The Vision

Game-changing research and innovation increasingly requires both collaboration across a broad range of disciplines and multi-sectoral partnerships. To help facilitate such outcomes, the University of Toronto Scarborough’s (UTSC) strategic plan, Inspiring Inclusive Excellence Beyond 2030: A strategic vision for the University of Toronto Scarborough, committed to the established three research institutes, organized around our areas of established and emerging strength, and supported by an appropriate funding framework which will build the capacity in people and infrastructure necessary to realize our vision of global prominence in particular areas of scholarship.”

The three established institutes are i) the Institute for Environmental, Conservation, and Sustainability Research (ECSR) (safeguarding planetary health); ii) the Institute for Inclusive Health and Well-Being (ensuring health and well-being for all); and iii) the Institute for Inclusive Economies and Sustainable Livelihoods (imagining sustainable and just economic futures in an age of necessary degrowth).

The funding framework identified in Inspiring Inclusive Excellence Beyond 2030 is the Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program (CSPP). Its purpose is to promote self-sustaining, interdisciplinary, inter-departmental, collaborative clusters of scholarship in areas of established and emerging strength at UTSC that have a demonstrable capacity to augment University of Toronto’s (U of T) global standing through prominence in research, creative activity and exceptional learning.

A description of the program, including the application form and deadlines, can be found at: https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/research/internal-funding-programs

CSPP OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

CSPP-supported clusters are expected to generate impactful, transformative research that transcends traditional departmental and institutional boundaries and thereby enables UTSC to create and disseminate new knowledge and innovations that will benefit the citizens of Canada and beyond. The clusters are expected to foster strategic global research alliances such as the VPRI/VPI initiative of Global Research Alliances (see: https://global.utoronto.ca/overview/).
Clusters funded by the CSPP should clearly exhibit significant potential to:

- elevate the University of Toronto Scarborough’s provincial, national and international profile as a cluster of research excellence across a wide diversity of fields;
- succeed in major, large-value funding competitions (e.g. NSERC Alliance, NSERC CREATE, SSHRC PG and IG, NFRF, NCE, CFI);
- help attract new top-tier faculty and high-quality trainees;
- support and enhance undergraduate and graduate training and post-doctoral fellowship programs;
- draw upon regional, provincial and/or national assets and partnerships to promote knowledge mobilization (i.e., knowledge co-creation, sharing, translation, operationalization) and/or to generate socio-economic impact; and
- become financially sustainable.

The CSPP is primarily meant to support areas of established and emerging strength, inline with the strategic plan’s priorities as represented by three established research institutes. However, the CSPP is also available to support other nodes of high-profile, high-impact research and creative activity that may not fit into the above-noted three institutes but show the capacity to achieve the goals of the CSPP.

Projects supported by the CSPP are also expected to address the U of T’s commitments, as articulated in its Institutional Strategic Research Plan 2018-2023 (ISRP) (https://research.utoronto.ca/reports-publications-metrics/institutional-strategic-research-plan). In particular, the ISRP identifies five strategic objectives – informed by key societal challenges – to enable U of T to continue to increase its research excellence:

- demonstrate national and global leadership in research and innovation
- foster collaborations, partnerships and engagement
- advance equity, diversity and inclusion
- support integration of research into student curricular and co-curricular experiences
- strengthen the institutional supports that foster research and innovation excellence

Faculty considering submitting a CSPP application are encouraged to consult the OVPRI as early as possible for informational and administrative assistance. Please contact Dr. Suhail Asrar (suhail.asrar@utoronto.ca) or Brice Rousseau (brice.rousseau@utoronto.ca) with any questions or requests.

**Eligibility**

- Proposed clusters shall consist of between five and 10 members, with representation from at least three UTSC units if the cluster is entirely comprised of UTSC faculty, and at least two UTSC units if it includes members from either/both of the other two U of T campuses.
- Each cluster can have a maximum of two cluster leads. When two cluster leads are named, one must be identified as the “administrative cluster lead”.
- The cluster lead/administrative cluster lead must be a faculty member with a primary
appointment at UTSC. There is no expectation that cluster leads will be only senior Associate Professors or Professors.

