

## Guidelines for Preparing SAPG Submissions

Beginning in Fall 2001, Vanderbilt University began soliciting applications for limited-term funding to launch major new interschool or transinstitutional initiatives in research and scholarship under the auspices of the Academic Venture Capital Fund (AVCF). (Note: The term *transinstitutional* refers to an interschool collaboration that includes University Central and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.) The purpose of the AVCF is to launch major new initiatives capable of advancing Vanderbilt to the front rank of American research universities. To make measurable progress toward such an imposing goal almost certainly will require the collaboration of faculty across two or more schools; proposals that are mindful of this principle will have the best opportunity for success.

Deadlines for submitting applications for consideration within a competitive process will be announced annually. Each application must be submitted to the office of *each* cognizant school dean for forwarding to one or both of two Strategic Academic Planning Groups (SAPGs), one operating within University Central (UC) and the other operating within the Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC). Each school dean who receives an application should forward it along with a letter that speaks to the importance of that application both for the school in question and for the university as a whole. Applications proposing transinstitutional initiatives involving UC and VUMC must be submitted for parallel consideration by both SAPGs.

Applications will be evaluated and ranked by the SAPG to which it is submitted. Competitive applications will be forwarded by each SAPG to the Integrated Financial Planning (IFP) Council for further consideration, after which the IFP will make selected recommendations to the Chancellor for funding.

**The Application** Each application (described in what follows) will consist of a mandatory Letter of Intent, due no later than September 20, followed by a combined Concept Proposal and Budget Proposal, due no later than November 8. Initiative leaders are required to meet with the Associate Provost for Research (University Central) and/or the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research (VUMC) to discuss proposal preparation (content and budget) at least twice during the period between the submission of the Letter of Intent and the submission of the full proposal. Additional meetings before or after September 20 are encouraged. The approximate timetable for various stages of the decision process appears in Appendix 2.

### A. Letter of Intent

The Letter of Intent must be submitted in hard-copy form accompanied by an electronic version in the form of a Microsoft Word attachment sent by e-mail, must be no more than two pages in length and must be received no later than September 20. Those planning to propose initiatives residing entirely within University Central (UC) should send their Letters of Intent to Prof. Dennis G. Hall, Associate Provost for Research. Those planning to propose initiatives residing entirely within the Medical Center should send their Letters of Intent to Prof. Lee Limbird, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research in Health Affairs, VUMC. Those planning to propose Transinstitutional initiatives involving UC and VUMC should direct copies of their Letters of Intent to *both* Profs. Hall and Limbird. An additional copy of the Letter of Intent should be sent by September 20 to each SAPG Chair to whom a full proposal will be submitted by the November 8 proposal deadline.

Each Letter of Intent should include at least the following information:

1. Tentative title of the proposed initiative;
2. Names and affiliations (departments and schools) of the principal authors of the proposal, along with contact information (mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address);
3. Names of the college/school deans and dept. chairs with whom the principal authors of the proposal expect to be holding discussions during the development of the proposal;
4. A tentative list of Vanderbilt faculty expected to be included as collaborators;
5. A no-more-than 250 word summary of the current vision for the effort to be proposed;
6. A brief outline of the anticipated budget request (it is understood that this might be revised upward or downward during the preparation of the proposal).

## **B. Concept Proposal**

The Concept Proposal should describe the proposed interschool or transinstitutional initiative in as much detail as possible. The description should situate the proposed work within the relevant fields of research and include enough background and general information to make it understandable to the broad membership of the SAPG and the IFP, but it should include, in addition, sufficient specific information to make it suitable for evaluation by objective external reviewers with expertise close to the effort being proposed. Indeed, it might be wise, in some cases, to prepare two introductions, one intended for general readership and the other intended for a more specialized readership. Those preparing proposals should keep in mind that any given proposal might be read by Vanderbilt faculty drawn from the arts and humanities, from the sciences or from the professions. Not every proposal submitted to an SAPG will be reviewed externally, but each application advanced by the SAPG to the IFP Council should include the reports of at least three highly qualified external reviewers. At minimum, the Concept Proposal should address the following questions:

