

Faculty Cluster Initiative Modus Operandi

1.0 FCI Administration and Fiscal Management

The Vice President for Research coordinates the activities of the Faculty Cluster Initiative (FCI). Reporting directly to the vice president for research, the FCI Director provides administrative oversight inclusive of FCI's policies, practices, and fiscal management in consultation with unit administrators.

2.0 Faculty Roles & Definitions

FCI Cluster(s): A core group of committed faculty who are engaged in transformational research that crosses disciplinary boundaries, creating faculty groups that complement and strengthen existing areas of expertise.

Cluster Lead(s): The person(s) who serve as the director(s) responsible for daily cluster management activities, including strategic planning, all-hands cluster meetings, input to the tenure & promotion process, and the cluster's budget derived from F&A return and startup funding.

FCI Core faculty: Faculty who have a joint appointment or joint secondary appointment with a cluster including, but not limited to, faculty hired into a cluster who are paid directly by the FCI.

Home Unit: Each faculty member hired into a cluster will be associated with a home department or school where they are either tenure-earning or tenured, thereby creating the academic reporting structure for that individual.

Central FCI Program: staff and resources dedicated to the FCI.

Electronic Research Administration System (ERA): The official reporting system used by the university to capture research activity.

Joint Appointment: A paid appointment of a faculty member to a second university unit (host unit) when the person will be regularly participating in the teaching, research, or graduate supervision responsibilities of more than one university unit. The salary of a joint appointment is shared by the host and home unit. The proportion of the salary to be shared depends upon the individual circumstance and is determined and approved by the home and proposed host unit.

Secondary Joint Appointment: An unpaid appointment of a faculty member to a second university unit (host unit) when that person will be regularly participating in the teaching, research, or graduate supervision responsibilities of more than one university unit. Payment of the appointee's salary is not shared.

3.0 Faculty Matters

3.1 FCI Search & Hire Practices

The FCI developed a set of search guidelines and a checklist to assist search committee chairs and members in the cluster faculty search process. This document is intended to be a supplement to the FCI Search Checklist and UCF's search and screening guidelines published by the Office of Institutional Equity.

The intent of these documents is to point out where the cluster search process varies from a traditional search as the search committee is made up of members from multiple colleges and

units. The search guidelines outline the process beginning with the assemblage of the search committee and conclude with the offer and acceptance.

Wherever possible, the FCI strives to keep the process as normal as possible for the units and colleges involved, while simultaneously ensuring the candidates are supported by their tenure home faculty and they are a good fit for the cluster as a whole.

Special Considerations. If a faculty member hired through the FCI leaves UCF, the faculty line will return to the FCI program for reallocation. Requests to replace cluster faculty who leave must be reviewed and approved by the FCI Director. Adequate supporting documentation of the success of the cluster in research, teaching and outreach must be provided along with the request for replacement. Startup packages will be shared between the home unit and the FCI (FCI will use salary savings). Upon approval, a search can begin for the replacement faculty member.

If a cluster should decide it wishes to change the function of a vacant position, this will also need to be approved by the FCI Director. If, as a result of this change, the list of potential tenure homes for the position needs to be modified, the chair or director of the added units and their deans or VP will also need to agree to participate in the cluster just as the original group did, which includes paying for interviews of candidates in their department and contributing to a portion of the startup.

3.2 Teaching Assignments

It is expected that the teaching, research and service loads for FCI hire's will be the same as their peers in the home units in which faculty members reside. Cluster home units acknowledge that faculty may occasionally engage in activities for the cluster and that this should be recognized as part of their home unit assignments. FCI hires must, at a minimum teach one class per year.

3.3 Administrative Support

The administrative support staff of the FCI core faculty member's home unit will be responsible for overseeing purchasing, office supply acquisition, IT support, travel, etc. Any exceptions must be covered by a specific agreement with the FCI Director.

3.4 Course Buyout

An FCI memorandum dated 3/1/2017 addressed the management of course buyouts and research releases for FCI faculty paid directly by FCI, by way of Academic Affairs. Since faculty are associated with a home unit where they are either tenure-earning or tenured, FCI will generally defer to the home unit's teaching loads, course buyout, and research release policies and procedures to minimize inconvenience. However, funds returned for either purpose will solely be eligible to either reimburse a replacement adjunct instructor or for summer salaries/fringe for the PI; no other costs are eligible. The FCI procedures are outlined below.

Course Buyout. This occurs when a faculty member who is typically paid by Education & General (E&G) funds uses other sources, including Contracts & Grant (C&G) funds, to pay for a percentage of their salary. The E&G savings may be used to hire a replacement adjunct instructor. FCI recognizes each home unit's policy regarding the buyout cost for faculty, per class. Upon documentation of the replacement adjunct instructor, FCI will reimburse the unit's additional expenditures for the replacement of the FCI faculty by an adjunct up to the amount of the original salary savings for FCI faculty directly paid by FCI. These expenditures do not

include salary of unit faculty reassigned to the course and which are already paid by the home unit. The home unit will be responsible for executing the contracts and maintaining formalized records of the transactions. Any salary savings will stay with the central FCI program for reinvestment and overall program oversight as well as sustainability for central program operating costs.