- Individual faculty can lead only one cluster, and can participate in a maximum of two clusters.
- Members of the adjudication committee (see below) cannot participate in any CSPP application.
- While cluster lead(s) and the majority of cluster members must be faculty whose primary appointment is at UTSC, cluster members may include faculty from the other campuses of U of T.
- Faculty from other postsecondary institutions can be involved in projects undertaken by a cluster, but the primary aim of the program is to promote and facilitate the establishment of multidisciplinary clusters of expertise at UTSC.

**AWARD DETAILS**

Proposals can request funding ranging from $100,000 to $200,000 per year. The budget (and funding) does not have to be equal each year of the proposed project as long as expected spending each year is based on the research goals and methodology proposed and justified in the application. Successful applications will be funded for three years. Successful proposals can be awarded full or partial funding. The normal budget year is September 1 – August 31.

There will be annual meetings of cluster leads with the Associate Vice-Principal Research and Innovation–Strategic Initiatives (UTSC) to discuss progress towards cluster milestones. Following the annual meeting, a determination will be made as to whether sufficient progress has been made in achieving identified yearly goals to warrant the release of the subsequent year’s funding.

The cluster lead(s) will be required to:

- work with the UTSC Office of the Vice-Principal Research & Innovation (OVPRI) throughout the funding period to review annual budgets, expenditure forecasts, and activity planning; and
- meet with the Associate Vice-Principal Research and Innovation–Strategic Initiatives at least once per year (typically at the mid-point of the year) to discuss progress toward achieving that year’s objectives
- demonstrate by no later than the conclusion of year 2 that they have applied for one or more major external grants
- On October 1 of each year, following the award, provide an annual report that clearly outlines progress toward identified goals, the emergence and response to any unforeseen challenges and opportunities, and a detailed description of the use of all funds secured during the year in question. The cluster lead(s) is/are responsible for managing all aspects of the cluster, including financial oversight and the on-schedule submission of the aforementioned annual report

**ELIGIBILITY OF BUDGET REQUESTS**
Proposed budgets (form attached below as Appendix 4) should be realistic and justified, containing expenses related only to activities that will support the development and success of the cluster. As a general rule, expenses should conform with the University of Toronto Financial Guidelines (http://finance.utoronto.ca/policies/gtfm/) to be considered eligible. While all direct research costs are in principle eligible, they must be demonstrably connected to advancing the development of the cluster at UTSC. (NB: A revised budget will be required for clusters that are awarded only partial funding.)

Eligible expenses

- The costs of cluster meetings, workshops, and/or conferences
- Community and stakeholder engagement costs, such as per diems or honorariums
- Communications and marketing materials or services
- Costs for professional development or training of team members and their HQP (e.g., EDI training or cultural competence training)
- Consumables needed to conduct research
- Postdoctoral stipends and/or top-ups
- Undergraduate and Graduate student stipends and/or top-ups
- Critical shared research equipment that is demonstrably of benefit to cluster members (one-time, to a maximum of $25,000)
- Cluster member travel between U of T’s three campuses in Scarborough, Toronto and Mississauga
- Cluster member travel to important conferences and meetings (annual maximum of $5,000 per cluster)
- Faculty or trainee recruitment visits (annual maximum of $5,000 per cluster)

Non-eligible expenses:

- Furniture
- Renovations
- Course/teaching releases

Any questions regarding the eligibility of a particular expense should be directed to Carmen Siu, Research Operations and Financial Officer, OVPRI (carmenwn.siu@utoronto.ca).
**DEADLINE**
A mandatory Notice of Intent (NOI) is due **February 15th**. NOIs will be reviewed by the Vice-Principal Research & Innovation (VPRI) and the Associate Vice-Principal Research–Strategic Initiatives (AVPR–SI) to identify any overlap between proposals. In cases of overlap, relevant applicants will be contacted to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a single application. The NOI is also used by the OVPRI to identify appropriate reviewers of CSPP applications. NOIs are not adjudicated.