- What is being proposed and what are its goals?
- Which faculty, departments and schools (i.e., Arts & Science, Engineering, Medicine, etc.) will be involved in the proposed initiative?
- Which college/school deans express strong support for this proposal?
- How does the proposed initiative present Vanderbilt with an important opportunity?
- How distinctive is this proposal? If it parallels activities underway or being considered on other campuses, what are the arguments for pursuing the proposed activity at Vanderbilt?
- How will the proposed initiative operate, if funded? How will it be determined which faculty receive funding or other benefits from the proposed initiative?
- Which criteria should be used to measure the initiative's progress, both yearly and in the long term, if funded? (It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of this item.)

The SAPG will consider the merits of each application it receives with respect to the ten criteria listed below. A given application need not satisfy all ten criteria in order to be selected, but it is expected that successful applications will meet at least several of those criteria.

**Selection Criteria** (order or appearance does not imply an order of importance)

**Criterion #1.** The proposed effort is in accord with Chancellor Gee's five basic goals for academic excellence and strategic growth:

- We must renew our commitment to the undergraduate experience at Vanderbilt.
- We must reinvent graduate education at Vanderbilt.
- We must re-integrate professional education with the intellectual life of the University.
- We must reexamine and restructure economic models for the university.
- We must renew Vanderbilt's covenant with the community.

**Criterion #2.** The proposed effort will help advance Vanderbilt University to the front rank of American Universities. To offer only two examples, this could be accomplished by bringing together existing institutional strengths in a new and distinctive way, or by proposing a creative way to strengthen a critical area that limits Vanderbilt's ability to move forward.

**Criterion #3.** The proposed effort enhances the learning environment and opportunities for undergraduate, professional and graduate students, and recognizes the need to recruit and retain an intellectually, racially and culturally diverse campus community.

**Criterion #4.** The proposed effort will require a significant investment in graduate education, and, if successful, will improve the national ranking of one or more graduate programs.

**Criterion #5.** The proposed effort involves a broad range of faculty rather than a few individuals and will foster greater collaboration among the schools.

**Criterion #6.** The proposed effort will strengthen disciplinary integrity and expand the interdisciplinary range of departments.

**Criterion #7.** The faculty leadership is already in place.

**Criterion #8.** The proposed investment will strengthen the core disciplines.

**Criterion #9.** The proposed effort is bold, requiring significant intellectual and financial investment, with anticipated gains commensurate with the magnitude of the investment.

**Criterion #10.** The proposed effort shows clear promise for generating the funding needed to sustain itself after the initial period of AVCF support (of no more than five years).

**C. Budget Proposal** In general, each budget proposal must: (1) present a multi-year budget plan (of no more than five years) that, at a minimum, speaks to the issues of phase-in, priority, multiple funding sources and continuing operation, and endorsement; (2) identify and explain/justify each major expenditure category and each major expenditure; and (3) identify the arrangements made for any new space needed to accommodate the work being proposed. Co-

funding from other university sources or external sources is viewed positively both from a budgetary point of view and as a sign of intellectual support for the ideas being advanced. In general, funds provided by the AVCF are not intended to be used for major construction projects (bricks and mortar) or to create new endowments or increase existing ones; funds can be used for approved renovation costs. The four categories listed in item (1) are described further in what follows. In cases where commitments (space, financial support, ...) are needed from the offices of one or more deans, please contact those offices as soon as possible to determine how much lead time will be required to reach decisions on those requested commitments.

**Phase-in** Each initiative selected for funding is expected to ramp-up its activities over an appropriate time period. Certain costs projected for the second and/or later years might not occur in the first year because of turn-on delays. Graduate student, postdoctoral and faculty support offer good examples. For instance, one recruits graduate students during the Fall and early Spring in order to admit them the following Fall. A first-year budget might show recruiting costs, with stipend-and-tuition support costs not showing up until the second year. Delays accompany many kinds of research expenditures – the budget plan should be realistic and should anticipate those delays.