Example. Dr. X buys out one class that results in \$10,000 in E&G salary savings. Dr. Y is the replacement adjunct instructor for the course, and his/her time equates to \$5,000. FCI would reimburse the home unit \$5,000.

Research Release. This occurs when a faculty member who is typically paid by E&G funds pays a portion of their salary from a grant or contract commensurate with their level of effort on the research project, thereby creating an E&G salary savings. This research release does not necessarily impact the teaching load.

FCI will defer to each home unit's policy in regard to applying their time to C&G funding; however, any E&G salary savings being used for summer salary must be used by the summer immediately following the academic year buyout, for FCI salary supported faculty on a 9-month appointment. **PLEASE NOTE:** The faculty member's summer funding distribution must be applied to the FCI salary account no later than June 30 of the current fiscal year. The amount of salary returned will be the total amount of the release available in the summer term; the home unit must adjust the faculty member's FTE if there is fluctuation in the faculty member's salary or change to the Composite Fringe Benefit Rate, to keep the summer cost equal to the savings. The home unit will be responsible for executing the contracts and maintaining formalized records of the transactions.

Example. Dr. A requests the home unit to process a research release (cc: FCI team). She will pay one month of her salary and fringe (\$10,000) from her grant during either fall 2019 or spring 2020. This will create an E&G cost savings in the FCI faculty salary account of \$10,000. As a result, Dr. A can use this same amount (\$10,000) to pay her summer 2020 salary and fringe between the start of the summer contract to June 30, 2020.

Note that in some colleges, research release funds can be used as a salary supplement. We will defer to the home unit's policy in these cases.

3.5 Faculty Career Development

Promotion and Tenure Process and Criteria. FCI paid faculty members, who have joint appointments in the cluster, will follow the promotion and tenure (P&T) procedures outlined in UCF's Collective Bargaining Agreement ([Article 14 and Article 15](#)) and [UCF Regulation 3.015](#). Cluster faculty shall follow the promotion and tenure criteria and annual evaluations standards and procedures of their home department. The cluster lead will provide input to the P&T decision for FCI paid faculty members in accordance with UCF Regulation 3.015. Leads expected to participate in jointly in P&T evaluations of joint faculty will be given access to the promotion system. A review will be conducted by the lead and will present in the review a recommendation for or against tenure and/or promotion. This review will be provided to the home unit head to upload in the system in pdf format. Co-leads shall jointly conduct a combined review together in one document and provide to the home unit head for addition to the P&T system. The P&T schedule is available on the Faculty Excellence [website](#). FCI encourages the

home unit to review their promotion and tenure criteria to ensure they support the interdisciplinary nature of cluster research and creative activities. Sample language encouraging and recognizing the interdisciplinary work of faculty [is available](#). Consideration of external letters from members of multiple disciplines, prestige and competitiveness of funding sources, inclusive meta-metrics, and community impacts is recommended. Home units should be sensitive to the fact that FCI faculty members may be doing “double duty” with respect to service to the cluster and the unit and that cluster members may attend conferences and publish in journals not traditional to the home unit.

Mentoring. Paid FCI faculty members must be assigned a mentoring team which should routinely meet to discuss the mentee’s progress. The team should be comprised of a senior same-discipline faculty member to help navigate the P&T pathway, a fellow cluster member who is senior in rank and experienced with interdisciplinary research, and a senior administrator who can guide the faculty through institutional procedures and standards.

3.6 Annual and Cumulative Progress Evaluation Faculty members receive annual performance evaluations to assess and communicate the nature and extent of their performance of assigned duties following the University Criteria for Annual Performance Evaluations in the Collective Bargaining Agreement and using the policies and procedures set forth by their home unit ([Annual Evaluation Standards and Procedures \(AESP\)](#)) which establish the standard to which faculty will be held in that particular unit in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Because FCI paid faculty have joint appointments in their respective clusters, the cluster lead will provide input to the unit chair/director and will co-sign annual evaluations using form appropriate annual evaluation form based on bargaining unit status¹ Annual reports are due to evaluators on May 7 of every year. The supervisor may, at the written request of the employee, provide an extension of up to twenty-one days to submit the annual report. The proposed written evaluation shall be provided to the employee at the start of the fall semester.

