UC Davis Research Core Facilities Program

Request for Applications

**Designation as a Campus Research Core Facility**

December 2015

Submission deadline: January 22, 2016

**Introduction & Definitions**

The Research Core Facilities Program administered by the Office of Research is soliciting applications from scientific shared resource facilities at UC Davis who wish to be considered for the designation “Campus Research Core Facility.” Facilities given this designation will be those that offer access to expert personnel and state-of-the-art instrumentation and services to a large, multi-college/school user base. This designation is the first step in a multi-year program of strategic campus investments in scientific core facilities and in the upgrade and professionalism of services that are central to the research mission. After this initial request for applications, similar calls will follow in the future.

Core facilities at UC Davis have developed in a number of different ways, often from a bottom up approach to meet the needs of an individual or a small group of investigators. The [UC Davis Core Research Facilities and Resource Committee Report](http://research.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/Core-Facility-Report-February-2014_final.pdf) published in February 2014 defines a *core facility* as “an organized shared resource that provides access to technologies, training, and high quality scientific, technical services delivered by experts, often on a fee or reimbursement basis, to enable, facilitate, or enhance the research mission of the university”. As facilities made the transition from small user groups to larger, cross-college user groups with more formal expense-sharing needs, operating subsidies or equipment replacement costs were requested from the Office of Research through an ad hoc process.

With the creation of the Research Core Facilities Program (RCFP), new procedures are being established with the objective of ensuring quality, accessibility, transparency, and financial sustainability of core facilities. The current UCD culture includes a variety of operating practices. Therefore, the RCFP will distinguish between “Campus Research Core Facilities” (CRCFs) and “Shared Resource Facilities” (SRFs). **This call is only addressing CRCF designation**.

* Shared Resource Facilities play an important role on the UC Davis campus by providing access to scientific instrumentation, expertise and training to meet the needs of a local user base. The size and scope of these operations vary considerably, including for example in the number of dedicated professional staff and the levels of scientific and business management processes.
* Campus Research Core Facilities have a 3-fold mission: (i) provide access to scientific services & instrumentation, (ii) provide teaching & training of clients/users, (iii) provide research and development components within each facility. The CRCFs are broadly accessible across the campus community and provide technologies, training and high quality scientific and technical services delivered by experts on a fee-for-service basis to enable, facilitate or enhance the research mission of the university. CRCFs are professionally managed operations that have a sustainable business plan, set standards for best practices in facility management and operations, and meet unified criteria for this classification. CRCFs have a faculty director, a technical director, and a faculty advisory committee that includes facility clients. More detailed expectations for CRCFs are listed in the attached appendix.

**Why become a Campus Research Core Facility?**

1. Recognition campus-wide as a model of core facility excellence translating into increased success in national funding opportunities.
2. Eligibility to apply for financial support from RCFP/OR (e.g. personnel, equipment, maintenance, …)
3. Access to core facility management software at subsidized cost
4. Marketing support through OR and special recognition on the RCFP webpage
5. Opportunity for showcasing of CRCFs during the annual Office of Research Open House (“Core Expo”)

**Application Preparation**

Applications shall contain the following sections with brief descriptions. Each application will be reviewed by the Research Core Advisory Council, which will subsequently recommend the most suitable applications for the designation as CRCF. There is no length limitation for application submission. However, it is suggested to provide a concise yet comprehensive description of the respective resource facility.

1. Mission & Vision: Describe briefly the mission and vision of the resource facility and why it should be considered as a CRCF with strategic impact on the scientific mission of UC Davis. Please provide justification on the basis of scientific impact and strategic considerations for UC Davis. Explain how your facility contributes to scientific advances and discoveries.
2. User Base: Describe the user base of the resource facility over the past 3 years, considering specifically the number of users on and off campus and their affiliations. Provide a summary table with number of PIs, number of trainees (students, post-docs, etc.), number of UC Davis departments and schools, and current number of external non UC Davis users served. In an appendix include a user list (students, postdocs & staff scientists) together with the corresponding PI, department and college. Please use the template table provided for this purpose.
3. Services & Equipment: Include a list of all accessible equipment and services available in the facility, and summarize the usage records over the past 3 years (used time, available capacity, downtime if available). If applicable, provide information how equipment maintenance is carried out (vendor service contract or time & materials as needed, facility personnel, etc.).
4. Staffing: Include a list of all facility staff and their sources of support, including all technical, non-technical staff, students, and facility directors. In addition, please identify the members of the faculty advisory board, group or committee and how frequently it meets.
5. Management Plan: Describe the management plan for the facility that outlines the responsibilities of all staff. This section must also explain the decision making process in the facility with regards to hiring, equipment acquisition, and sun-setting of services.
6. Financial Plan: Provide a detailed financial plan for the entire facility including all financial expenses and all funding sources over the past 3 years along with a budget projection for the current fiscal year. Include all sources of subsidy including grants, department, school or OR support. The financial plan must include the financial aspirations towards reduction of institutional financial support and strategies to achieve potential financial sustainability within reasonable time intervals. Please use the XLS document provided in the application package and attach to your submission.
7. Strategic Planning: What will be the strategic goals for your facility as a Campus Research Core Facility within the next 5 years? Please address specifically the following subjects:
8. Explain why your goals are critical for the research mission of UC Davis, and provide a justification why the goals could not be achieved without the designation as CRCF.
9. What actions, such as changes in staffing, equipment acquisition and replacement, new services to be implemented, do you anticipate within the foreseeable future?
10. What financial challenges do you foresee in the immediate future (next 12 month) and beyond?

