

Application for Designation as a PILOT University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Center

The University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Center (UWIRC) program is recognized as one of UAB's signature programs. The UWIRC program promotes outstanding interdisciplinary research across the spectrum of science and scholarship and the enhancement of the development of partnerships across departments and schools. The purposes of pilot UWIRCs are to speed the evolution of scholarship via new and novel programs and provide these new initiatives with a developmental period for potential future transition to full UWIRC status. Periodically, the program solicits applications for pilot UWIRC designation.

UWIRC awards provide resources to:

- Facilitate the advancement of scholarship in focused areas of importance to the university, state, region, and nation;
- Support fundamental, translational, and clinical research and entrepreneurialism/innovation; and
- Play a role in graduate student and postdoctoral education and mentoring and facilitate community outreach.

The interdisciplinary activities fostered by the UWIRC program should enhance the competitiveness of individual faculty members and groups of investigators for extramural awards in specific thematic areas, with a particular emphasis on large "center" type and institutional training grants from all relevant funding agencies. UWIRC awards may also be used to augment programs supported by multi-investigator extramural awards. A significant mandate for UWIRC designation is the creation and support of programs that, were not for the UWIRCs, would or could not otherwise exist.

Expectations of a pilot UWIRC are to establish activities and programs that will allow the pilot center to mature into an organization that can meet the expectation of a full UWIRCs, which are as follows:

- Stimulate collaborations among investigators across departmental and school/college boundaries, as exemplified by receipt of one or more competitively awarded multi-investigator extramural awards. Such collaborative arrangements add to the intellectual environment of UAB and facilitate interactions across departmental and school boundaries.
- Include substantive involvement of faculty from multiple schools/college.
- Facilitate recruitment, retention, and professional development of research scholars.
- Increase the diversity of UAB's investigators.
- Increase UAB's breadth and depth of extramural funding.
- Enhance UAB's research infrastructure by providing efficient and well-run shared facilities (e.g., cores), which make available specialized expertise, services, and/or equipment that is difficult or cost-prohibitive to provide within individual research programs or units.
- Provide grant review, submission, and management resources to UAB researchers.
- Provide an interdisciplinary matrix for student and fellow training such that UWIRCs serve as the intellectual home for theme-based extramural training awards.
- Facilitate the integration of research and service.
- Directly promote and foster entrepreneurialism and innovation by facilitating commercialization effort of UAB's intellectual property.
- Directly engage in philanthropic efforts in support of research and UWIRC activities.
- Promote UAB's strategic plan and the research mission through community-based education, service, and/or outreach activities.
- Participate actively in the UAB UWIRC Council of Center Directors.

Application Process for Pilot UWIRCs

The 2022 pilot UWIRC application process will run in three phases. In Phase 1, interested groups will meet with Senior Associate Vice President for Research, Dr. Jason Nichols, for initial conceptual discussions. In Phase 2, interested groups will submit a letter of intent (LoI) to submit a pilot application for consideration. Each LoI will be reviewed, and selected groups will then be asked to proceed to Phase 3, where a full pilot application will be submitted and reviewed.

Successful Letters of Intent will include:

- Overview of need for an UWIRC on an enterprise, national and international level.
- Description of proposed membership and leadership for pilot UWIRC.

- Description of funding (e.g., center, training) programs for which UAB would not be competitive but for the proposed pilot UWIRC.
- Adherence to one page, single spaced, 11 pt. font space limit with standard regular margins (not narrow).

Successful applications for the designation of a pilot UWIRC will:

- Show how the pilot UWIRC is collaborative and cross-cutting across university units in general.
- Persuasively articulate the pilot UWIRC’s potential to secure substantial funding, such as federally funded center grants, institutional training type grants, or significant foundation philanthropic support.
- Include a letter of support from the Dean of originating pilot UWIRC center director. The letter of support should indicate a financial commitment to the proposed pilot UWIRC of the school/college of no less than 25% of the total application budget request in either cash or directly relevant, in-kind support (e.g., release of a substantive teaching assignment).
- Include up to 3 Letters of Support from Deans or Chairs of the other schools/college involved in the UWIRC.
- Include description of the leadership team for the proposed pilot center.
- Provide a detailed budget request for funding up to a total of \$100,000 (\$75,000 pilot UWIRC support + \$25,000 school/college support).

Successful pilot center director attributes include:

- Outstanding mid-to-senior career scientist with strong track record of funding, scholarship, and national/international recognition.
- Demonstrable leadership experience in running large scientific, interdisciplinary, and collaborative teams.
- Demonstrable leadership experience in training students and/or fellows.
- Not currently holding a substantial university leadership role (dean, chair, division director).

TIMELINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION, REVIEW PROCESS, AND FUNDING

Jan 2022	Pilot UWIRC notification announced
Feb 2022	Pre-application/discernment conferences with Dr. Jason Nichols, Sr. Assoc. VP for Research
March 30, 2022	Letter of Intent due to the Office of the Sr. Assoc. VP for Research
April 15, 2022	Pilot UWIRC application finalists announced
May 15, 2022	Pilot UWIRC applications due from selected finalists
July 15, 2022	Pilot UWIRC pilot selections announced
October 1, 2022	Start date for funding
July 1, 2023	Submit annual progress report materials