Enhancing Academic Excellence at the University of Oregon
The Faculty Excellence Cluster Hire Program
March 22, 2014

The Academic Plan of the University of Oregon calls for a focus on the goals of achieving academic excellence, promoting student access and success, and ensuring financial stability. To realize these goals, we must engage in a step-by-step process of building on our existing strengths and taking advantage of new opportunities. Hiring promising faculty is the key to our future as a major research university. The following proposal to recruit excellent faculty to UO is a key feature of our strategic plan to make new discoveries, create new knowledge, and educate the next generation of scholars and innovators.

The University of Oregon has a distinguished record of success for its fundamental research, and as a consequence is one of 62 select institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU). In contrast to its AAU public research university peers, UO has significantly fewer tenure-track and research faculty. In order to stay competitive, we need to expand dramatically the proportion of our faculty who are engaged in cutting edge research and creative endeavors. The simple fact is that the small number of tenure track faculty at UO threatens our ability to succeed in today’s competitive global educational arena.

By relying on a combination of funding sources, including incremental improvements to our budget model, additional external resources and new philanthropy, we will invest in our future by expanding our faculty. The path forward is not simply adding faculty by rote formula across campus. National conversations are centered around seemingly intractable grand challenges that cut across any particular discipline or approach: Developing new materials to power our future; Sustaining treasured environmental resources; Unlocking the mechanisms of life; Advancing the human condition & societal well-being. Addressing these grand challenges requires new ways to bridge disciplines and enable collaboration to solve pressing problems.

For UO to maintain its distinctive stature and advance its position, we need to build our faculty who do research and creative activity. We propose to do this, in part, by hiring small clusters of faculty who add capacity and also connect our strengths. Given UO’s traditional base in faculty whose goal is to understand fundamental processes, these strengths can be linked to our expertise in professional schools and to our ability to enhance communities at the local, state, national and global levels.

By utilizing a cluster hire approach, we will be able to realize a significant impact quickly in an area, growing our disciplinary capacity across the full range of the translational pipeline, better aligning our capacity with federal priorities, enabling collaboration among our faculty to create a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. With these investments, the cluster hiring initiative will:

• Increase the number of outstanding tenure related faculty in high performing departments and cross-disciplinary programs;
• Increase the institutional output and impacts of faculty scholarship in metrics where the University lags relative to its peers;
• Increase diversity among tenure related faculty;
• Expand UO’s footprint in the translational pipeline to address grand challenges, enhancing competitiveness for, and alignment with, federal, state and foundation funding opportunities;
• Build UO’s academic and instructional programs that provide unique opportunities to enhance Oregon’s economy and improve social conditions.

Program Overview

The Faculty Excellence Cluster Hire Program is designed to bring the best and brightest minds in select fields to the University of Oregon to join in efforts to address some of today’s most significant challenges. The intent is to attract small groups of scholars (approximately 2-5) who will add depth and expertise in specific areas and who will connect nationally prominent academic departments to address national needs.

The eventual size of the cluster hire program will depend on success in external fundraising, but we must launch this important program with the resources available to us. We are prepared to commit central recurring funding to this effort so that we can search for and hire new faculty and will partner with academic schools, colleges, departments and research centers to provide new cluster hire faculty with the space, equipment and other supports they will need to be successful. Initial selection of clusters will begin in Spring of 2014, enabling us to conduct searches in AY 2014/15. It is anticipated that the first strategic group of scholars will arrive on campus by fall of 2015, but if opportunities exist to fill positions during FY15, funding will be made available. We hope to hire 12-15 new faculty using this process in the next three years. Successful fundraising during our upcoming comprehensive campaign will enable us to conduct more cluster hires going forward. It is anticipated that we will review the overall cluster hire process in two years and refine procedures as needed. Initially we plan to solicit new cluster hire proposals every two years but may modify that timing if new funding becomes available.

Objectives of Faculty Excellence Cluster Hire Program:

• Encourage and foster cooperation within an already strong faculty and staff.
• Advance research and creative capacity and enable collaborative opportunities that deepen existing expertise and create new links among them to enhance UO’s national profile.
• Enable the campus to devote a critical mass of faculty to knowledge areas that are not solely addressed through existing structures.
• Strengthen existing curricular offerings on the undergraduate and graduate levels, and create opportunities for new ones.
• Advance the impact of the University of Oregon’s programs by addressing society’s needs.
• Assist in the fulfillment of other missions of the University, in particular advancing innovation and engagement with our communities, and increasing campus diversity and inclusion.

Application Process: (Cluster Hire application forms are available on this Provost website site)

Eligibility. Proposals may be submitted to the college dean by small groups of faculty, organized research or curricular programs, departments, schools and colleges, or cross-college collaborations.

