Hiring under the LAS Signature Themes
Call for Focus Area Proposals

11/18/2013

The LAS Signature Themes define broad priority areas for research and scholarship in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. This call describes a pilot project, aimed to establish more sharply defined and targeted focus areas for the college. A focus area will align with one or more of the signature themes and pursue the same goals: to address complex research challenges through highly collaborative, interdisciplinary ventures. Focus areas will provide an opportunity to build or strengthen research areas with a clearly defined focus, and to do so much more quickly than under the regular hiring process.

A focus area under a signature theme consists of up to six new faculty hires in an interdisciplinary research field which shows promise for international prominence. One or more of the new faculty can be hired at senior levels, if leadership of the focus area is not already available on campus. We expect that the new hires will be recruited into two or more departments over a period of typically two to three years. The new faculty will be mentored carefully, and LAS will provide some support for networking and team building, in addition to competitive salaries and startup packages.

We invite faculty to collaborate and submit proposals for focus areas, in consultation with their departmental colleagues and chairs. We expect to select 2-3 areas in the first year and continue the pilot program for a second year, budgets permitting.

Proposals must contain the following information:

- A description of the targeted research area and how it addresses one or more signature themes. Explain how this focus area builds on existing strengths: Are there ISU faculty already working in this area? What specific new expertise would provide a significant boost to existing efforts?

- A detailed hiring plan. Explain how each of the requested hires will contribute to the focus area. How will they combine with existing expertise to substantially increase the international prominence of the area? What are the projected salaries, startup packages, and space needs? Who will mentor the new faculty?

- A description of expected “return on investment.” What will we be able to do with the new faculty in place that we were not able to do previously? What new funding/awards are expected to result from these hires? Are there new academic programs that could be started?

- A description of partnering units. A focus area should involve at least two LAS departments, and proposals must be accompanied by a letter of support from each chair. The chair’s letter should address whether the departmental faculty is supportive of the proposal and outline concerns, if any, with departmental governance processes, should the proposal be selected. If a chair wishes to support multiple proposals, the ranking of each proposal must be clearly stated.

- Proposals involving departments from other colleges will be considered but will require more extensive negotiations with the affected department chair(s) and dean(s). For such proposals to be successful, the investment of the partner college must be commensurate with the LAS contribution. We strongly encourage teams planning such proposals to let the college know at least two weeks before the proposal deadline (i.e., by January 15) to allow time for detailed discussions between the LAS Dean’s Office and the partner college(s).

There will be one search committee for each focus area, composed of representatives of each partner unit. Proposals will be accepted with a deadline of February 1 each year, for focus area searches to be initiated in the following academic year. Proposals for regular faculty hires will be accepted with a deadline of April 1 after decisions on focus areas have been made.