

Strategic Investments in Research

Interdisciplinary research and creative work to understand conflict and change

Introduction

We live in an era of rapid and accelerating change, which creates exciting opportunities but also major challenges for individuals and societies. Climate change, advances in artificial intelligence, political polarization, and rising conflict around the world are examples of forces that will disrupt many people's lives in the years and decades to come. In the face of these challenges, it is essential to address fundamental questions about how humans think, interact, learn and change, as well as about the value of diverse perspectives, cultures and traditions. Greater understanding of uniquely human characteristics such as intelligence, creativity and morality and how they develop in people is essential to building well-functioning societies. Such work is especially important in an era when advances in technology are leading to claims that machines can possess traits such as intelligence, consciousness or personality, and in which courts are deciding questions such as whether Andy Warhol's silkscreen image of the rock star Prince is original art or a derivative of another artist's photograph.

Research and creative work that provides insight into the motivations and inner lives of others is essential for helping us to view the world from the perspective of others, hopefully increasing empathy and mitigating negative conflict. We are interested in receiving proposals that center collaborative and interdisciplinary research and creative work, particularly at the intersection of the arts and humanities, and other disciplines, to better understand the sources and impact of change and conflict and also to explore how conflict or its negative impacts might be reduced. The study of art, literature, and artifacts can provide insight into how change and conflict have been addressed by individuals, families and societies in different eras of history and in different cultures and religions. It can show us alternatives to our own approaches or perspectives that enhance creativity and provide insight. We seek proposals for how scholarship in the arts, humanities, and beyond can provide critical tools for framing and answering today's most pressing questions and problems. Lehigh has an opportunity to lead in this kind of work because of our history of facilitating interdisciplinary scholarship, including at the intersection between arts and humanities and other disciplines.

Application and process

We seek proposals for interdisciplinary research and translation efforts that will address the challenges associated with understanding and mitigating conflict and change locally and globally. We expect these proposals to describe new research centers that involve groups of approximately 8-20 current faculty, describe key external partners and propose new research efforts that: 1) leverage current strengths; 2) propose new investments in faculty hires and research infrastructure; and 3) describe opportunities to partner with other organizations including universities, not-for-profits and for-profit organizations.

Timeline:

Letter of Intent	Requested by 5:00 PM August 31, 2023
White paper	Due by 5:00 PM October 30, 2023

The Letter of Intent should include a descriptive title, list of team members (as currently known), and a 1-2 paragraph description of the central idea being proposed. Letters of Intent do not constitute an obligation to move forward; they are simply for planning purposes. White papers may be submitted even absent a Letter of Intent. Teams may be contacted by OVPR staff for consultation as they prepare white papers.

The three page white paper should consist of the following components:

- 1. Center summary (2 pages):** A description of the research focus of the proposed center.
 - a. What is the specific objective of the center? What problems are being targeted?
 - b. What are the current approaches/practices? And what are the limits/challenges of the current approach?
 - c. What is new in the proposed approach? Why do you think this approach will be successful?
 - d. What difference will it make if you succeed?

- 2. Description of Team (1 page):**
 - a. Who would be part of the day one team? (Include internal and external members.)
 - b. What kinds of people would you seek to support the work?
 - c. What partnerships would be key to develop?

Submit your application through Lehigh's [InfoReady](#) portal.

Review and criteria

Proposals will be initially reviewed by an internal group including the Provost, VPR, VP for Strategic Planning and Initiatives and the President. Proposals will be selected for further review and development based on the potential for these centers to result in signature high impact research activity by Lehigh faculty and students. Specifically we will assess:

1. Is an important area being targeted as the focus of research activities?
2. What is innovative about the proposed work?
3. Why is Lehigh well poised to lead in this area?
4. By combining existing strengths with new faculty hires, improvements to research infrastructure and new and existing partnerships, can Lehigh become one of the best places for this kind of work within the next decade?
5. Is activity in this area sustainable through external support (grants and gifts) and internal prioritization of resources like faculty lines, space etc.

If a team's proposal is selected for further review we will initiate an iterative process to refine and improve the proposal. Questions will include:

1. What are the risks? Why might you fail? How will you mitigate the risks?
2. What milestones (3-5 years) would you propose for the center? What specific objectives will be achieved?
3. What hires, infrastructure and other resources are needed to make this successful?

Assessment of these proposals will at various stages involve consultation with technical experts from outside of Lehigh.