



Office of the Vice President for Research Request for Applications

Thematic Units of Excellence (TUNE) Program (FY23-FY27 Cycle)

BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS

The Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) is pleased to announce a request for applications for the new *FY23-FY27 Thematic Units of Excellence* program.

Colorado State University continues to foster a culture of excellence and nurture success of research and scholarship community members, build excellence, embrace purposeful innovation, and translate innovation into impact. Our ability to reach aspirational goals will depend on identifying and investing in areas of institutional excellence with a process to select, develop, and support strategic thematic programs of high potential impact. To meet these ambitious objectives, the OVPR recently enlisted a task force comprised of faculty and administrators to provide recommendations for a novel, transformative institutional program, building from the underpinnings of the sunseting Programs of Research & Scholarly Excellence (PRSE). The task force recommended a program that would be more focused thematically, with more resources dedicated to thematic areas of documented excellence. They also suggested fewer investments that could be rotated over time to provide a continual examination across our institution of what we consider to be excellence in research and scholarly programs.

The new “Thematic Units of Excellence (TUNE)” designation has emerged from that effort. The TUNE program will create a new, more robust institutional process to nurture and sustain impactful programs of research, scholarship, and artistry, by recognizing already-achieved excellence with demonstrable promise in existing and emerging strategic areas that have demonstrated excellence. The TUNE program will be one of a cohort of programs across our campus with varied intent and funding levels, from seed funds in colleges, departments, schools, centers or institutes to funds that support emerging new areas of research or scholarly interests.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The TUNE designation program will invest in thematic excellence through a process that encourages ideas and collaborations with *local, regional, national, and international impact*, while *reflecting institutional priorities and strengths*. This process is designed to elicit broad representation and participation from the campus community (including faculty and research scientists/scholars) and across all mission areas of our land-grant foundation, with emphasis on research and scholarship activities. The basis for TUNEs is an established track record of nationally and internationally recognized excellence. TUNE applications may include both emerging and existing themes that are poised for significant impacts.



Designated TUNEs should demonstrate significant *engagement across campus*, impacts already made that demonstrate *engagement and enthusiasm from internal and external communities* (including industry, government, or philanthropic sponsors), and *well-developed plans for how the investments and impacts made with the institutional support will be realized and leveraged*. As such, *each designated TUNE is expected to host a national or international conference or workshop on campus during the duration of the designation to communicate success and promote awareness of activities broadly both internally and externally*.

The TUNE program selection and designation at Colorado State University will set a high standard for qualification, therefore, only a limited number of programs will be selected. To ensure there are sufficient resources to support new TUNEs that emerge, the OVPR will limit the number of newly designated TUNEs to a *maximum of 3 per cycle*, with a *new call for TUNE applications issued every 2-4 years*, depending on the progress of existing TUNES. *Each TUNE designation is limited to a maximum 4-year funding duration*. It is envisioned that there will be a maximum of 6 funded designated TUNEs at any time, with a transition process that includes introduction of new programs and conversion of established programs to self-sustainability. The TUNE designation itself can be maintained during the self-sustaining period, without funding from the TUNE program, as long as the program is thriving.

All selected programs will be evaluated annually for progress and, after 2 years, a mid-program progress report must be submitted to request an additional 2-year funding designation, for a total of 4 years. It is anticipated that this period of time will allow each TUNE to establish a sustainable plan with solidified goals and milestones of progress. Participants from a retired TUNE may be eligible to recompete in a new cycle, with a new idea.

Thematic Alignment:

The TUNE program will foster Colorado State University's recognition as a global leader in emerging or existing thematic areas of sustained excellence. The program will prioritize growing our current pillars of strength as well as catalyzing our newly emerging areas of innovation in science, research, scholarship, and artistry, while recognizing the need for inclusive excellence. Broad examples include, but are not limited to, thematic areas in climate science and interventions, food security, one health, social sciences, humanities and cultural programs, as well as our continued leading position in sustainable and innovative practices in air, water, soil, energy, and agriculture. We will consider both discovery as well as programs that are community facing. Other priorities encompass life-long critical thinking development for future generations of leaders, change makers, and global citizens, as well as a rich understanding of the complexities of today grand challenges.

All designated TUNEs must align with a theme of institutional, college, or division priority and strength, as identified and endorsed by unit leadership.

AVAILABLE FUNDING

This program will provide funding support to each designated TUNE at a maximum of **\$400K - \$800K total from the OVPR over the duration of the program**. As we define opportunities to align resources with strategic intent, the program may allocate additional resources to include new instrumentation



or other support.

Additional non-OVPR support, including leveraged or cost-shared support (cash or in-kind) from relevant departments, colleges, and other internal or external sources is strongly encouraged. In general, applications for TUNE programs that have financial or other support from local units will be viewed as indicative of higher prioritization and strategic alignment within those units.

It is expected that, from this total combined amount from all sources (including cost-share or leveraged partnerships), *25% will be utilized for graduate fellowships associated with the TUNE.* Efforts to support interdisciplinarity among the follows is encouraged (e.g. cross training, lab rotations, etc.).

OVPR funding for designated TUNEs will be for a *4-year maximum period* and must be expended within that timeframe (FY23-FY27 for the current cycle). Funds will be approved at the program start and at the 2-year midpoint review, and will be released on an annual basis after evaluation. Funding requests should be based on anticipated needs and can be structured so they fluctuate annually.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Eligibility:

Applications may be submitted by tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty; research scientists/scholars; center/institute directors; deans; or department heads. A lead/director/PI must be identified at the time of application. Co-leads/co-directors/co-PIs should also be identified, if applicable, and must also meet the above eligibility criteria. Other key personnel are allowable, and do not need to meet this eligibility criteria.

