

University-Level Research Institutes and Centers FY 2024 Request for Applications

Purpose: Research-related Institutes and Centers (RICs) support and promote VCU’s interdisciplinary strengths in research, scholarship, and creative expression. RICs are organizational units comprised of a group of multidisciplinary researchers across multiple units focused on solving a critical societal problem that is consistent with the goals of [VCU's Quest 2028](#) and the [One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan](#). The mission of RICs will have significant focus on research as well as training and service. RICs are classified into two types: university-level and unit-level.

- University- or unit-level designation:** University-level RICs report to the VPRI and are supported in part by OVPRI staff and funding. Unit-level RICs report to the chief administrator of the unit, typically a dean. This application is only for university-level RICs. Unit-level RICs do not need VPRI approval and should seek guidance from their dean or other chief administrator.

Before applying for the creation or renewal of a RIC, please read VCU’s policy governing RICs, found [here](#).

University-Level Research Institute or Center At-A-Glance (additional details below)

Full Proposal Deadline	March 18, 2024
Award Start Date and Project Period	July 1, 2024
Eligibility Criteria	University-level RICs must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align with One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan Have a mission that is multidisciplinary, with significant faculty involvement from multiple academic units, and <i>beyond the scope of what can be accomplished by an individual school or college.</i> Be evaluated periodically by the RIC Oversight and Review Committee on whether the RIC is still pursuing a mission that is novel, compelling, and university-level. Plan for financial stability and external sponsored funding, such as center-type grants or multi-investigator funding. Typically, have a demonstrated track record of collaboration and success over multiple years and have a significant research focus.

Full proposal deadline: Application packages should be submitted via the [RIC Administrative Action Form](#) no later than **5pm (EST) on March 18, 2024**. You will receive a confirmation email upon receipt. **Applications cannot be accepted after the deadline for any reason.**

Format: Please use Arial 11pt, Times 12pt font, or a similar-sized common font. Figure legends can have smaller fonts so long as they are reasonably legible. Use ½” margins around the page. Once complete, **the application and any supporting documents must be converted to a single PDF file for upload.**

Application Guidance: Please respond to the following guidance to structure your university-level RIC application.

1. **Mission and Vision statements:** Provide short (1-3 sentence) mission and vision statements that are suitable for display on the OVPRI website.
2. **RIC aims and goals.** (Limit: 3 pages) Describe the aims of the RIC and how these will add value to the university's strategic goals. Specifically, address how the RIC will accomplish some or all of the following:
 - Contribute to the national and international prominence of VCU as a research university
 - Enhance inter-school/college interactions and collaborations leading to significant multi-investigator awards
 - Promote strategic initiatives that expand the university's research enterprise
 - Improve research quality and research productivity
 - Create a mentoring environment for faculty that augments and extends what is provided by individual departments
 - Provide unique educational opportunities for faculty, students, and trainees, including those from underrepresented backgrounds
 - Play a significant role in transferring research and creative discovery into practice and/or impact policies and regulations

Your application may also address other assets the RIC could provide, such as how it will:

- Develop and maintain core facilities or services that promote and support research
 - Play a significant role in the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty
 - Build partnerships and alliances between the university and local, state, national, and international communities.
3. **Scope and value:** (Limit: 1 page) Provide the rationale for seeking university-level status instead of establishing a unit-level RIC. Explain how the interdisciplinary collaboration of individual researchers under the proposed RIC will potentially result in outcomes greater than those that could be realized from the researchers' individual efforts. Describe similar VCU entities and how the proposed RIC differs from or might be consolidated with these groups.
 4. **Organizational structure, operations, and governance:** (Limit: 1 page) Describe the organizational structure and general operations plan. Include your plan to address the university's mission for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Please specifically address:
 - The rationale for selecting the RIC director, the evaluation criteria and process for assessing the director's performance and efficacy, and how succession will be accomplished.
 - A description of the roles and responsibilities of the director and any other administrators (e.g., assistant director).
 - How membership for RIC faculty is defined and monitored, with clear guidelines for promoting diversity and inclusivity. Membership should be demonstrated by prior evidence of synergistic collaboration between faculty members, or plans for future collaborations (publications, collaboration on a sponsored research project, etc.).
 5. **Measurable outcomes and timeline:**
 - Renewing RICs (Limit: 2 pages): list your previous measurable goals and summarize progress towards these over the previous funding period. This should include your progress toward multi-PI or "center"-type funding.
 - All applicants (Limit: 1 page): Provide specific activities to be undertaken, measurable outcomes, and a timeline for the stages of development over the next three years. The proposal

must include the projected number of faculty members and trainees who are expected to participate in the RIC during this time as well as a plan for obtaining extramural funding.

6. **Evidence of past productivity/synergy of the RIC (if renewing) or the proposed group of investigators (for new applications):** It is important that the reviewers can clearly see that the group of faculty involved are from more than one academic unit (i.e. report to more than one dean). Using a table or spreadsheet format, provide a summary of outcomes the proposed or current RIC has supported over the past 3 years. Please do NOT generate a long narrative response to this query. The reviewers are best served by a list of important collaborative products such as co-authored publications from RIC faculty, co-written grants submitted or funded, patent applications or other intellectual property, and other tangible outcomes of collaborative work. Faculty groups with no documented history of collaboration are not encouraged to apply for university-level RIC status.

For renewing RICS only: The committee is seeking an understanding of how the RIC has led to the generation of these products. To assist the committee please score each product in the table/spreadsheet with a letter designation as follows:

“A”: Products whose creation was not possible without support and collaboration through the RIC

“B”: Products whose creation benefitted from but was not completely dependent on the RIC

“C”: Products whose creation were incidental to the RIC but involved participating members

7. **Budget:** (Limit: 2 pages) Explain the funding plan and outline the resources needed and available (including personnel and space) for the next **three-year period (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027)**.
- Budget Justification: Clearly state your funding request from OVPRI and justify the amount needed.
 - Describe the support provided by deans and other key administrators. All units involved with a RIC (schools/colleges, departments, etc.) are expected to have an investment in the work of the RIC. Examples include funding commitment, protected time, decreased teaching responsibilities, facilities, space, and administrative support. These should demonstrate sustainability and solvency and must be accompanied by a letter of support or Memoranda of Understanding from the key stakeholders. Place letters at the end of the application.
 - Briefly explain current financial support from other sources such as grant funding, philanthropy, etc. that directly contribute to the RIC’s operations. These should also be evident on the spreadsheet budget spreadsheet (below).
 - Provide a **separate budget spreadsheet** that describes the total annual operations budget for RIC. This should clearly show expenses and origin of the funds being proposed to pay for these expenses. It is important for the reviewers to understand all sources of funding and how the investment from OVPRI is being incorporated into the RIC’s operation.

Questions: Please direct all questions to ovprifunds@vcu.edu.