The annual deadline for the submission of full applications is **March 31st**. If the deadline for either the NOI or full application falls on a weekend or public holiday, the submission deadline will be the next business day. Please email the NOI document (attached below as Appendix 2) and, in turn, a full application, (combining all forms [attached below as Appendix 3 and Appendix 4] into a single PDF attachment) to the OVPRI via researchoffice.utsc@utoronto.ca.

Files should use the following title format: Cluster lead(s) surname(s)-CSPP NOI/Full Proposal-Year.

**ADJUDICATION PROCESS**
Each application will be evaluated by two external reviewers, who will each submit a written assessment of the proposal. CSPP leads are asked to nominate suitable as well as unsuitable referees on their NOI. Their nominees cannot be departmental colleagues of any member of the research cluster or be partners on another research grant.

- The adjudication committee will be composed of the UTSC Principal, the Vice-Principal – Academic and Dean, the Vice-Principal Research & Innovation (VPRI), the Associate Vice-Principal Research and Innovation–Strategic Initiatives (AVPRI–SI), the Associate Vice-Principal Research and Innovation—Research Facilitation and Infrastructure, and the directors of the three research institutes.
- Final decisions on funding will be made by the UTSC Principal, the Vice-Principal – Academic and Dean, the VPRI, and the AVPRI–SI.
- The adjudication committee reserves the right to fund successful proposals fully or partially.
- Each proposal will be assessed based on the evaluation criteria listed below and U of T’s strategic research objectives outlined above.
- Applicants will receive the full reports of the external referees as well as a summary of the adjudication committee’s evaluation.

**PROPOSAL CONTENT, EVALUATION CRITERIA AND WEIGHTING**
The purpose of each cluster is to support the establishment of new research collaborations involving UTSC researchers from multiple disciplines, to pursue research projects the initiation of which is not easily accomplished by a single individual or discipline. The proposed collaborative projects must present bold ideas seeking big impacts, involve external organizations as collaborators/partners (when needed for the success of the project) and have significant potential to secure major new external funding to sustain the projects and their impact beyond the period covered by the CSPP award.
The full proposal should be **no longer than 8 pages long** (excluding any references/bibliography section and the budget).

Each proposal must include the following:

**Vision (30%)**: A clear vision for the cluster, which includes a description of its potential to:
- have a transformative impact on UTSC, U of T and on society;
- establish itself as a cluster of excellence in collaborative scholarship and related partnerships;
- attract substantial external funding and become self-sustaining following the CSPP funding period;
- support training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students and postdoctoral fellows;
- serve as a mechanism for faculty to work with trainees in different disciplines/units
- elevate UTSC’s provincial, national and international profile as a cluster of research excellence in the particular area of multi/inter-disciplinary scholarship.
- The contribution of the CSPP to other strategic initiatives on the campus
- A detailed description of the planned activities – such as governance meetings, strategic planning meetings, research workshops, conferences and other knowledge mobilization initiatives, co-supervision/training of students, etc. – that will facilitate the development and enhancement of a sustainable cluster of scholarly excellence.
- An account of the anticipated outcomes, expected outputs (deliverables) and the potential impacts and benefits for stakeholders and society.
- A management plan for the cluster that considers governance, communications, team-building and administrative supports that will enable the cluster’s success.
- A letter of support from the UTSC Departmental Chair(s)/Centre Director(s) of the cluster lead(s) indicating how the Departments/Centres will support the initiative. This letter is required even if the lead’s Department or Centre is not providing any type of support (funding or in-kind). Letters of support from external partners (like community organizations/groups) might be included as well but are not mandatory.
- If the Departmental Chair/Centre Director is participating in the application, the Chair’s/Director’s designate (the Associate Chair in Departments that have such a position) must provide the letter of support.