Proposals. Groups of faculty should prepare brief proposals (3 pages) to attract a cluster of leading scholars to campus. Emphasis can be in areas of strength and high potential impact that add depth in a discipline or sub-discipline, or that will enable cross-disciplinary capacity by connecting academic departments that are recognized nationally to address national needs. Proposals can propose cluster hires of senior, mid-level or junior faculty, depending on the current faculty composition and the goals
and opportunities of the proposed cluster. Phased hiring over multiple years can be proposed, typically with a more senior hire to initiate building of expertise in the cluster. Existing hiring proposals from current or previous strategic planning efforts may be incorporated into these proposals, provided they follow the format suggested below. Proposals should include a section on how they will employ an "active recruitment" strategy for attracting a diverse pool of applicants.

Consultation. Faculty must consult with college dean(s) and associate deans in the development of the proposal. Cross-college proposals should be submitted to all colleges involved for review. Deans will consult with departments and should also notify and communicate with one another when cross-campus proposals are identified.

Budgets. Proposals should include initial estimates of hiring budgets and proposed space and facilities needs, but these will be elaborated in deans’ review (including expected salary, facilities and start-up costs over a specified time frame). Mention should be made of expectations for potential revenue generation from cluster hires (grants or new student tuition).

College Review. Proposals will be reviewed at the college level and must be accompanied by a letter of review from the relevant dean(s). College letters should include a statement of where the submission fits into the college’s strategic plans, an assessment of individual college priority among all proposals submitted from the college, detailed budgets, and any commitment to provide matching funds in support of the cluster hire.

Proposals must be submitted by the college dean to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2014.

Evaluation & Selection Process:

Cluster hire applications will be evaluated by standing advisory committees, including the Research Advisory Board, Academic Leadership Team, and Faculty Advisory Committee. Review committees will evaluate the merit of proposals in the context of existing capacity and competing proposals. In the review process, committees or the Provost may recommend modifications to optimize benefit to the University. Committee recommendations will be presented to the Provost, who will consult with the Vice President for Research and the President before selecting cluster areas. Selected cluster areas will be rank ordered for potential funding over the next three years. The amount of funding available for cluster hires each year will be determined through the normal annual budget process, including consultation with the Budget Advisory Group.

Criteria for Evaluating Cluster Hire Proposals:

- Ability to achieve national or international pre-eminence
- Enhancement of cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Potential to build on and connect existing strengths
- Building a diverse and inclusive faculty
- Strong likelihood of improving academic benchmarks
- Commitment to sharing extant resources and physical facility infrastructure
- Inclusion of multiple departments, units or colleges
- Clear hiring plans to meet stated goals and address priorities
- Enhancing campus leadership in a field of study
General Guidance for the Cluster Hire Search Process

I. Governing Assumptions

Administrative Home
While these cluster faculty positions are being created to enhance depth and promote cross-disciplinary scholarship, following current UO policy and practice, each cluster hire faculty member will have a primary department (or college) as an administrative home (with at least 60% FTE in that department). As such, the faculty working in these cluster areas and the departments that serve as their administrative homes will be instrumental in the search and hiring process. All hires will therefore require departmentally based evaluation, but additional departments may be involved and cross-disciplinary faculty hiring committees will typically be needed to evaluate candidates in emerging fields. It is anticipated that the majority of faculty appointments will be made into tenure-track positions (assistant, associate and full professor), but proposals may also be submitted for hiring into the research professor series (research assistant professor, research associate professor, and research professor). The administrative homes for faculty in a cluster proposal do not need to be in the same department, unit or college.

Funding
Recurring funding for salary associated with each position will typically emanate from the Provost’s Office, though participating colleges may propose cost sharing to maximize hiring if resources are available. Proposals may propose funding for a specified time period (e.g., 3-5 years for faculty in the research professor series with the expectation that continued funding must be obtained through external grants or contracts). Start-up costs associated with the new hires will be shared across the department, college, RIGE and Provost’s Office as for other faculty hires and can include facilities renovation costs, laboratory and computer equipment costs, postdoc and technician salary, graduate student support and related expenses.

The amount of recurring funding available for cluster faculty salaries in a specific year will be dependent on a combination of normal budgeting processes and private giving. Funding for faculty lines will be transferred to the department(s) when filled for the duration of the appointments. If the positions are vacated, salary funds will return to the Provost and relevant College(s) in proportion to their original participation. Return of revenues recovered from expended F&A costs generated by the cluster hires will be distributed according to standard RIGE practices.

