholarship being proposed

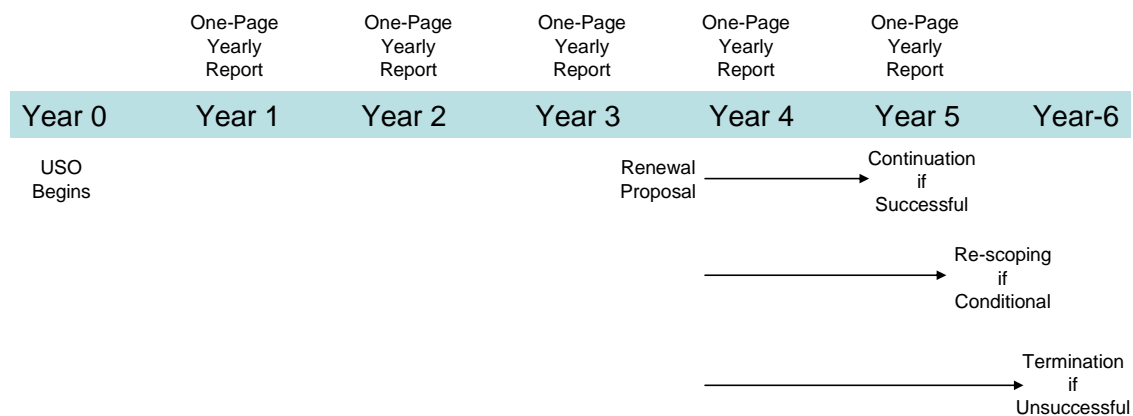
Proposal review is expected to be completed between 1 May and 1 June 2008 and **funding for successful proposals will begin 1 July 2008**. The principal investigator will be notified once a decision has been made and will be provided with a written summary of reviewer comments. Re-submission is possible in the event of declination, and the revised proposal should address all points made in the previous review.

6. Annual Reporting and Merit Review

All formally organized scholarship organizations, including USOs, are required to submit, on a yearly basis to the Office of the Vice President for Research, a one-page (two-sided) annual summary of activities using a standard template that will be provided. This information must be submitted by 1 February for the previous year's activities unless otherwise approved and is used to maintain a working portfolio of University capabilities for both internal and external use. During years in which a renewal or continuation review is held for USOs, additional information will be required.

Additionally, USOs will be notified each spring to submit a one-page request for base funding that specifies how funds from the previous year were expended, the scholarly and organizational benefits of those expenditures, and a request and justification for funds in the following year. This yearly request provides an opportunity to modify the base funding requested in the five-year Financial Plan based upon the availability of new funds. Guidance regarding such modification will be provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research. Note that such funding may be withheld if participants in the USO are delinquent submitting reports required by the University or funding agencies.

Periodic merit review is essential for maintaining high quality in scholarship and ensuring wise investment of resources. It also should be conducted in a manner that extracts the needed information with minimal disruption to the organization being reviewed. USOs operate on a five-year plan (see figure below) and will be reviewed mid-way through year-three. If seeking to continue, they must at that time submit a new five-year plan to the Office of the Vice President for Research. The year-three review will focus on the extent to which the USO has achieved its stated objectives and met its specified review criteria.



Five- year cycle of University Scholarship Organizations.

For the three-year review, a panel, consisting of internal and external experts, will be appointed by the Vice President for Research to assess, as appropriate, scholarship, creative activity, administration, education impact, broadening of participation,

workforce development, and overall outcomes and impacts. Members of the Advisory Committee also may be involved. Costs for engaging external members will be provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research. The review panel will be provided with the annual report of activities during the previous five years, along with the new five-year plan.

The panel will prepare a report for the Vice President for Research and Provost (Vice President for Research and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in the case of Tulsa Campus activities), with distribution to the Research Cabinet and cognizant deans and chairs. The panel will recommend continuation, de-scoping, re-scoping or termination, and the Vice President for Research will act upon these recommendations as appropriate.¹ In the event de-scoping or re-scoping are recommended and subsequently approved, the USO director, in collaboration with University leaders and the Advisory Committee, must submit to the Vice President for Research, within 6 months, a revised plan, which will be reviewed appropriately. If a recommendation for termination is made and upheld, a plan for doing so likewise must be submitted to the Vice President for Research within six months. Termination must be approved by the President and will be reported to the Regents.

7. Cognizant University Representative

Please direct questions and requests for further information to Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Associate Vice President for Research (kkd@ou.edu; 325-3806). Additional Information on University policies for non-academic scholarship units will be available soon on a web site now under development.

¹ The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs will be consulted for all programs involving the Tulsa Campus.