

**Institute for Society, Culture and Environment**  
**INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GROUPS (IRG)**

**Request for Applications**

March 6, 2008

The Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) is tasked with strengthening the university's competitive position in the social sciences, arts, and humanities. Based upon input received from a visioning session held with key faculty leaders and the support of the Institute's Stakeholders Committee, ISCE is sponsoring a new Interdisciplinary Research Groups (IRG) Initiative. This initiative is designed to further build the capacity of Virginia Tech faculty to successfully compete for external funding in support of their research and scholarship.

**FOCUS.** In order for interdisciplinary research to develop, scholars from various disciplines need time to meet to discuss mutual interests, learn about different perspectives and approaches, develop research questions, identify necessary activities to achieve the group's goals, and divide responsibilities. This mechanism is designed to bring together faculty from diverse disciplines to develop research groups and position themselves to secure external research funds. ISCE anticipates funding two IRGs in 2008-2009.

One IRG will support the Institute's programmatic area of Human Development and Health Behavior. Within this broad area, ISCE is seeking IRG proposals that address critical issues facing individuals, families, or communities including physical and mental health concerns, disease prevention, or chronic disease management.

The second IRG will focus attention on another pivotal societal issue identified during the ISCE visioning session: resource sustainability (water, energy, climate change, human factors); technology and communication; violence and aggression; disparities and oppression (gender, health, income); individual and community competencies; immigration; globalization; diversity and cultural meanings; and security (terrorism, disaster).

The particular focus or research emphasis within each IRG will be identified by the group. A member of the ISCE core faculty will serve as a liaison to each IRG.

**IMPLEMENTATION.** Funding for the IRGs will occur in two phases. Phase I funding is competitive and is for the period of July 1 through December 31, 2008.

If needed, Phase II funding will be available for January 1 through June 15, 2009. Phase II funding depends on the quality and completeness of the work accomplished in Phase I.

It is expected that previous established teams will complete their proposal development work within one semester whereas newly formed teams may require additional time and support to achieve the goal of preparing a well-crafted, competitive proposal.

The maximum award is \$30,000 for Phase I and \$20,000 for Phase II.

**EXPECTATIONS AND PRODUCTS.** IRGs are expected to complete and submit a proposal to an external funding agency prior to June 30, 2009. The minimum level of external funding sought (i.e., direct costs) by an IRG is expected to be at least \$250,000.

Each IRG will be required to submit: (1) a monthly accounting of IRG activities and accomplishments; and (2) a 2-page *Issue Brief*, suitable for posting on the ISCE website, highlighting the nature of the problem under study.

IRGs requesting Phase II funding will also be required to submit an 8-10 page situation analysis paper or pre-proposal that specifies the issue the final proposal will address, specific aims or research questions, the “data” that support the significance of the intended project (e.g., demographic trends, summative literature review), approach or research methods, and evidence that the group has had contact with an identified funding agency.

Evaluation of Phase I progress products will serve as the basis for Phase II funding.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES.** Applications for Phase I IRGs are welcome from groups of tenure-track or tenured faculty from all departments and programs at Virginia Tech. The IRG leader, however, must be a tenure-track or tenured faculty member in a college represented by the ISCE stakeholders – College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences [CLAHS], College of Science [COS], Pamplin College of Business [PCB], and College of Architecture and Urban Studies [CAUS].

IRGs are comprised of 3 to 6 members. It is expected that collectively IRG members will have expertise in three different disciplines or different areas within a particular discipline. IRGs should include members who range in seniority and experience.

Each application must include a signed cover sheet (attached), abstract (250 word maximum), and proposal of no more than 8 pages. The narrative portion of the proposal must provide the following information:

1. Focus statement, including a description of the issue, problem, or situation that the group will address within the ISCE parameters discussed above (2-4 pages).
2. Initial members, including identification of the IRG leader, disciplines represented, and experience of group members as it relates to the focus of the IRG. At least 3 group members need to be identified when the application is submitted. Applicants not identifying all group members must submit a brief plan and timeline for inviting additional faculty members to join the group (1 page max).
3. Activity plan, including timeline, anticipated meeting schedule, activities, and tasks to be accomplished (1-2 pages).
4. Budget and budget justification (e.g., student support, faculty summer stipends, course buyouts, travel, consultant time) (1-2 pages).

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS/DEADLINE.** Applications are to be prepared using 1-inch margins and Arial 11 font. Submit 2 paper copies and one e-copy of the completed application to ISCE (237 Wallace Hall [0426]; [kroberto@vt.edu](mailto:kroberto@vt.edu)) by 5:00 p.m. April 28, 2008.

If you have questions, please contact:

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Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE)

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GROUPS (IRG)  
PHASE I - COVER SHEET

Focus of IRG: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRG Leader and Members [Please Print/Type]:** I agree to serve as an active and productive member of this IRG and understand that unused funds will be returned to ISCE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Leader) Department email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Department email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Department email

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**Signatures of Department Head/Chair or Center Director:** I support the faculty member's participation in the IRG and understand that ISCE will transfer funds to the identified department/center to be used for designated expenses in accordance with University policies. All unused funds will be returned to ISCE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name [print/type] Department email

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Signature Date

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Name [print/type] Department email

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