PART 1. Overview Information

Program Opportunity Title	Transdisciplinary Cores to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in Urban-Focused Research, Creative Activity and Scholarship
Program Opportunity Announcement (POA) Number	VCU-POA-002 (Reissue of VCU-POA-001, August 31, 2015)
Program Opportunity Purpose	This POA seeks concept proposals supporting the formation of transdisciplinary cores that engage urban communities in the redress of challenging problems. The core concepts will be a catalyst for recruiting visiting scholars with interests in connecting science, pedagogy and practice between the university and urban communities. This POA is intended to promote diversity, in all of its forms, and the inclusion of community members, faculty, staff and students who contribute to the university's education and research enterprise.

Key Dates

Posted Date	September 24, 2018
General Information Dates* and Consultation Period	October 10 – October 11, 2018* October 1 – October 30, 2018
Intent to Submit Core Concept (Required)	October 24, 2018
Open Date (Earliest Submission Date)	November 1, 2018
Core Concept Proposal Due Date	November 14, 2018
Advisory Council Review Date(s)	November 16. 2018
Accepted Core Concept Notification Date	November 21, 2018
Anticipated Visiting Scholars Search Timeline	December 5, 2018 – June 30, 2019

PART 2. Full Text of Announcement

Section I. Opportunity Description

1. Overview

This program opportunity announcement (POA) is sponsored by the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry & Innovation (iCubed) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The POA is intended to tap into our university's human resource potential in areas of clinical practice, creative activity, and research and scholarship, as a means to increase our capacity to solve societally relevant problems of the 21st century. There is an urgent need for comprehensive approaches that integrate discovery and knowledge within academic disciplines, with creativity and other ways of knowing, in the framing of complex problems impacting urban communities. Transdisciplinary approaches to problems affecting the lived experience, principally within urban communities, offer us the best opportunity for broad *inclusion*, collaborative *inquiry* and transformative *innovation*.

2. Purpose

The purpose of VCU-POA-002 is to request transdisciplinary core concept proposals focused on the promotion of education equity and excellence for African American and Latinx school children; the articulation and/or delineation of effects of discrimination and other threats against people with multiple minority identities (LGBTQTIA+ and ability/class/race); and the integration of urban agriculture in the cultural, economic, political and social landscapes of Richmond, Virginia. [Note: The selection of these priority problem areas was informed by a review of available community needs assessments [1], national and regional data and statistics, and a consideration of our university's assets and promise to deliver meaningful and sustainable solutions.] The goal is to support transdisciplinary cores in developing a scholarly milieu that inspires meaningful collaborations across academic disciplines, institutes and centers, and urban communities. The objective is to promote diversity and inclusion within each core through broadening participation in knowledge generation that enhances the lived experience. This POA is only one mechanism through which *i*Cubed contributes to the university's mission to be the model 21st century, urban public research university. Other mechanisms include iCubed's Commonwealth Scholars Program (CSP), and Pathways to the Professoriate Program (PATH).

3. Background

As a premier urban public research university, VCU, unlike other higher education institutions in the Commonwealth, is situated in a dynamic metropolitan context. U.S. cities are fertile ground for universities such as our own, which seek humanistic, scientific and entrepreneurial solutions to a range of challenging problems that disproportionately impact urban populations. In Richmond, VA, these problems often are compounded by the confluence of concentrated poverty, discrimination, ecological disruption and transit injustice, education inequality, health inequities and structural racism. Our ability to capitalize on existing assets in terms of geography, people and resources is fundamental to our success as a leader on issues related to economic, health and social equity in urban regions.

The general consensus is that our university is primed to become a national model for diversity, inclusion and educational excellence among 21st century urban research universities. Through our distinctive academic programs and institutes and centers (ICs) of excellence, our university has the resource capacity to develop promising solutions that enhance the vitality of urban communities. There are several academic programs and 'problem-centered' ICs that contribute to the university's premier status in the Commonwealth. These academic programs and ICs play a critical role in helping the university negotiate its location at the intersection of urban problems and solutions. They also facilitate partnership equity between the university and our community partners, and serve as a driving force for the co-construction of humanistic and scientific approaches to populations in need.