**Research Excellence (30%)**: 
- a brief literature review that describes the novelty and/or impact of the proposal, research questions, methodology, anticipated findings and their significance; a knowledge translation/mobilization plan; and a detailed budget.
- evidence that cluster members have demonstrated global leadership and excellence in the proposed research areas and are top-tier scholars with established or emerging leadership in their area(s);
- evidence of suitable leadership experience on the part of the cluster lead(s);
- a description of the cluster’s planned multi/inter-disciplinary research approaches to address
key questions facing society, and why those approaches are needed;
• evidence that the cluster’s members possess the expertise necessary to execute a multi/inter-disciplinary approach.
• A team comprised of faculty at different career stages;

Engagement and Commitments (15%):
• Involvement/engagement of community organizations/groups as needed for the success of the project;
• Plan to address the initiative’s impact on communities and/or society;
• Plans for stakeholder consortia (e.g. industry, clinical, community);
• Plan to communicate or engage with the public or to mobilize or translate the knowledge generated;
• Demonstrated financial or personnel commitment (e.g., matching support [cash and/or in-kind]) from the academic divisions involved.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (10%)
• An explanation of how the cluster will satisfy the requirements and expectations contained in the University of Toronto’s ISRP and in the University of Toronto Scarborough’s Strategic Plan concerning Indigenization, equity, diversity, inclusion networks and partnerships (e.g., a management/governance plan that embodies EDI best practices, systems and structures and provides for recruitment and training of diverse trainees), as embodied in its commitment to inclusive excellence and in its anchor strategy. Such commitments must be accounted for in the vision, activities, and the proposed budget for the cluster;
• Applicants may refer to Tri-Agency EDI guidelines, such as NSERC and SSHRC guidelines, for further direction in this regard.

Budget (15%):
• Appropriateness and justification of budget
• Plan to utilize existing resources and/or facilities, and/or to share any newly created resources (e.g., management and operations staff; trainees; instruments; core facilities)
• Feasible plan for applying for major external grants

Additional Information
The term of the grant is three years, with funding for Years 2 and 3 conditional upon receipt and approval of an annual report that details satisfactory progress towards goals, milestones and outcomes articulated in the proposal.

Disbursement of funding for Years 2 and 3 is also contingent on a closing balance at the end of the previous annual reporting period of less than 50% of the funding allocated for that year.

Budget changes must be justified and must have a positive impact on the planned cluster-building and
Changes in cluster faculty composition, including the addition of new researchers, are permissible following the approval/establishment of a cluster. However, the cluster budget will remain as originally allocated.

All eligible expenditures must be incurred prior to the end of the award term, after which time any unspent funds will be returned to the OVPRI. With justification, a one year, no-cost extension may be granted at the end of Year 3 at the discretion of the OVPRI.
Appendix 1
UTSC INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOLARLY COLLABORATION AND PROMINENCE – GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL RELEVANCE

RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN AREAS OF ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING STRENGTH
(Under Overall Leadership of the Vice-Principal Research Office, and supported by research-support and administrative staff)

Institute Governance
Chair – Associate Vice-Principal – Special Research Initiatives
Members: Institute Directors; representative group of cluster leads

CLUSTERS OF SCHOLARLY PROMINENCE
(Examples of potential clusters to be supported by Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program (CSPP), based on evidence of critical mass of research and creative activity and productivity)

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS (TEACHING AND RESEARCH)
• INDIGENOUS HOUSE
• INSTRUCTIONAL CENTRE 2
• CENTRE FOR CULTURES, ARTS, AND PLURALISM (C-CAP)
• SCARBOROUGH ACADEMY OF MEDICINE AND INTEGRATED HEALTH (SAMHI)/BIOLOGICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE
• EARTH AND RELATED TECHNOLOGIES HUB (EaRTH)

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS
(Supported with Learning Enhancement and Related Networks (LEARN) Fund

ANCHOR INSTITUTION PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS
MOUs, IRCs, Joint/Adjunct Appointments, etc.

