COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT:
TRANSDISCIPLINARY CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Overview: The UWM Center for 21st Century Studies (C21) invites proposals from multidisciplinary research teams to work with C21 in addressing the transdisciplinary challenges of 21st century studies. A substantive one-year award will be made to a collaborative research project which brings together UWM researchers from the Center’s traditional constituencies in the humanities, arts, and humanistic social sciences with researchers from natural, physical, and quantitative social sciences. Other smaller awards may be given to encourage promising projects for future development.

This initiative is designed to prompt researchers from any disciplinary background to think in unexpected and untried ways about working with researchers in disciplines whose methodology, content, and institutional practices are unfamiliar to them. Although this is not the kind of research with which most academics have experience, we are convinced that this kind of research will become increasingly prevalent and necessary in the 21st century. The aim of these awards is not only to generate new research approaches to the complex problems of the 21st century but also to provide models for how researchers from disciplines that do not have a history of collaboration can work together to meet the complex, heterogeneous challenges of the 21st century.

The award will target project start dates near July 1, 2014.

About C21: The Center leads the way in imagining, defining, and creating the developing field of 21st century studies, focusing on the intersection of the humanities, arts, and sciences (social and natural) with issues of compelling concern. C21 organizes its research and public programs around themes that change periodically. Each year the Center constitutes a group of eight to ten UWM and external fellows, whose research interests relate to the theme. Nationally and internationally known scholars are brought to campus to address the topic of the year’s research in seminars, lectures, and conferences.

Research Areas: Proposals are especially solicited which develop new concepts, methodologies, or approaches to their research problems that transform traditional disciplinary practices. Although proposals may be submitted on any research problem of pressing concern, C21 is particularly interested in sponsoring research in the following areas.

Digital: How do new technologies of computation create new paradigms of research and scholarship in the humanities and social sciences? How can such research areas as data mining, bioinformatics, and natural language processing be brought to bear on the liberal arts more broadly and how can the liberal arts, particularly in relation to philosophical
concepts of meaning, information, number, space, and visuality, impact the way in which
the computational disciplines conceptualize their research problems?

**Environment:** The 21st century faces crises of climate, scarcity, waste, pollution, and
extinction. How do these crises open up new areas of research in the arts, humanities, and
social sciences? How can artistic and literary depictions of these crises provide new
possibilities for scientific research and technical development? Are we truly in a new
geological era called the anthropocene, and if so what kinds of problems and challenges
does this pose for 21st century studies?

**Health:** In the 21st century the health of individuals and communities poses increasing
challenges to researchers across the disciplinary spectrum. These challenges cannot be
solved by technical means alone, but must rely upon humanistic, artistic, and social
scientific research as well. How can transdisciplinary approaches to questions of health in
the 21st century employ the methodologies of the arts and humanities to reframe the way in
which the medical and health sciences conceptualize and approach these key questions of
individual and public health?

**Security:** How do questions of security, risk, and futurity — particularly as developed in
economics, health science, engineering, and emergency management — intersect with similar
questions in media, literature, or the imaginative arts? How can technical measurements
and conceptualization of risk and security impact these imaginative realms? How can the
imagination of risk impact problems of technical measurement and intervene in the
formulation and management of natural and geopolitical emergencies?

**Award Amounts:** Proposals are invited for one-year research programs up to $150,000. Smaller
awards may be given to promising proposals that could be funded more fully in the future.

**Scholarly Presentation:** To further the aims and mission of the Center for 21st Century Studies,
winning teams will be asked to organize a public workshop, symposium, lecture series, or
conference on their transdisciplinary topic at some time during the year after their research project
is completed. The timing and nature of these presentations will be determined in consultation with
C21.

**Requirements:** All UWM faculty and research staff are eligible to propose a project. Because the
winning project is meant to provide new models for how researchers from disciplines that do not
have a history of collaboration can work together, proposals must meet the following criteria:

- Researchers from at least two different departments must be involved
- At least one researcher must be from the humanities, arts, social sciences or other traditional
  C21 constituencies
- Projects are encouraged to deploy graduate (or undergraduate) assistants from participating
disciplines as appropriate
**Informational Meeting/Statement of Interest:** Each interested party should prepare a brief statement of interest, along with a two-page CV, to be submitted at an informational meeting at 2:00 PM on **Friday, December 6, 2013, in Curtin 939**. Indicate if you are seeking collaborators or, if you already are working with other researchers, their names. C21 will work to foster conversations among interested faculty as a means of facilitating collaborations among researchers from across various parts of campus.

**Pre-proposals:** Faculty who form collaborative teams must submit 2-3 page pre-proposals by 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, January 17, 2014**. Pre-proposals should contain a short draft of the project narrative, making clear what is unique or distinctive about this transdisciplinary research project, as well as 2-page CVs of all participants. C21 will provide brief feedback on these pre-proposals no later than **Friday, January 31, 2014**.

**Proposals:** Each proposal must contain the following components in a single-spaced document, with 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Proposals are due by 5:00 pm on **Friday, February 28, 2014**.

- Project Narrative – Five pages maximum
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- Two Page CVs of key project participants
- Names of outside evaluators from each discipline represented

**Evaluation Criteria:** Decisions on the award will be made by an ad hoc selection committee made up of faculty selected from the C21 advisory board as well as members drawn from a variety of disciplines and selected with substantial input from the faculty and academic staff governance committees. The C21 director and deputy director will be ex officio members of the selection committee. The primary criteria for selection of projects will include: 1) level of true transdisciplinary partnership; 2) strength of the proposal; 3) prospects for generating other similar collaborations; 4) likelihood of sustaining the project beyond the award period; and 5) relevance to C21’s mission.

**Instructions:** E-mail completed proposal applications in a single PDF document to: **c21@uwm.edu** no later than 5:00 pm, **Friday, February 28, 2014**. Late proposals will not be considered. For questions or further information please feel free to contact Richard Grusin, C21 Director, at **grusin@uwm.edu**.