The Office of Research (OR) in the College of ACES is announcing a call for Future Interdisciplinary Research Explorations (FIRE) in order to spark creativity and collaboration between ACES faculty and their research partners (both within and outside UIUC). Accordingly, we are soliciting outstanding multidisciplinary team research proposals to initiate new and enhance existing collaborations among faculty. The aims of FIRE proposals are for faculty to (1) develop exploratory research ideas that require the involvement of multiple disciplines, (2) identify a research theme or question that gives coherence to the project and relates to the scope of programs within the College of ACES, (3) collect preliminary data or other relevant information to address research questions, and (4) prepare, develop, and submit research proposals for external funding. The expected product of the FIRE seed grant program is a fundable interdisciplinary research proposal.

We anticipate funding 5-7 multidisciplinary research proposals during the 2016 cycle. The applicants can request a maximum of $60,000 over 2 years (no more than $35,000 in one year) during federal fiscal years (FFY) 2017 and 2018. Investigators can also request funding for a single year (up to $35,000) for FFY 2017. Additionally, the OR will provide logistical support to each successful team during the development of the research proposal for external funding – including organizing team meetings, reviewing and editing proposals, and other relevant support the teams may need.

The lead PI must be a faculty member within the College of ACES. In order to streamline the funding process, the lead PI should have an active Hatch project related to the proposed activities. We encourage active participation of researchers from social sciences and humanities disciplines and incorporation of both junior and senior faculty into teams. Proposals should include a description of the innovative nature of the research and the team’s capabilities, where the contribution of each collaborator’s expertise is evident.

Proposals should be no more than 3 pages, single-spacing, Times New Roman: 11 pt font size, 1-inch margins, consisting of:

- The attached cover page (does not count against the 3-page limit):
  - Title
  - Project summary (suggested length: 150 words max)
- Problem statement and potential impact (suggested length: 0.5 page max)
- Approach (including a description of the innovation of the research and alignment with current areas of strength) (suggested length: 1-1.5 pages max)
- Need for collaboration (including how this team is well suited to tackle the problem at hand) (suggested length: 0.5 page max)
- Plans for execution and continuation (e.g., develop and submit proposals for external funding) This section is critical for accountability, be as specific as possible when identifying funding opportunities (suggested length: 150 words max)
- References (does not count against the 3-page limit)

Additionally, each FIRE proposal should include a supplementary section including (i) a budget and budget justification (suggested length: 1 page max) and (ii) one-paragraph professional information for each of the team members indicating number of publications and external grants received during last five years only (unlimited page length).
The funds can be used for research assistant support, travel support, and other support necessary in developing an outstanding research proposal for external funding; however, the funds may not include faculty summer salary support. The applicant has the discretion and flexibility to use the funds according to their needs. However, the proposal will be evaluated for the ability of the proposed budget to generate an outstanding interdisciplinary grant proposal.

FIRE Proposals will be evaluated based on merit by the ACES OR staff and ranked by the Dept. Heads or the Research Policy Committee using the criteria outlined below.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Problem and Impact Statement (10%)
   a. Does the study address a well-defined problem? Is the problem important?
   b. Are the potential impacts meaningful? Are there potential benefits of the proposed activity to the scientific community? Stakeholders? Society?

2. Approach (20%)
   a. Is the approach well-developed, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
   b. Is the project original and innovative? Does it build on current strengths or add new directions to previous research? Is the approach feasible?

3. Collaboration and Suitability of Team Members (20%)
   a. Does the team have complementary and integrated expertise in distinct disciplines?
   b. Do the collaborative efforts enable the team to achieve collective results that would not be possible individually?
   c. Is the team leader capable of leading the team and accomplishing the proposed task(s)? Does the assembled team have the right composition to complete the proposed task(s)?

4. Plans for Execution and Continuation (15%)
   a. Will the plans improve the team’s chances of obtaining external funding in the future?
   b. Have specific funding opportunities been identified? Are the opportunities well-suited to the team’s objectives and visions?

5. Budget and Budget Justification (10%)
   a. Is the budget realistic? Will the use of funds help lead to the development of a grant proposal?

6. Overall Assessment (25%)
   a. What is the overall assessment of the proposal? Does the proposal and team have a high probability of success?
   b. Does the project align with the goals of the FIRE seed grant program? Will the funds enhance collaboration and address important interdisciplinary questions? Will the proposed tasks make the team more competitive in obtaining external funding? Will funding this proposal lead to the development of an outstanding interdisciplinary research proposal?

The deadline for submission of FIRE proposals is March 4, 2016. We anticipate notifying successful applicants by April 18, 2016 with the funding to begin on October 1, 2016. Proposals should be submitted electronically by 5PM CST as a combined pdf file to the email below. For more information please go to our website at http://research.aces.illinois.edu/content/fire-seed-grants.

Questions? Please contact Kathy Partlow at kcpartlo@illinois.edu.
## FIRE Proposal Cover Page

**Project Title**

**Total Budget**

**Related Hatch Project No. (if applicable)**

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**Principal Investigator Name, Title, and ACES department**

**Co-Investigators, Titles, Affiliations**

**Project Summary (suggested length 150 words max)**