ADVANCEMENT
(Student Support, Capital Projects, Chairs, Distinguished Series, Mentorship, Fellowships, etc.)
### Appendix 2

**NOTICE OF INTEREST**

UTSC Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program (CSPP)

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<tr>
<th>1. ADMINISTRATIVE CLUSTER LEAD’S CONTACT INFORMATION:</th>
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<th>3. NAME, DEPARTMENT OF CLUSTER MEMBERS:</th>
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<th>4. TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST (FOR 3 YEARS)</th>
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<th>5. PROJECT SUMMARY: Provide brief plain-language summary of the project (maximum of 250 words)</th>
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Suggested Reviewers

Instructions:
Recommend up to three potential reviewers for your proposal. Please also identify opposing reviewers who should not be contacted.

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**EXCLUSION OF POTENTIAL REVIEWERS (INDIVIDUALS YOU SUGGEST SHOULD NOT BE APPROACHED)**

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**PLEASE INCLUDE ALL DOCUMENTS AS A SINGLE PDF ATTACHMENT**

### Cluster Lead (Administrative Lead)

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### Cluster Co-Lead (If Applicable)

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### Project Details

**Title of Proposal**

### Cluster Team – (Max of Ten Participants, Including Lead(s))

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### Plain-Language Summary (100 Words Maximum)

**Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program – Application Form**
Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program (CSPP)  
Cover Page

ANNUAL FUNDING REQUEST (MAXIMUM $200,000 PER YEAR)

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DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

- PROPOSAL (6 PAGE MAXIMUM)
- ANNUAL BUDGETS AND JUSTIFICATION (ON BUDGET TEMPLATE PROVIDED)
- 2-PAGE CVS FOR ALL TEAM MEMBERS, HIGHLIGHTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS RELEVANT TO THE PROPOSED CLUSTER (2 PAGE MAXIMUM PER PARTICIPANT)
- LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM SECURED PARTNERS
- LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ACADEMIC DIVISIONS INVOLVED (i.e., non-UTSC units)
- LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM UTSC DEPARTMENTAL CHAIR(S) AND CENTRE DIRECTORS (i.e., those of the Cluster Lead and, if applicable, Co-Lead, and any other Departments/Centres that are providing either cash or in-kind support to the Cluster)

SIGNATURES

I verify that all the information contained within this application is true and complete, to the best of my knowledge.

CLUSTER LEAD

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CLUSTER CO-LEAD (IF APPLICABLE)

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**PLEASE INCLUDE ALL DOCUMENTS AS A SINGLE PDF ATTACHMENT**
Appendix 4

Clusters may request funding from $100,000 to $200,000 per year.

Instructions:

Use this budget form to align specific activities with cluster goals and proposed outcomes. Add additional rows as needed. Be sure to reference specific budget line item numbers in the justification text below. Review committees will carefully consider each budget item and may recommend funding only some budget items. See program terms for eligible costs.

The budget (and funding) does not have to be equal each year of the project, as long as expected spending each year is based on the research goals and methodology proposed and justified in the application. Proposed budgets should be realistic and justified, containing expenses related only to activities that will support the development and success of the cluster. While all direct research costs are eligible, they must be demonstrably connected to advancing the development of the cluster at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Applicants are encouraged to consider timing of student and other HQP hires, which typically happen in the Spring or Fall, and forecast the salary costs appropriately.

The University of Toronto Scarborough and/or the University of Toronto will be offering training workshops on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Indigenous Cultural Competency Training. Cluster participants are strongly encouraged to participate in these sessions.
Cluster Administrative Lead:

Cluster Title:

Year 1 – to (rows can be added as needed)

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Total $ requested:

**Expense Categories**

- Salaries and Stipends
- Cluster-building Activities
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Direct Research Costs
- PD and Training
- Equipment
- Travel
- Recruitment
- Other
Y1 Budget Justification (1 page maximum):
### Year 2 – (rows can be added as needed)

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### Expense Categories

- Salaries and Stipends
- Cluster-building Activities
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Direct Research Costs
- PD and Training
- Equipment
- Travel
- Recruitment
- Other
Y2 Budget Justification (1 page maximum):
## UTSC Clusters of Scholarly Prominence Program (CSPP)

Year 3 – to (rows can be added as needed)

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### Expense Categories

- Salaries and Stipends
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- Other
Y3 Budget Justification (1 page maximum):