Request for Proposals

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, two-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, 2013.

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 two-year research programs up to $125,000 per year. Smaller awards may be given to promising proposals that could be funded in the future.

**C21 Scholarly Presentation:** To further the aims and mission of the Center for 21st Century Studies, the winning team will be asked to organize a public workshop, symposium, lecture series, or conference on their transdisciplinary topic at some time during the two-year term of the grant. 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
- At least one researcher must be from the sciences, engineering, professional schools, or other units not traditionally served by C21
- Projects are encouraged to deploy graduate (or undergraduate) assistants from each participating discipline as appropriate

**Informational Meetings:** C21 will hold informational meetings on Thursday, October 25, 2012, and Monday, October 29, 2012, in Curtin 939 at 3:30 pm.

**Initial Statement of Interest:** Each interested party should submit a brief statement of interest, along with a two-page CV, by 5:00 pm on Friday, November 9, 2012. 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 two–three page pre-proposals by 5:00 p.m. on **Monday, December 10, 2012.** 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 two-page CVs of all participants. C21 will provide feedback on these pre-proposals no later than **Friday, December 21, 2012.**

**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 15, 2013.**

- 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) strength of the proposal; 2) relevance to C21’s mission; 3) level of true transdisciplinary partnership; 4) prospects for generating other similar collaborations; and 5) likelihood of sustaining the project beyond the award period

**Instructions:** E-mail completed proposal applications in a single PDF document to c21@uwm.edu no later than 5:00 pm, **Friday, February 15, 2013.** Late proposals will not be considered. For questions or further information please feel free to contact Richard Grusin, C21 Director, at grusin@uwm.edu.