DATE: May 10, 2017

FROM: Richard Galbraith, Vice President for Research

SUBJECT: National Institutes of Health (NIH) Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) [P20]

The current funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for the NIH COBRE award program has a published receipt date for new applications in fiscal year 2018. In order to allow adequate time for interested investigators to prepare pre-proposals and for a selection process to occur well in advance of the January 24, 2018 deadline, we are announcing an internal call now for pre-proposals from interested investigators. Please see the current FOA for details: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-16-415.html

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) supports research capacity building in states that historically have not received significant levels of research funding from NIH. NIGMS accomplishes this through the Institutional Development Awards (IDEA), of which one component is the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) [P20] program; the other is the Clinical and Translational Research (CTR) Award. As an IDEA state, we may have a total of 3 COBREs and 1 CTR funded simultaneously. For 2018, the University is eligible to submit 1 application to this COBRE competition. The objective of the COBRE initiative is to strengthen an institution's biomedical research infrastructure through the establishment of a thematic, multi-disciplinary center, and to enhance the ability of investigators to compete independently for complementary NIH individual research grants or other external peer-reviewed support. Projects must be led by an established peer-reviewed and well-funded investigator with expertise critical to the thematic focus of the COBRE and include a critical mass of promising junior investigators. The COBRE program includes 5-year awards (P-20, Phase 1) which can be renewed for a second 5-year term (Phase 2). Transitional awards (P-30, Phase 3) are also available for 5 years, which end participation in the COBRE program.

In a newly released related notice (NOT-GM-17-005), NIH has clarified the eligibility and letter of support requirements for PD/PIs of a previous COBRE center that completed the 3 consecutive phases. Such previous PD/PIs may only lead a new COBRE phase 1 application if they can show compelling justification that it proposes a distinct and completely different scientific theme from the previous COBRE center. In addition, the previous PD/PI must include a letter of support from a senior official indicating that the previous PD/PI is the sole established investigator at the institute/organization with the appropriate scientific expertise and is able to lead the new application. The requirement that PD(s)/PI(s) may not simultaneously lead two or more IDeA program awards remains unchanged.

At this time, I am requesting pre-proposals from faculty members wishing to apply to this program. The pre-proposals are due by 4:30 p.m. on June 26, 2017 and must be uploaded as a single pdf file into UVM’s InfoReady Portal for Institutional Competitions at https://uvm.infoready4.com/.

Pre-Proposals should be no more than five pages in length and should identify the lead (senior) investigator, faculty mentors and junior faculty. Junior faculty members must have a faculty appointment at the time of the award; the appropriate department chairs and deans must agree that they will have this position regardless of receipt of the award. Pre-proposals should describe the theme or focus of the proposal and why it is a) innovative; b) feasible; and c) how it will develop long-term competitiveness for funding. Pre-proposals should also include a section describing the following personnel information: a) the mentoring record – particularly faculty mentoring - of the PI(s) and faculty mentors; b) the tenure track status of each junior faculty member and the names of their proposed mentors; and c) the cores each junior faculty member will use. Finally, if funds will be requested for core facilities, please describe the core facilities in detail.
Please include biosketches, in the NIH format, for the lead investigator, faculty mentors and junior investigators; the biosketches may be in addition to the five-page pre-proposal.

The goal of the pre-proposal is to present your plans in the best possible light so as to render them competitive to be selected for a full proposal. Pre-proposals will be evaluated by a committee of experienced researchers using the following criteria: alignment with the program description and objectives; significance of the proposed research theme; qualifications of the PI(s); overall strength and interdisciplinarity of the research collaborators; innovative elements; feasibility; and potential to lead to future external funding.

Please be in touch with Hilda Alajajian, Grant Resources Specialist if you have questions or would like additional information (Hilda.Alajajian@uvm.edu or 656-1322)

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