The Eminence Program – 2021 Competition

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**DETAILS**

The UBC Okanagan Vice-Principal Research and Innovation (VPRI) has established the Eminence competition to provide funding to support the development of clusters of research excellence at UBC Okanagan.

For the purposes of this funding competition, a cluster of research excellence is defined as an interdisciplinary network of researchers focused on addressing key challenges facing society. Each cluster of research excellence is comprised of an interdisciplinary cohort of scholars who are leaders in their respective areas of expertise and who are working together on complex issues. Clusters funded through the Eminence Program are expected to perform high-impact work that transcends traditional departmental or institutional boundaries, mobilizes new knowledge, and allows UBC to address issues in ways that single disciplines cannot accomplish.

At UBC Okanagan, we expect our Eminence-funded clusters to become:

- A recruitment tool to attract new faculty and trainees;
- Highly competitive for funding with strong potential to succeed in major funding competitions (e.g., CFI, NSERC CREATE, NCE, SSHRC-IG, CIHR Team grant);
- Vertically integrated with undergraduate and graduate training programs;
- Catalysts to maximize regional, provincial and/or national assets and partnerships; and
- Provincially recognized centres of research excellence with an emerging national and international profile.

The Eminence Program is designed to support clusters of research excellence that leverage existing strengths and are aligned with the strategic plans of the units, faculties, campus and university.

The Program is intended to support projects that address UBC’s commitment, as articulated in UBC’s Strategic Plan, *Shaping UBC’s Next Century*, to Indigenization, equity, diversity, and inclusion. It is also aligned with UBC Okanagan’s cross-cutting commitments to further regional socio-economic development. Applicants will be asked to articulate how cluster activities and structures will respond to these commitments.

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In the context of this funding opportunity, the term “interdisciplinary” should be understood to fully encompass all research that connects, crosses or falls in between the traditional disciplines of the social sciences, humanities, science, engineering and health, including transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, convergence research and other approaches at the interface.
ELIGIBILITY

Clusters must have between three to ten members (including lead(s)) and a maximum of two cluster leads. In cases where two leads are named, a single administrative lead must be identified. Cluster Lead(s) must be faculty at UBC Okanagan with a full-time academic appointment in the tenured or tenure-track research stream. A Cluster Lead is expected to have a well-established research program and demonstrated leadership experience.

Cluster members may include faculty from UBC’s Okanagan campus, Point Grey campus or other Canadian post-secondary institutions with full-time academic appointments. Note that while proposals can involve faculty from other organizations, the primary aim of the Eminence Program is to cluster talent within the UBC Okanagan campus. Individual faculty can lead a maximum of one cluster, and can participate in a maximum of two clusters.

INFORMATION SESSION

Applicants are invited to attend an information session on July 14, 2021 from 9 – 10 AM to learn more about the Eminence Program. In this session, we will go over what is a cluster, review the evaluation criteria, and provide some advice on creating a two-page CV that supports your proposal. Please RSVP to vprawards.ubco@ubc.ca to receive the ZOOM link.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPLY

The Cluster Lead must submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) by submitting the NOI form to vprawards.ubco@ubc.ca by August 10, 2021 at 4:00 PM. Faculty sign-off is required for the NOI (letter or email from Dean or Associate Dean of Research).

The NOI is non-competitive and will be used internally to plan the review panel. NOIs (titles and membership) will be shared with ADRs and Deans. The VPRI may encourage teams to merge or consolidate.

FULL APPLICATION

Applicants are invited to submit a proposal that describes how three years of Eminence funding would be deployed to establish and/or advance a cluster of research excellence in any research or knowledge creation field. Applications will consist of a single PDF document that includes the following (in order):

- **Cover page** including a 100-word lay summary and institutional signatures
- A free-form proposal addressing the evaluation criteria (4 pages maximum)
  - Proposals must be written using a 12-point black font, single line spacing and a standard, single column on an 8.5” x 11” page layout for documents; references and figures are included in the page limit. No supplemental materials, such as appendices, are allowed.
  - Renewals – Applicants submitting a request to renew funding for an existing cluster must address additional criteria described below (2 pages maximum)
Applications for this funding call must be emailed to vprawards.ubco@ubc.ca by September 16, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

ADJUDICATION PROCESS

A review panel will make recommendations for funding to the Deans. The Deans will assess the proposals’ alignment with the strategic research priorities of the units, faculties, campus and university and make final recommendations to the Provost and Vice-Principal of Research & Innovation (VPRI), UBC Okanagan.

Final decisions on funding will be made by the Provost and VPRI.

Note that while the review panel members are established researchers with varied areas of expertise, applicants cannot rely on the committee being knowledgeable in the applicant’s specialized area of research and are encouraged to use non-technical language understandable to researchers in other fields.

AWARD DETAILS

Clusters may request funding ranging from $20,000 to $200,000 per year. Successful applications will be funded for three years, and will be eligible to re-apply for one additional three year term.

Successful applicants will be notified in October 2021 and Year 1 funding will be disbursed effective November 1, 2021.

A revised budget will be required for clusters that receive only partial funding. Upon receipt of an award letter, Cluster Leads must submit an RPIF to ORS in order for the grant to be set up.

