Achieving Distinction: Request for Proposals
Strategic Investment Program
The University of Akron


Based upon the Board of Trustee’s resolution, University leadership is to include $2M for investment annually to support the execution of *Vision 2020*. The total investment in this program includes: the institutional commitment ($400,000 one-time funds and $400,000 in-kind contributions per year) to our partnerships via the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron, that includes the local health care systems (SUMMA, Akron General, Akron Children's) and NEOMED, and an institutional commitment of program facilitation funds ($100,000 per focus area per year for the next three to five years). This long-term strategy represents a projected 10-year $140M total investment, subject to annual Board of Trustees fiscal year budget endorsement.

Areas targeted for investment include, but are not limited to, regional solutions, health care and medicine, the human condition, and innovative technologies. A critical component of this strategy is to align institutional investments in order to enhance and advance vital partnerships, where greater gains can be achieved via the *mutual leveraging* of resources. In addition, it is anticipated that over time, this strategy will lead to discoveries that will increase external funding, patents awarded, as well as licensing and commercialization successes facilitated by a university-wide proof-of-concept strategy. The framework is illustrated in the following figure.

![Figure 1 Strategic Investment Framework](image-url)

*Figure 1 Strategic Investment Framework*
This request for proposals inaugurates The University of Akron’s "Achieving Distinction" strategic investment strategy, which is designed to create both relevant and productive academic and research capacity and to enable relevant and connected curriculum development in tandem with meaningful and long-term relationships with strategic partners. This approach aligns with the institutional commitment to build long-term, vital partnerships including, but not limited to, regional health systems and NEOMED, including Austen Bioinnovation Institute of Akron, Summit Education Initiative, Akron Public Schools, University Park Alliance, as well as arts, social services agencies, business, industry, and governmental partners as well as collaborators. This commitment also links to the primary pathway of Vision 2020, student success, to be achieved via The Akron Experience connected to our inclusive excellence strategy. The following outlines the purpose, funding, principles, context, timeline, criteria, reporting requirements, and evaluation panel for this program.

**Achieving Distinction: Request for Proposals (year one)**

A Ten-Year Strategic Investment Program

**Purpose:** To catalyze and prompt the interdisciplinary knowledge-base in tactical areas providing alignment with the investment strategies of our vital partners and linked to student academic success.

**Funding:** All funds will be held in a separate strategic investment account, which will provide the mechanism for transparency, accountability, and assessment of the impact and influence of this program.

**Core Principles:** The following principles will apply to this program:

- New faculty and staff must have a combination of training and experience that will allow them to contribute to programs across disciplines and/or colleges through research-collaboratives and curriculum design;
- Diversity of people, thoughts, and perspectives must be enhanced;
- Linkages to rigorous use of library resources and/or collaborations;
- Purchased instrumentation and equipment should be available to other researchers across the institution, as appropriate, in alignment with the overall objectives of this program;
- Teaching and research priorities must span multiple colleges and/or units;
- Demonstrated impact on student success;
- Alignment with the university's strategic plan is a requirement, external investments and current or future external funding will be considered; and
- Cash and/or continuing funds contributed by other sources, as well as gifts.

**Context:** In the first year, FY-13, funds will be available to hire up to 12 faculty and four staff support personnel, depending upon position level and experience.
First year faculty allocations to the regional solutions, human condition, health care and medicine, and innovative technologies will likely be two, two, four, and four, respectively;

Four staff positions will be allocated in a manner that supports the chosen areas or the overall program(s); and

There will be $2M in equipment, start-up costs, and/or renovation funds available.

**Timeline:**

The timeline for submissions and decisions will be the following:

- **February through May 17, 2012**
  - faculty-instigated discussions related to the request for proposals including but not limited to the involvement of department chairs or school directors, as appropriate,
  - discussions amongst deans concerning the proposals under development via faculty-instigated discussions
- **May 18, 2012:** Submit proposals—no more than 10 pages
- Elements of the proposal should be the following:
  - Vision
  - Rationale
  - Potential for impact and influence
  - Statement of alignment with core principles
  - Proposed hiring strategy or sequencing that either increases current research capabilities or fills gaps in expertise to enhance both academic and research capacity
  - Proposed use for start-up or renovation funds
  - Proposed metrics
  - NSF-like biographical sketch for each involved faculty member (not included in 10-page limit)
  - Signature page of the involved faculty members (designating lead faculty members, n=2) from two or more colleges, department chairs, college deans (not included in the 10-page limit)
  - Statement of interest and/or collaboration from a vital partner is encouraged (not included in the 10-page limit)
- **Summer, 2012** - deliberation process for first-round decisions
- **August, 2012** - decisions regarding position allocations

**Criteria (Weight):**

It is expected that submitted proposals will align directly with the pathways and aspirational goals of Vision 2020; including faculty members from two or more colleges involved in each submission; otherwise, the proposal will not be considered for funding.

In this context, the criteria (weight) are as follows:

- Enhance the trajectory of current or new interdisciplinary knowledge and application-based initiatives, as well as student success (30%);
- A well-defined expertise gap analysis supporting the request for strategic hire(s), record of success of the proposers, and existing support/infrastructure capacity (30%);
- Contribution to the diversity of people, thoughts, and ideas including connections to globally relevant academic programs (20%); and
- Contribution of funding from federal/state/industry, college/department, vital partners, and/or gifts (20%).

**Project Reporting Requirements:**

Because the overall objective is to ensure success of the program, an annual report from each awarded team will be required.

The review of each report will result in one of the following recommendations:
- continued funding;
- continued funding pending reconciliation of outstanding issues (distribution of central funds "on hold" with on-going allocation of local funds); or
- immediate or phased cessation of funding.

**Evaluation Panel:**

The Provost and Vice President for Research will make funding decisions, in consideration of suggestions made by an advisory group.
- Commitments might be made to a particular area for one or more year(s);
- Residual funds might be used for out-of-cycle opportunity hires; and
- Proposals can include vitae of a proposed opportunity hire of an individual to fill gaps in academic and/or research expertise.

**Program Reporting Requirements:**

The progress of the activities of this program will be integrated into reports associated with Vision 2020. This will include:
- Deans, associate deans, and department chairs;
- President and Vice Presidents;
- University Council and Faculty Senate; and
- Board of Trustees