![Rutgers logo] Office of the Executive Vice
President for Academic Affairs

Investing in Faculty Diversity at Rutgers

Program Description and Guidelines for Cluster Proposals

Date: August 29, 2024
From: University Academic Affairs
To: Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, Chairs

Subject: Guidance for Implementation

Website: https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/strategic-initiatives/investing-faculty-diversity-rutgers/strategic-diversity-cluster-hiring

Since a thriving culture of inclusive excellence often depends on thoughtful collaboration within and across units in areas that are of strategic value to the university, the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs invites proposals for faculty cluster hires that fit within one of four areas of strength and emerging promise across all the Chancellor-led units at Rutgers: **Race, Racism, and Inequality**; **Health Equity**; **Advancing STEM Diversity; Engaged Climate Action.** All appointments funded through the program are intended to advance Rutgers's institutional goals of building diversity, equity, and inclusive academic excellence, as outlined in our Diversity Strategic Plan.

- **Race, Racism, and Inequality** clusters will support scholars at any rank conducting research into the structural, systemic, institutional, and individual effects of racism and discrimination, both historically and today, in all domains of the humanities, social sciences, and professional schools, including but not limited to area studies, business, criminal justice and the carceral state, families, education, environmental and climate justice, labor, law, media, public policy, urban planning, or other related fields.

- **Health Equity** clusters will support scholars at any rank conducting basic, clinical, translational, community-engaged, and population-based research in the biomedical sciences, social sciences, behavioral, psychological sciences and related fields that addresses health inequalities, including but not limited to research on pathogenesis, chronic disease, mental health, disease prevention and treatment, access to healthcare, and public health.

- **Advancing STEM Diversity** clusters will support underrepresented scholars at any rank conducting research in any area of the physical, biological or biomedical sciences, earth sciences, computer sciences, engineering, mathematics, or in areas of convergence

among multiple fields that define an emergent domain of research (e.g., AI and the data sciences, computational biology, interdisciplinary climate science, etc.).

- **Engaged Climate Action** clusters will support scholars at any rank conducting use-inspired, publicly-engaged and/or community-engaged research in the natural sciences, social sciences, policy, engineering, humanities, or other disciplines that addresses the causes and consequences of climate change, their inequities, and policies, technologies and behaviors to limit those consequences and inequities

Support: UAA will support successful cluster hires at 100% salary or the equivalent amount for the first two years of appointment, to be used for salary and benefits support, discretionary funds for the faculty as a top off to the startup, or funds to provide protected time for scholarly activities. Note in addition that:

- Faculty may be supported either through the Strategic Cluster Hiring program or through the Accelerated Recruitment program, but not both.

- Funding support is allocated according to fiscal year, beginning in the year following hire. Hires made in AY24-25 (FY25) will be supported with program funds as of July 1, 2025 (FY26) and forward for two years total.

Approval Process and Deadlines: Teams should work closely with their Deans and use the fillable Cluster Proposal Form on the [UAA website](#) to prepare all necessary information. Final cluster proposals will be submitted by Deans to their campus Provost and/or Chancellor's Office, who will set internal deadlines for review at the campus level. Provosts and/or Chancellor's designee will forward ranked recommendations to UAA, where proposals will be reviewed for sustainability and strategic priority and approved for implementation. Final ranked proposals will be due to UAA on **January 31, 2025.**

Requirements and recommendations: Successful clusters may take many forms, but they must fit clearly within one of the four priority areas described above. As teams assemble cluster proposals, they should bear in mind the following parameters:

- Clusters may originate in any department or school at Rutgers, but proposals that involve collaboration across multiple departments, schools, or Chancellor units will receive priority for funding. Collaboration might include (but is not limited to) hiring in complementary fields around a convergent area of research and teaching; the development of new academic programs, certificates, or pathways; coordinated research projects sustained through collaborative fieldwork, seminars, or seed funding; coordinated teaching, supervision, or training of student cohorts; association with an

interdisciplinary center or institute that catalyzes intellectual work and community across schools or Chancellor units.

