

## Creating Signature Centers at IUPUI: Funded Proposals

January 17, 2007

Dear IUPUI Colleagues:

In this letter, I am pleased to present the list of proposals to be funded under the Signature Center initiative. This initiative is intended to take IUPUI's research effort to a much higher level by helping to create a significant number of Signature Centers which will stand out like skyscrapers over the surrounding landscape. Such structures need support, and the Signature Center initiative is designed to provide approximately seven million dollars of flexible money over the next three years (equally shared between the central administration and the academic units). With that in mind, a request for proposals was made in September 2006. It is appropriate to recall some of the characteristics expected for Signature Centers, as indicated in the following paragraph extracted from the letter calling for proposals:

*A signature center is a research unit distinctly identifiable with IUPUI. In addition to representing an area of research strength, the center will usually build on some ongoing activities and have many of the following attributes:*

- *Signature centers will often be interdisciplinary in character. They should have the capacity to attract significant external funding appropriate to the disciplines involved, including federal grants and foundation support. The centers need to bring academic distinction to the campus. After an initial period of campus-based seed funding, they should become largely self-sufficient in a 3 to 5 year time frame.*
- *The work of the center should have something unique and distinctive, which makes it stand out. It should not focus on an area commonly studied at many other universities, although collaborations with other institutions could be a desirable feature.*
- *The center should engage in work which takes advantage of the urban location in Indianapolis and establish partnerships with local community and cultural organizations.*

*At present, IUPUI has numerous existing centers and institutes engaged in a wide variety of activities. Some already possess the attributes of signature centers described above. These centers may nevertheless wish to submit proposals with plans to further expand the scope of their activities. Yet other centers, created in years past with high hopes but few resources, may wish to write proposals with specific plans to take them to signature status. For most faculty, this request for proposals is really a call encouraging you to dream, to let your imagination soar, and conceive of new collaborations and directions which are perhaps risky, but hold the elements of developing into signature centers. The intent is to support and nurture academically reasonable creative ideas in all academic areas, particularly those with an interdisciplinary focus.*

Review Procedure: 71 proposals were submitted for review. They were judged on academic merit and the above described criteria for determining whether a proposal had the potential to reach Signature Center status. Other aspects, such as the scholarly track records of the faculty investigators and the planned use of budget, were also taken into consideration.

The first step in the review procedure was for each school dean to set up a small faculty committee to screen, review and rank order the proposals. This was followed by two independent, campus-level reviews by the IUPUI Council of Associate Deans of Research and the IUPUI Research Committee. Several faculty members in Academic Affairs also reviewed all proposals independently. All of the evaluations were assembled and led to the selection of 19 proposals for seed funding at this time.

Submitted Proposals: The number of proposals coming from various schools were as follows: Medicine 21; Science, Engineering 8; Liberal Arts 7; Art, Dentistry, Informatics, Law 3; Public and Environmental Affairs, Social Work 2; Music, Nursing, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences,

Education, University Library, University College, Business 1. Non-teaching units contributed 4 proposals. This distribution corresponds to the 71 submitted proposals.

Funded Proposals: The 19 proposals funded in this round as potential Signature Centers are given below. Six of the funded proposals came from existing centers seeking new directions of enquiry - these are indicated with an asterisk.

**Center for Assessing, Understanding and Managing Pain**  
[Medicine, Dentistry, Science, Nursing]

**Center for Regenerative Biology and Medicine\***  
[Science, Medicine, Engineering, Liberal Arts, Informatics]

**Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture\***  
[Liberal Arts]

**Center for Earth and Environmental Science**  
[Science, SPEA, Liberal Arts, Informatics, Medicine]

**Cellular Therapy, Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant for Cancer**  
[Medicine]

**Center for Family Violence Prevention, Education and Research**  
[Medicine, Liberal Arts, Business, Law, Nursing, Social Work]

**Randall L. Tobias Center for Leadership Excellence\***  
[Business, Education, Medicine, SPEA, Liberal Arts]

**Renewable Energy Center**  
[Engineering, Science]

**Service Learning Research Collaborative\***  
[Science, Liberal Arts, SPEA]

**PREGMED: Pharmacogenetics and Therapeutics Research\***  
[Medicine, Nursing]

**Center for Advanced Studies in Hearing, Perception and Language**  
[Medicine, Music]

**Institute for Research on Social Issues**  
[Liberal Arts]

**Binational/Cross-Cultural Health Enhancement Center**  
[Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Liberal Arts]

**Center for Cancer, Genetics and the Environment**  
[Medicine]

**Tobacco Cessation and Biobehavioral Center**  
[Dentistry, Medicine]

**IUPUI Center for Mathematical Biosciences**  
[Science, Medicine]

**Center for Computational Diagnostics\***  
[Medicine, Informatics]

**Consortium for Health Policy, Law, Bioethics**  
[SPEA, Medicine, Law]

**Center for Excellence in Bio-Computing**  
[Science, Informatics, Medicine, Liberal Arts, Nursing]

Nineteen proposals were chosen for funding because they demonstrated the best chance of achieving the distinction of Signature Centers; it must be noted that almost all proposals were consistently of very high quality. The faculty review committees felt that several proposals were very creative, but the ideas lacked either the depth, breadth or maturity for funding at this time. The principal investigators of all proposals will soon be sent brief comments from the review committees. This should help in formulating modified proposals in the future. Barring severe economic problems, I anticipate a second round of funding for Signature Centers next year.

It was impressive to see the level of interest generated by this initiative. As I have said before, I was expecting about 30-40 proposals, and the fact that we received so many more is a good indicator of the high degree of faculty commitment to excellence in their research endeavors. Although the Signature Center initiative is the cornerstone of the Academic Plan, as you know, there are other action items under active consideration by many targeted teams of staff, students, and faculty. Hopefully the recommendations of the action item teams will lead to many suggestions that we can implement in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Uday Sukhatme