Our best opportunity to enhance diversity, inclusion and educational excellence across the university is to invest purposefully in academic programs and ICs that focus on challenges in urban communities. Such academic programs and ICs often are highly inclusive environments, where faculty, staff and students from a range of academic and scholarly perspectives engage in collaborative inquiry to address complex problems in a community or population. The disparate approaches and methodologies observed by stakeholders usually require some mediation between disciplinary boundaries. When negotiated effectively, the convergence and integration of several disciplinary perspectives can lead to a transdisciplinary approach to a complex problem.

Transdisciplinary approaches "transgress boundaries between scientific disciplines and between science and other societal fields" to confront problems of the lived experience (p.435) [2]. These approaches are firmly imbedded in the paradigm of the knowledge society, but also recognize other forms of knowledge generated in cultural and societal fields. Through a recursive process that involves the negotiation of assumptions, evidence and values, transdisciplinary approaches work to merge cultural, scientific and societal knowledge in a manner that "significantly improves the quality, acceptance and sustainability" of solutions that promote the welfare of urban communities (p.434) [2]. Transdisciplinary approaches differ from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in very important ways: the multidisciplinary model approach still being subject to discipline-bound evidentiary bases, and both approaches failing to systematically integrate other forms of knowledge.

Academic programs and ICs supportive of transdisciplinary approaches offer opportunities to draw diverse stakeholders – some from underrepresented minority populations – in collaborative endeavors that lead to humanistic and scientific engagement with communities. Evidence of this may be found among the 70+ faculty, staff, students and community partners now participating within existing iCubed transdisciplinary cores. The strategic inclusion of stakeholders from underrepresented minority populations in academic units, in general, and in problem-centered ICs, in particular, can lead to the development of novel approaches to challenging and persistent problems in urban communities [3]. Stakeholders from such backgrounds bring with them intuitive and scientific assumptions that support transdisciplinary approaches, and they can provide impetus for paradigmatic shifts in how we investigate problems and what we ultimately propose as innovative solutions [3, 4]. Our ability to leverage the assets of these academic programs and ICs will enable us to attract stakeholders who not only advance a compassionate science, but who also contribute to a diverse community, thereby furthering the mission of our university.

Transdisciplinary approaches are most appropriate "when knowledge about a societally relevant problem field is uncertain, when the concrete nature of problems is disputed, and when there is a great deal at stake for those concerned by problems and involved in dealing with them (p.34)" [2]. In Richmond, VA, these societally relevant problems include those broadly related to education equity and excellence, empowerment of LGBTQTIA+ communities, and urban health and food justice. As such, this POA seeks core concept proposals describing a comprehensive redress of problems related to these priority areas. Indeed, *i*Cubed endeavors to make the following summary statements in 10 or fewer years:

      (1) The achievement gap is closed,
      (2) Communities are empowered,
      (3) Health disparities are eliminated; and,
      (4) Justice is equitable.

The above-referenced summary statements are ambitious, bold and courageous. However, the alternatives to these summary statements are unacceptable, especially in the 21st century.

Our university is poised to become a leader among research universities committed to the welfare of urban populations. The leading 21st century urban research university is one that will be able to successfully "bridge the chasms" between academic disciplines and "actually practice interdisciplinarity" [5]. Importantly, our university's goal to strengthen collaboration and connections between the arts, health sciences, humanities, social sciences and the STEM disciplines is aligned with this vision of a transcendent university [6]. Another attribute of the model 21st century research university is the integration of community engagement through clinical, creative, research and scholarly activities. Here to, our university's goal to enhance community-engaged scholarship and service is befitting of our status as a premier university [6]. Finally, the preeminent 21st century research university evokes transformative learning as "a structural change in how we see ourselves and our relationships" to the life world (p.100) [7]. Accordingly, our university's goal to recruit and retain a diverse and talented faculty and staff to imbue our students with a sense of commitment, purpose and service to humanity is consistent with this intentional pedagogy and practice [6]. In many ways, this POA reaffirms our university's commitment to form meaningful and sustainable partnerships with urban communities, and to be ambitious, bold and courageous in our collaborative efforts of solve societally relevant problems.