**Priority** Because there is no way of knowing in advance how the sum of all of the budgets for meritorious applications will compare with the total funds available in a given year, it will be important for budget plans to identify spending priorities. That is, in the event that the available resources are insufficient to fund a given budget plan at its requested bottom-line figure, it will be helpful to understand which budget elements are most important. For example, if funding for a given item would be ideal in the first year, but still workable if deferred to the second year, then it will be important for the committees to know that. Presenting the various committees with prioritized options will help speed up the evaluation and the decision-making process.

**Multiple Funding Sources and Continuing Operation** The Academic Venture Capital Fund (possibly in conjunction with other resources) will provide limited-term funding for the selected initiatives, but it will not provide permanent funding. Therefore, it will be necessary for each budget plan to explain how the proposed initiative will be sustained once central-university funding is no longer available. Over time, a given initiative will have to become self-sustaining from one or several of the following: extramural grants, income from (new) dedicated endowment funds, School/College resources, or other sources distinct from the Academic Venture Capital Fund. Budget plans should show not only how AVCF funds phase in over time, but also how those funds phase out and are replaced by other sources of income. This should be done in an explicit way using a spreadsheet that covers the full period of the requested AVCF funding plus one additional year, the first year *after* the AVCF funding has concluded. Budget plans should reflect realistic timeframes for securing expected resources of all kinds, including gifts, grants and endowments. Because the selection process will be very competitive, the early availability of leveraging funds from sources other than the Academic Venture Capital Fund will be a positive factor in funding decisions.

**Endorsement** Commitments for Vanderbilt funding from sources other than the Academic Venture Capital Fund, or from current external support that will be used to support parts of the program, must be secured prior to submitting proposals and must be verified by supporting letters (or other appropriate documentation) from the parties in question. In the case of space requirements, has the space been identified and has the cognizant Dean agreed in writing to its use? If the proposed initiative requires the renovation of space, have explicit arrangements been made and documented in writing with respect to who will fund the cost of that renovation? In the case of tenure-track or tenured faculty positions, has the cognizant Dean agreed in writing to fund those positions after the AVCF-funding period? If there is a commitment to providing teaching-assistant or other graduate-student support, have the cognizant Dean and Department Chair agreed in writing to that arrangement? If there is an endowment to be raised, has the cognizant Dean (or Deans) agreed in writing to make raising that endowment a School priority? Has the Office of Institutional Planning and Advancement reviewed and approved, in writing, any plans or targets for philanthropic fundraising? Letters verifying those and similar commitments *must* be included in the Budget Proposal.

A sample, multi-year budget format that represents the minimum amount of financial information that must be included in the budget proposal appears as Appendix 3.

**Appendix 1 – Committee memberships**

**SAPG-VUMC (3-year term, staggered); Dean Steven Gabbe, Chair**

Dr. Dan Beauchamp	Dr. Ray DuBois
Dr. Jacek Hawiger	Dr. Randy Blakely
Dr. Arnold Strauss	Dr. Brigid Hogan
Dr. Robert MacDonald	Dr. Al George
Dr. Michael Waterman	Dr. Nancy Lorenzi
Dr. Daryl Granner	Dr. Linda Norman
Dr. David Carbone	

**SAPG-UC (3-year term, staggered); Dean Mark Wait, Chair**

Dean Camilla Benbow	Prof. Beverly Moran
Prof. J. Patout Burns	Prof. Ronald D. Schrimpf
Prof. Daniel B. Cornfield	Prof. Charles K. Singleton
Prof. David J. Ernst	Prof. Cecelia Tichi

**Appendix 2 – Estimated Timetable**

Notation: CRO = Chief Research Officer (i.e., Lee Limbird or Dennis Hall)

No later than September 20	Letters of Intent Due to CROs; copies to relevant chairs, deans and SAPG chairs.
November 8	Proposals due to SAPGs, to Associate Provost for Research (UC) and to Associate Vice Chancellor for Research (VUMC).
February 1	Recommendations from SAPGs due to CROs.
No later than early March	CROs forward proposals to IFP.
April 15	IFP makes decisions, with recommendations to the Chancellor.
Early May	Notifications to those who submitted proposals.