Note: all facilities accepted to the program will be asked to formulate a 5-year strategic plan.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Shared Resource Facilities on campus are eligible for the designation as Campus Research Core Facility when they …

* provide equitable access to all users
* are professionally managed
* each year serve users from 3 or more colleges or professional schools
* have campus-approved recharge rates in place

**Statement of Intent and Application Submission**

A Statement of Intent and full applications will be submitted electronically via the OR Research Funding system provided by the Limited Submissions Program. Specific submission instructions will be announced soon with a submission deadline for this first call of Friday, January 22, 2016.

**Application Review**

Applications will be reviewed by the Research Core Advisory Council (RCAC), which will make recommendations for designations as CRCFs to the Faculty Director. To ensure informed decision making, RCAC may seek input from on-campus subject matter experts while recognizing potential conflicts of interest during the review process. Details about the review process can be found on the RCFP webpage (<http://cores.ucdavis.edu>).

**Application Review Criteria**

All applications will be evaluated based on the formulated Expectations & Requirements for CRCFs outlined in the appendix. Key criteria are a multi-college/school user base, professional management and planning both financially and operationally by consideration of best practices, and strategic importance for the research mission of UC Davis. During the review RCAC may invite applicants for a 10 minute Question & Answer session.

**Decision Timeframe and Notification**

The RCAC will make its recommendations to the program Director by February 12, 2016. Final decisions on applications will be made by the program Director in consultation with the Vice Chancellor for Research. Notifications will be made via email on or around February 22, 2016.

**APPENDIX –Review Criteria**

The current core facilities at UC Davis are very diverse with respect to operational practices, management and funding sources. The newly formed Research Core Facilities Program (RCFP) has been charged with defining, establishing and administrating distinct Campus Research Core Facilities (CRCF) to ensure that investments of campus resources are strategically aligned and sustainable. This document outlines benefits for and unified expectations of Campus Research Core Facilities, and provides criteria to assess whether facilities are eligible for RCFP investment funds and management resources. RCFP facilities will set and define standards for best practices in facility management and operations.

**Benefits of the designation as Campus Research Core Facility**

1. Recognition campus-wide as a model of core facility excellence translating into increased success in national funding opportunities.
2. Eligibility to apply for financial support from RCFP/OR (e.g. personnel, equipment, maintenance, …)
3. Access to core facility management software at subsidized cost
4. Marketing support through OR and special recognition on the RCFP webpage
5. Opportunity for showcasing of CRCFs during the annual Office of Research Open House (“Core Expo”)

**Expectations & Requirements**

* **Utilization:** Campus Research Core Facilities provide strategically important non-redundant services and access to instrumentation and expertise not available in any other campus core facility. Specifically, Campus Research Core Facilities must:
* be broadly accessible to all researchers on and off-campus
* primarily serve UC Davis researchers
* be accessible on a first come-first served basis in a manner that is consistent with equitable access of Core services to the campus community and consistent with efficient operation of the Core
* demonstrate utilization in excess of 50% of available capacity
* **Management & Operations:** Dedicated Campus Research Core Facilities are considered the cornerstones of broadly accessible scientific resources at UC Davis. They must be professionally managed and set standards for best practices in operations. The professional management structure includes specifically:
* Faculty Director (≥ 1 month effort)
* Technical Director (100% effort)
* Facility Advisory Committee (typically meets at least 2 times/year and is advisory to the Faculty Director). Their deliberations should be accessible to the RCFP.
* **Training Activities:** As part of the day-to-day operations CRCFs provide specific training to new and established users. It is expected that facilities actively engage with the scientific community by providing workshops and training sessions for on- and off-campus researchers.
* **Strategic Planning:** CRCFs provide, maintain and annually review separate 5-year strategic plans regarding the scientific activities and business planning, including assessment of current capabilities vs. state-of-the-art, equipment acquisition and maintenance as well as human resources.
* **Financial Management:** CRCFs will be eligible to receive financial management assistance by RCFP. CRCF’s will be asked to provide an annual report with presentation to a joint meeting of RCFP and ACCD. The following criteria are essential for CRCFs:
  + - Utilization of common sets of financial tools (core facility management software)
    - Transparent cost analysis for usage rates with annual review in coordination with the Campus Rate Committee
    - Financial record keeping through the RCFP-provided software tools
    - Electronic usage tracking/reporting/billing; software provided by RCFP
    - Invoicing performed monthly
* **Reporting:** Each CRCF will be periodically reviewed. Annual reports submitted to RCFP staff will include:
* Scientific impact
* Finances & Operations
* Definition of goals and self-assessment of success
* External Benchmarking and outsourcing possibilities
* User survey including RCFP recommended survey questions
* **Visibility & marketing:** CRCFs must be visible to the community. This will be facilitated through the centralized RCFP webpage and the campus-wide searchable database. In addition:
  + - Each facility will maintain its own website with the following information: Contact information, location, fee schedule, services and equipment available, access information ensuring equitable access to all
    - Each facility continuously updates information on searchable database
    - The facility participates in RCFP hosted visibility events like “Core Day” at the annual OR Open House.
* When appropriate, facility users shall acknowledge RCFP support in manuscripts by providing suitable language. Text for acknowledgement shall be provided by posted signs, the facility website, and during new user training.
* **Grantsmanship/instrument replacement:** Campus Research Core Facilities are expected to support and participate in center grant proposals, and seek to expand and renew capabilities through shared instrumentation grant proposals. Campus Research Core Facilities will, however, not receive preferential status during limited submissions proposal review.