Section II. Award Information

Award Mechanism	Program Opportunity: A mechanism to support the cluster hiring of visiting scholars across colleges, schools and institutes and centers whose collective research, creative activity and scholarship agenda contribute to the development of a trans-disciplinary approach to a societally relevant problem.
Application Types Solicited	New
Anticipated Number of Programs	It is anticipated that up to three core programs will be supported this award cycle. However, the continuous funding of any program is contingent upon university budget appropriations and the receipt of meritorious concept proposals.
Award Budget	Up to four (4) visiting scholars per core (1-year, temporary position appointment with possibility of permanent hire)
Award Date	July 1, 2019 (Earliest start date for visiting scholars)

Section III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) vice presidents, deans, and associate deans affiliated with the following:

- College of Humanities and Sciences
- College of Engineering
- College of Health Professions
- Graduate School
- Honors College
- L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
- Life Sciences
- School of the Arts
- School of Business
- School of Dentistry
- School of Education
- School of Medicine
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Social Work
- University College
- VCU Health (Health Sciences)
- VCU in Qatar

Applications will not be accepted from individual faculty members, staff or students; chairs of academic units; directors of institutes and centers; or, any individual, group or organization not affiliated with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Section IV. Proposal and Submission Information

1. General Information Session Dates and Consultation Period
General information sessions will be held on October 10th and 11th (9:00 – 9:50am; 3:00-3:50pm) at the Division for Inclusive Excellence, 817 S. Cathedral Pl., in the Dr. Wanda Mitchell Conference Room and Library. The information sessions will afford applicants the opportunity to review the POA and to explore transdisciplinary core concepts. There also will be an open consultation period beginning October 1 and ending October 30. Applicants, or those expected to contribute to the proposed program application, are encouraged to schedule an appointment to discuss the development of their concept proposal(s). Click here for more information.

2. Intent to Submit
Eligible applicants are required to declare their intent to submit on or before October 24, 2018 at 5:00PM EST. In the case of multiple proposal submissions, a separate declaration of intent for each is required. Click here for more information.

3. Content of Proposal

3.1 Concept Proposal
The concept proposal should address the purpose of the transdisciplinary core; its significance to the priority areas identified in this POA; its relevance to urban communities in Richmond, VA; its stakeholder's representative of university and community constituencies; its potential to promote the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority visiting scholars; and, its promise to advance the university's mission.

- *Purpose*. Briefly, state the proposed challenge, issue or problem to be addressed in the concept proposal.
- *Significance*. Provide an estimated account of the problem. Explain why a transdisciplinary approach is needed to solve the problem. Mention what is novel or innovative about this particular approach.
- *Relevance*. Explain how the problem is relevant to urban communities, specifically those in Richmond, VA.
- *Stakeholders*. Identify those involved in the initial formation of the core, in terms of academic departments, colleges and schools, institutes and centers, and/or the university and community organizations. Explain how each visiting scholar (up to 4 per core), representative across academic discipline and perspective, might contribute to the development and future success of the core. Do not include names of individuals who may be part of a future recruitment plan.
- *Potential*. Explain how the transdisciplinary core can serve as a recruitment mechanism for underrepresented minority scholars. Explain how the core might advance the careers of faculty and students, specifically those from underrepresented minority populations.
- *Promise*. Provide a glimpse into what it would mean to solve the problem. Explain how this core will lead to programs of distinction or national prominence in a specific problem area.