Cluster Lead(s) and, if applicable, the cluster’s project coordinator will be required to:

- Attend a kick-off meeting with the VPRI Office on November 17, 2021 from 10:00 am-12:00 pm
- Submit a yearly progress and financial report
EVALUATION CRITERIA

Vision and Governance of the Cluster:

- Elaboration of a clear vision for the cluster that will be achieved through the Eminence award, including the potential of the cluster to:
  - have a transformative impact on UBC and on society; and/or
  - attract further external funding opportunities; and/or
  - support training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students;
- A detailed description of the planned activities that will establish a sustained cluster of research excellence (e.g., group meetings, co-supervision/training of students, strategic planning exercises, development of interdisciplinary methodologies, partnership development, etc.);
- A management plan for the cluster that considers governance, communication, team building and administrative supports that will enable the cluster’s success;

Research Excellence:

- Evidence of excellence in research, scholarly activity and/or artistic creation of the individual cluster members and the team as a whole, as determined by impact statements, discipline-specific metrics, national and international stature and/or external funding levels; evidence of leadership experience for the Cluster Lead;
- Description of the cluster’s planned interdisciplinary research approaches to address key questions facing society and why they are needed; details on how the different perspectives and methodologies will be applied or integrated; evidence that the team has the required expertise to execute an interdisciplinary approach;

Engagement and Commitments:

- As appropriate, evidence of community and/or partner engagement;
- Articulation of the cluster’s plan to respond to UBC’s commitment, as articulated in UBC’s Strategic Plan\(^2\) to (1) Indigenization and (2) equity, diversity, and inclusion; and UBC Okanagan’s cross-cutting commitments to exploring the conditions of, and furthering, regional socio-economic development. **Budget should include funding to support these commitments.**

Special Criteria for Renewals

- Evidence of the cluster (as a whole, not of individual members) in making significant progress towards meeting the expectations of the Eminence program during its first term of funding;
- A detailed proposal outlining the cluster’s plan to achieve sustainability after a second and final term of Eminence funding.

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\(^2\) See for example in Shaping UBC’s Next Century:

“a research culture that interacts in positive and respectful ways with Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge, and that welcomes the participation of members of other historically excluded groups.” (pg. 50)

“cultivat[ing] a diverse community that creates and sustains equitable and inclusive campuses” (pg. 42)

“build[ing] a diverse culture that integrates our themes of innovation, collaboration and inclusion, and infuses them through all our activities” (pg. 13)
ELIGIBILITY OF BUDGET REQUESTS

Budget should reflect activities to establish and/or advance a cluster of research excellence. Applicants should particularly consider proposed expenditures in Y1. In most cases Y1 budgets should be smaller than Y2 and Y3 and take into consideration, for example, student start-dates and ramp-up times.

Eligible:

- Direct research costs (including consumables) that explicitly support the cluster’s interdisciplinary research activities (annual maximum of $25,000 per cluster)
- The costs of cluster meetings, workshops, and/or conferences
- Salary costs for a cluster administrator/coordinator
- Community and stakeholder engagement costs, such as per diems or honorariums
- Communications and marketing materials or services
- Costs for professional development or training of team members and their HQP (for e.g. training to support EDI or cultural safety training)
- Postdoctoral stipends and/or top-ups
- Undergraduate and Graduate student stipends and/or top-ups
- Critical shared research equipment or tool that is demonstrably of benefit to the interdisciplinary research activities of cluster members (one-time, to a maximum of $75,000)
- Cluster member travel between UBC’s two campuses in Kelowna and Vancouver
- Cluster member travel to significant conferences and meetings (annual maximum of $15,000 per cluster)
- Faculty or trainee recruitment visits (annual maximum of $5000 per cluster)
- Relocation costs for new recruits (annual maximum of $2500 per recruit)

Non-eligible:

- Furniture
- Renovations
- Course releases

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Term of the Grant: The term of the grant is for three years with funding for years two and three conditional upon receipt and approval of an annual report that assesses progress towards activities, goals, milestones and outcomes articulated in the proposal.

Financial distribution for Year 2 and Year 3 is contingent on satisfactory progress and a closing balance at the end of the annual reporting period of less than 25% of the annual award. Clusters who carry-forward the previous year’s funding will have until March 31st to draw it down to <25% and receive the next year’s funding installment. Clusters will not be allowed to carry-forward unspent balances beyond March 31st.
Budget changes must be justified and must have a positive impact on the planned cluster-building and research activities of the cluster. Clusters should contact the Program Manager to discuss any major changes prior to incurring expenses.

All eligible expenditures must be incurred prior to the end of the three-year award term after which time any unspent funds will be returned to the VPRI. With justification, a no-cost extension may be granted at the end of year three at the discretion of the VPRI.

Clusters will have a single Administrative Cluster Leader (who may designate a delegate in case of extended absence). The Administrative Cluster Lead will be responsible for managing all aspects of the cluster, including financial oversight, and will provide an annual report that describes progress against milestones on October 1 of each year to the VPRI.

If the Cluster Lead leaves the University, the Eminence funded research project and infrastructure will remain at UBC Okanagan; in these circumstances, a new Cluster Lead at UBCO will be identified, subject to VPRI approval.

Clusters can add and/or remove members but must have between three to ten members and a maximum of two cluster leads. Team membership is reflected on the VPRI website. Cluster Leads can update membership on their annual report or by emailing vprawards.ubco@ubc.ca.