Tenure-earning faculty shall receive a Cumulative Progress Evaluation (CPE) annually beginning with spring of the second year, or spring of the first year if hired with tenure credit. Associate professor applying for promotion shall receive a CPE at least once prior to submitting their promotion dossier. Because FCI paid faculty have joint appointments in their respective clusters, Faculty Cluster Lead input should be provided following P&T Committee evaluation completion (~mid-February) and prior to chair/head completion of the review(~ mid-March). For cluster leads, the FCI Director should provide input to the lead’s direct supervisor. Evaluators should recognize that interdisciplinary research can take time to mature, and networking can be time consuming. The university-level resource for questions about faculty annual evaluations is available at [Faculty Excellence \(http://facultyexcellence.ucf.edu/\)](http://facultyexcellence.ucf.edu/).

4.0 Metrics for Evaluation of Cluster Success

The purpose of the FCI is to leverage UCF’s existing strengths and foster the development of strong, interdisciplinary teams focused on solving today’s toughest scientific and societal challenges through teaching and research. The FCI expects that it will strengthen UCF’s long-term, research/teaching/service faculty in areas of strategic opportunity. Faculty members hired through the FCI will strengthen the home units in which their tenure resides. It is possible that in

the future, the current need for the cluster topic will be met through institutionalizing into a structure other than the cluster, will shift, or will no longer be compelling enough to keep the faculty together around the same issue. In any case, the faculty hired are expected to be ongoing, critical contributors to the life of the home unit, the college, and the university. Therefore, cluster faculty membership may shift over time.

The decision of rescinding an appointment for FCI salaried faculty, must be reached through dialog among deans, the FCI Director, the VP for Research, and the Provost.

FCI faculty, as with all tenure-track/tenured faculty, are expected to be research intensive, however the unique collaborative nature of the clusters should provide additional research and creative opportunities for these faculty. While funding will be commensurate with each scholarly area, funding in excess of comparative departments/disciplines is expected because of cluster benefits.

Measures of cluster success include such metrics as research dollars awarded, number of published research articles by cluster members, news releases, improved departmental/institutional rankings as a result of the cluster, the number of new academic programs and research centers, and promotion and tenure rates. Other cluster impacts should also be considered such as translation of research to outcomes, patents generated, community service, graduating students, expanded partnership networks, new courses/degrees, and global relevance. And these impacts are also expected to exceed comparative departments/disciplines.

Data will be collected annually to compare publications, research funding, impact, diversity, new educational programs, student support, and tenure rates of clusters to departments/disciplines. A comprehensive review and evaluation will be conducted every five years by the OR following the Center & Institute review procedures.

5.0 FCI Secondary Appointment

5.1 Application

All FCI hired faculty shall have a secondary appointment with their respective cluster. Non FCI-salaried faculty are encouraged, where appropriate, to become affiliated with a cluster, through a secondary joint appointment. In addition, FCI salaried faculty may have secondary joint appointments in other clusters and departments. The process for obtaining this designation is through an application and letter from the FCI Director, signed by the FCI Director and VP for research and the faculty member's home unit chair/director and dean. All forms are available from the FCI. The university-level resource for secondary joint appointments is Faculty Excellence, [Personnel Administration](#) (FE-PA).

Advantages to join a cluster include:

- Participation in a highly visible group of faculty addressing high impact and complex societal issues,
- Demonstration of existing collaborations will increase the probability of success on multi-disciplinary proposals,
- Leverage access to cluster equipment and collaborative space(s),
- Support by a well-trained research administration, and HR staff,
- Participation in cross-disciplined academic programs spanning multiple academic units

5.2 Criteria for affiliation

All FCI core faculty are expected to contribute to a cluster's ability to achieve the following:

- National or international prominence;
- Integration with the Collective Impact Strategic Plan;
- Increased scholarly and creative works that can help address today's challenging societal problems;
- A robust, diverse, and recurring funding base that, while commensurate with the relevant scholarly area, is enhanced by the cluster;
- An increase in scholarly output that can have an influence across multiple disciplines; and
- Strengthened undergraduate and/or graduate education at UCF (i.e., increase the quality of our student body and increase the number of degree programs UCF offers, thereby adding to research and scholarly activity).

To receive a secondary joint appointment in a cluster, a faculty member must provide clear evidence of their contributions to the cluster achievements, although it is not expected that all criteria will be equally met.

5.3 Periodic Re-evaluation of Secondary Joint Appointments with Possibility of Termination

The secondary joint appointments with FCI are for existing UCF faculty who are not paid by FCI. These faculty will be reviewed by cluster leadership every three years to ensure they are contributing to cluster objectives, both specific to the cluster and more general, as outlined in Section 4.0. A secondary appointment can be rescinded at the discretion of the FCI Director or if the faculty member no longer wishes to maintain the appointment.