3.2 Concept Proposal Format
The concept proposal is limited to five, single-spaced pages. A proposal cover page will be generated during submission. The margins should be 1-inch. Font size should be 11 points or larger and conform to either Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype or Times New Roman typefaces. The final document should be converted to PDF before submission.

4. Submission Date and Time
The deadline for concept proposals is November 14, 2018 at 5:00PM EST. Late proposals will not be reviewed. Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Proposals must be submitted via the iCubed application system.

Section V. Proposal Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria
The evaluation criteria described below will be used to determine concept proposal rankings. All concept proposals will be subjected to these overall evaluation criteria to determine development potential and value.

1.1 Development Potential and Value
Concept proposals will be evaluated on whether the university's investment in the proposed cores will generate discovery and new knowledge, promote diversity and inclusion of faculty, staff and students, as well as lead to positive and sustained change in urban communities.

2. Reviews and Selection Process

2.1 Advisory Council Review
The Institute's advisory council will review and score all concept proposals based on the above-referenced evaluation criteria. The chair of the advisory council will submit scores for each concept proposal to the Institute director.

2.2 Institute Director Review
The Institute director will conduct a second review of all concept proposals. The director will use the same evaluation criteria as the advisory council. In addition, the director will consider factors related to appropriateness of core, overlapping interests, and time to development.

2.3 Consensus Review and Recommendations to the Provost

The Institute director will conduct a consensus review with the advisory council chair. Following this review, the Institute director will forward to the Provost the concept proposals recommended for visiting faculty searches.

3. Anticipated Notification Dates

The notice for approved concepts will be sent via email on November 21, 2018.

Section VI. Next Steps

1. Visiting Scholar Position Searches

Upon notification of an approved concpt proposal, iCubed – in collaboration with the Office of Faculty Recruitment and Retention, college and/or school personnel administrators, and transdisciplinary core co-chairs – will ready the concept proposal into a visiting scholar faculty position search announcement. The purpose of the position search is to recruit prominent and successful scholars to join a critical mass of VCU faculty and stakeholders to assist in the development of a transdisciplinary core. Select visiting scholars may be presented with future position opportunities at the university.

1.1 Nomination of Transdisciplinary Core (Search) Co-Chair and Members

Deans and/or their associate deans will have until November 28th, 2018 to nominate a core (search) co-chair and up to four others to represent their proposed transdisciplinary core. A curriculum vitae and/or a resume must accompany each nomination. The core co-chair and members must be faculty, staff or representatives of local community organizations relevant to the core. At least one core search member must be a tenured faculty member at the rank of associate professor or higher; and, at least one member must be a representative of a local community organization.

1.2 Approval of Transdisciplinary Core Co-Chair and Members

The Institute director will review the appropriateness of the slate of nominees and send approval to the recommending vice presidents, deans and/or their associate deans. Expectations of the transdisciplinary core co-chair and members will be shared in this notification.

1.3 The Role of Transdisciplinary Core (Search) Co-Chair and Members

Transdisciplinary core members will serve an initial 18-month term in the Institute, beginning December 2018 / January 2019. During this period, members representing each core will serve as search committee members (December 2018 / January 2019 to June 2019); and, then regularly engage visiting scholars in developing a transdisciplinary core vision document from their respective concept proposals (July 2019 to June 2020). The development of the core vision document will occur in direct consultation with the Institute director, chair of the advisory council, and consultants internal and external to the university, if needed. The core vision document will serve as the basis to all future core activities.

1.4 Professional Development Funds for Transdisciplinary Core Fellows

Core members will receive $500.00 in professional development funds for completing the initial 6-months, and $1,000.00 in professional development funds for completing the additional 12-months. Thus, the total compensation for core members completing the 18-month term will amount to $1,500.00.

2. Visiting Scholar Activities

Visiting scholar activities will vary across cores. However, each visiting scholar will be extensively involved in the development of the transdisciplinary core vision document; and each scholar will engage undergraduate, graduate and/or professional students in formal curricular and experiential activities (up to 1 course or course equivalent and seminar presentations).

Section VII. Contact Information

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