II. Roles & Responsibilities
To hire, nurture and retain excellent faculty working in new areas, we will need to create an environment that fosters ongoing development of disciplinary depth as well as linkages to enable cross-disciplinary breadth in research activities and creative endeavors. Proposals should specify the areas in which potential hires will make teaching contributions. Cluster faculty will be expected to fulfill the normal responsibilities of faculty members for teaching, research and public service, but the cluster proposal and letter of appointment can specify unique conditions requiring modification of such expectations.

Lead Dean and Cluster Coordinator (Search Chair)
The Provost will appoint a Cluster Coordinator (tenured faculty member) and a Lead Dean for each cluster hire proposal that is chosen for funding. The Cluster Coordinator functions as the lead contact for the cluster, provides significant intellectual direction and support for cluster faculty hiring and career
development, and serves as the Search Chair. The Lead Dean is responsible for the oversight of the intellectual and academic vitality of the individual cluster programs assigned to their school/college. The role of the Lead Dean is to oversee and provide support for the hiring process for a cluster.

**Department Heads of Administrative Home Departments (and joint appointments)**

The department heads of administrative home departments (or school or college deans if lacking departments) are responsible for the career development of cluster faculty members being mindful of any additional responsibilities expected of cluster faculty.

If the cluster hire requires large start-up packages (e.g., > $100,000), the Office of Research, Innovation & Graduate Education will partner with the Lead Dean and other deans to coordinate package offers.

The Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs is responsible for the overall management and coordination of central campus policies and practices of the cluster hiring process. The Provost’s office will monitor the cluster hiring process at regular intervals through the Lead Deans and the Cluster Coordinators.

**Search Committee**

The Lead Dean and Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair will be in charge of creating a search committee (typically 6-10 members) composed of both cluster (proposal) representatives and faculty from potential administrative home departments. This search committee will be responsible for conducting each of the searches within a cluster. To ensure this outcome, appropriate college deans and department heads from relevant departments will be consulted for nominations to the search committee. All search committees are appointed by the Provost and approved by Academic Affairs.

**III. Search Process**

Once the committee is constituted, it is the Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair’s responsibility to arrange for the search committee to receive training from Academic Affairs, the Office of Equity and Inclusion and the Office of AAEO to ensure a diverse pool and equitable search practices.

It is the responsibility of the Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair to ensure that the relevant entities (deans, department heads, potential department faculty) are regularly consulted throughout the search process, including facilitating a meeting at the start of the search process with the faculty and the department head(s) of potential administrative home department(s), who will provide feedback on the job description and make suggestions for advertising venues. The Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair will work with central units, relevant departments and the existing cluster faculty to publicize the search.

The search committee will narrow the pool to a short list of candidates, complete telephone/skype interviews with candidates (if per departmental practice), and select candidates for campus interviews.

**Final Candidate Selection**

Once final candidates are selected, the Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair will consult with the dean from the college(s) and department head(s) and faculty of appropriate departments to determine their interest in participating in the hiring process. Discussions with home department head and home college dean will include explicit discussion of the salary, start-up cost and other position parameters.
The Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair will arrange interview schedules for the candidates in consultation with the identified department(s). These interviews will include at least the following:
- Meeting with the Lead Dean and Dean(s) of Colleges of the potential home department(s),
- Meeting with the Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair and search committee,
- Meeting(s) with potential home department faculty and department head(s), and
- Research presentation to the search committee, cluster faculty, and potential home department faculty.

After the interview, potential home department faculty and cluster faculty will be asked to send feedback to the search committee.

**Final Candidate Selection and Negotiations**
The search committee will then meet to select its acceptable candidates, after which the department voting faculty of the potential home department(s) will be asked to vote on candidate acceptability and tenure status, if applicable. Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Lead Dean and Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair, dean(s) of the home college(s), and home department(s), will make a recommendation to the Provost about candidate acceptability. In order to receive Provost’s Office approval to hire, the Cluster Coordinator should contact Academic Affairs staff with the request to begin the offer process.

Academic Affairs then will contact the head(s) of the potential home department(s), requesting the faculty vote(s) and the head’s approval, as well as the approval of the Lead Dean, and any additional dean(s) in the case of cross-college appointments. If a candidate is to be hired with tenure, Academic Affairs will make a recommendation to the Provost on rank and tenure. Provost’s Office approval will be based on the agreement of all parties and candidate excellence.

**Standard Approval Still Required**
This process does not preclude the normal faculty hiring approval process at the University of Oregon.

**Letter of Offer**
In consultation with the Lead Dean, the Cluster Coordinator/Search Chair and Academic Affairs, the home department and College will prepare a letter of offer that specifies negotiated position-specific items (e.g., salary, start-up, incoming faculty member’s research, teaching, and service obligations to the home department and any joint department or cluster-related entity). The letter should follow standard UO templates and processes as overseen by Academic Affairs. The Department Head or Cluster Coordinator should inform all involved of the candidate’s decision to accept or decline the offer.