6.0 Research Administration

6.1 FCI Support

To reduce administrative burden on the home unit(s), FCI employs a research administration team to manage all pre-award activity for FCI faculty (salaried and secondary joint-appointed faculty). FCI faculty hired into a cluster who are paid directly by the FCI must prepare all their proposals with support from the FCI research administration staff. Faculty with a secondary joint appointment may receive FCI research administration support provided the topic of the proposal aligns with the cluster area. If there is uncertainty about the relevancy of the topic, the principal investigator will consult with the associate dean for research of the home unit.

The FCI research administration staff must receive the intent to submit, as soon as the solicitation has been identified by the FCI faculty; with budget and ancillary documents coordinated no later than eight business days prior to the agency deadline. The FCI research administration will assist in the development of all non-technical documentation and evaluate compliance with agency and university requirements (including OR's five business day rule).

All FCI proposals receive a technical and editorial review prior to submittal. The Office of Research's Research Development office can assist faculty in finding reviewers, however it is expected that the cluster culture will aid in the review process.

Post-award activity may include coordination with OR and the home unit for award setup, facilitation of complex post-award matters, and complex re-budgeting as needed.

6.2 FCI Credit Assignment

In order to gain access to university-wide reporting, which is vital in generating metrics, applying previous year comparisons, etc., all FCI core faculty members will be required to apply 1% of their assigned credit to their FCI cluster in the UCF ERA system. This will allow FCI to capture proper credit by utilizing data generated from the university-approved reporting system. By applying a multiplier of 100 to the FCI share, FCI will be able to document research productivity.

6.3 F&A Distribution

For the purposes of facilitating collaboration and sustainability, each research project that is associated with FCI salaried faculty members will have a small amount of F&A returned to the FCI, which will then be distributed to the associated cluster(s). OR will contribute 5% from their expected share (normally 55%, but reduced to 50%) and the college, institute or center will contribute 5% from their expected share (normally 45% but reduced to 40%) for a total of 10% from each award associated with the FCI salaried faculty. In order to manage this return, the Proposal Transmittal Form (PTF) will reflect the F&A contribution from the college, institute or center to the FCI and the OR CFO shall disperse their contribution to the FCI for distribution to the participating cluster(s).

For other FCI faculty with secondary joint appointments who are submitting research through FCI, OR will contribute 5% from their expected share (normally 55%, but reduced to 50%); the college, institute, or center contribution is voluntary and done in consultation with the PI, cluster lead(s), unit administration and the FCI research administrators via the PTF routing and approval process. If committed, it is expected the contribution will reflect 5% from their share (normally 45% but reduced to 40%).

All F&A contributions shall solely be assigned from the portion of the grant that is associated with the involved cluster(s) as reflected per the credit distribution.

6.4 F&A Use & Cost Share

If an individual cluster has funds available from their respective F&A return, the cluster lead(s), in conjunction with the core cluster faculty members, may approve their use for shared cluster equipment/resources, technical and administrative support and cluster cost sharing purposes. The individual cluster is wholly responsible for the tracking and distribution of these committed funds. Beyond academic/course release of an FCI faculty member's salary, no additional cost sharing is available from the FCI. An account will be established for each cluster to maintain and track F&A return and match commitments.

7.0 Space Allocation

It is highly desired that cluster faculty and resources be co-located in a space that encourages and facilitates collaboration. Each cluster faculty member hired by FCI shall be provided with office space (that may be on a shared basis when appropriate individual office space is unavailable). All space will be governed in accordance with university policy and managed by the UCF Space Planning, Analysis, and Administration (SPAA) department.

7.1 Building Manager Services

The Research 1 building (RB1) manager oversees maintenance, safety, security, access, and other activities associated with the operations of the Research 1 building and supports its

occupants (primarily researchers). The RB1 manager will coordinate with various on-campus entities, including but not limited to, Facilities, Housekeeping, Postal Services, Computer Services & Telecommunications, departments, other college property custodians and building managers, and outside vendors associated with community equipment such as vending, copy machines, etc. In addition, the RB1 manager shall serve as the liaison to FCI salaried faculty located in other areas on the main and satellite campuses.

7.2 Information Technology Support

A core faculty member must follow their home unit's standard operating procedures for obtaining IT support. An appointment with a cluster does not negate the home unit's responsibility for maintaining the faculty member under their IT's purview. This includes but is not limited to submission of port activation requests, VLAN/network implementation and maintenance, computer, and software needs.

8.0 Cluster Culture Development

It is important that UCF hire, retain, and promote excellent faculty and staff who are attracted to interdisciplinary research and education. We intend to create an environment that fosters best practices for collaboration and teamwork through workshops, as well as programs and websites to showcase cluster achievements. We encourage clusters to develop and follow a strategic plan outlining their goals and objectives, tactics, roles, and expectations. We also encourage clusters to offer certificates and other cross-cultural programs for students and postdoctoral fellows that will encourage them to work in collaborative teams.