- Clusters may be assembled over several hiring cycles, through searches for multiple faculty in a single year or through searches for individual faculty who will form part of an existing or proposed cluster. Full clusters should have a minimum of four faculty members and should aim to be fully constituted within three years. Approved clusters will be reviewed for progress at the end of the second year; clusters that have been unable to hire successfully after two years may not receive funding in future cycles.

- All Cluster hiring proposals should designate one or more **Cluster Champions**: a tenured faculty member with expertise in the area of the proposal cluster who will coordinate the hiring process and act as an intellectual leader for the ongoing academic work associated with the cluster. Cluster Champions typically play a central role in the development of cluster proposals and act as a communication partner between Deans, Chairs, Provosts, and UAA, once the cluster has been approved.

- All Cluster hiring proposals should include a clear **implementation plan** that provides an estimated timeline for searches over a three-year period and indicates how hiring will be coordinated across departments. This coordination process might be led by a separate Cluster Coordinating Committee, with membership drawn from multiple departments; as departments constitute local hiring committees for positions, Cluster Champions and select Coordinating Committee members serve on those departmental committees and pledge to attend all campus talks, presentations, visits, etc. Whatever the implementation process, it should be clear and should include a variety of disciplinary specialists relevant to the cluster to ensure diversity of representation and wide reach into relevant fields and subfields.

- Proposed hires into clusters may include faculty at any rank, but they should be anchored around at least one senior faculty member working in the area of the cluster (who may be an existing colleague or a proposed hire).

Proposal Materials: Teams wishing to propose a cluster should consult with their Dean to ensure that proposed clusters are reasonably feasible as well as intellectually desirable. Teams should use the fillable form on the UAA website for their final proposals. Provosts and/or Chancellors may stipulate additional required supporting materials. The following items are required on the fillable form:

1. The priority area in which the cluster is being proposed: (1) **Race, Racism, and Inequality**, (2) **Health Equity**, (3) **Advancing STEM Diversity, or (4) Engaged Climate Action.**
2. A specific description of the field or subfields advanced by the cluster and how they relate to the overall priority area.
3. A description of the departments, schools, and programs involved in the cluster and a clear statement of the goals that units aim to achieve through the cluster hiring process.
4. A description of the projected rank, field expertise, and tenure-home department / unit for each proposed member of the cluster.
5. The names, field expertise, and department / unit home of any existing faculty who will form part of the cluster.
6. The name of faculty who will serve as Cluster Champion(s), with affiliated department / program.
7. A brief but clear implementation plan for the cluster that indicates a projected timeline for hiring over three years, per participating unit (a simple table may be helpful), how hiring will be coordinated across departments, and how the cluster will integrate a diversity of disciplinary specialists into the search and recruitment process.
8. An endorsement by the Chairs of Departments involved in the cluster proposal indicating how they will collaborate with other units in the cluster and what resources, processes, and programs will help sustain cluster activity so that it grows to become an established area of strength (e.g., existing or new postdoctoral positions, graduate fellowships, leadership commitments and mentoring structures, start-up funds, coordinated release time, Center or Institute appointments / involvement).
9. An endorsement by the Dean(s) of the School(s) involved in the cluster proposal indicating what mechanisms or resources will coordinate the cluster hiring process and ensure best practices in advertising and outreach, the search committee process, and campus recruitment. Endorsements should also indicate any additional commitments that will help sustain the cluster (e.g., existing or new hires, postdoctoral positions, graduate fellowships, leadership commitments and mentoring structures, start-up funds, coordinated release time).
10. When done thoughtfully, cluster hiring has been demonstrated to improve faculty retention by creating an active intellectual and social community across campus. Proposals should include a clear and specific statement about how faculty mentoring and advancement resources at the departmental, school, campus, and / or central levels will be employed to sustain new hires and integrate any existing faculty into the cluster. Resources for successful mentoring plans and best practices for inclusion and equitable search processes are available through the Faculty Diversity Collaborative in the University Equity and Inclusion Office, which provides central coordination of Rutgers's mentoring, advancement, and hiring efforts.