Full academic departments should not apply for this designation, as there are mechanisms within the colleges to support full academic departments. Proposed TUNE programs contained within a single college should demonstrate breadth of impact across multiple units or with partners internal or external to the institution.

Eligible Costs:

The OVPR is seeking to support creative, high-impact Thematic Units of Excellence. Appropriate use of funds includes program development activities; capacity building; expansion of key research and scholarship infrastructure; graduate student support, including efforts to support interdisciplinarity (e.g. cross training, rotations, etc.); efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion of personnel. Use of funds to seed individual research/scholarship/artistry projects or enhance faculty startup packages are not considered suitable uses of these funds. Any major changes in TUNE direction that affect how the funds will be spent may be requested and allowable, but require prior OVPR approval.

Mandatory Costs:

Of the total funding available to each TUNE from all combined sources (OVPR plus non-OVPR support), *25% is expected to be utilized for graduate fellowships associated with the TUNE.* For example, *\$800K requested from the OVPR + \$300K from non-OVPR leveraged/cost-shared support = \$1.1M total, with \$275K to be utilized for graduate fellowships.*



Accountability:

It is expected that allocation of these funds will lead to substantive impact in research and scholarly excellence. Brief updates on progress and scholarly outputs, including budget expenditures, will be requested annually for evaluation. All designated TUNEs will also be evaluated more in-depth after 2 years, at which point a progress report must be submitted to request an additional 2-year designation. Each report should include the following elements: 1) A summary of the activities, including an evaluation of the impact that the funding had on the strategic goals of the TUNE and the university; 2) An outcomes assessment that references current and projected outcomes, metrics, and an update on the timeline included in the original application; 3) A summary report of expenditures. Unspent funds remaining at the end of the designation period may be made available to other TUNEs. In addition, in order to maintain the TUNE designation after transition to self-sustainability, a bi-annual progress report will need to be submitted for review and approval.

TIMELINE

DATE	EVENT
October 6, 2022	RFA announcement released
October 31, 2022	Open Forum: 1:30 – 2:30 pm In-person Location TBD or via Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting Or call in (audio only) +1 970-628-0547,,514682721# Phone Conference ID: 514 682 721#
November 17, 2022	Open Forum 9:00 – 10:00 am In-person Location TBD or via Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting Or call in (audio only) +1 970-628-0547,,358194176# Phone Conference ID: 358 194 176#
January 31, 2023	*Deadline for receipt of application package
March 1, 2023	Semi-finalists notified
On or about March 20, 2023	*Semi-finalist open presentation session, TBD
On or about April 3, 2023	Awardees notified
May 1, 2023	Program start date
May 2024	Progress report, end of year 1 period
May 2025	Mid-term evaluation: 2-year graduate/continue
May 2026	Progress report, end of year 3 period
May 2027	Final report: 4-year program transition to self-sustainability



APPLICATION FORMAT

Formatting, all sections: 8.5" x 11" page size; single-spaced; 1" margins; typeface no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman, 11-point Calibri, or 10-point Arial.

File submission format: Separate PDF document for each application component.

The nomination application will consist of the following components:

Component	Required Content	Page Limit
Cover Page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the proposed TUNE • List of contributing colleges/departments/units • Name, affiliation (college/department/unit), and contact info: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Director/lead and other key personnel ○ Advisory board members (if applicable) ○ 3 internal and 3 external potential reviewers 	1
Impact Statement	<p>Succinct summary statement, describing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme • Objectives, activities, and anticipated outcomes • Alignment to institutional priorities or strengths • Projected short and long-term impacts of the designation on the TUNE's programmatic vision, sustainability, recognition, potential for partnership and external funding, success of students/staff/faculty, etc. • One-sentence statement encapsulating the significance of the proposed TUNE. (Example: The Center for ABC should receive a TUNE designation for its groundbreaking contributions to XYZ solutions at the forefront of sustainable social and economic practice that support a thriving front range community.) 	0.5
Narrative	<p>The narrative should make a compelling case for the designation of the TUNE, supported by appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative data that demonstrate the impact of the program, and should include these sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thematic Area of Focus:</i> Identify the theme of the TUNE • <i>Mission and Vision:</i> Clear 5-year strategic mission and vision and how the designation will advance the program. • <i>Objectives and Activities:</i> Outline of proposed objectives and activities required to meet those objectives. Demonstrate existing and future internal and external collaboration and partnerships, relationship-building, and/or capacity strengthening. Describe what success will look like after 1, 	5



	<p>3, and 5 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u><i>Innovation and Impact:</i></u> Evidence of achieved and potential excellence and impact. Describe the potential innovation, as well as the impact, on a local, regional, national, and/or international scale. Provide context, including peer comparisons, impact of the program on its fields, the institution, and broader society.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>An appendix (see below) may be utilized to assist with communicating demonstrated quantitative/qualitative excellence.</i>• <u><i>Alignment:</i></u> Integration and alignment with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Institutional/College/Unit strategic planning initiatives, priorities, and strengths.○ Key research, scholarship, or artistry institutional infrastructure.○ The external (federal, philanthropic, etc.) competitive landscape, including the funding and priority landscapes.• <u><i>Competitive and Positional Advantage:</i></u> Why now? What positions CSU to succeed in this theme?• <u><i>Organizational Structure and Membership:</i></u> Identify all key personnel, including their roles and experience pertaining to the TUNE, as well as information about membership (faculty, research associates, collaborators, trainees). Include a description of the level of interdisciplinarity and synergy of the TUNE, and how it will function across units, if applicable. Discuss how departments, colleges, and other units will function in support of the TUNE. Include how graduate research/scholarship will be expanded through the investment in this theme.• <u><i>Engagement and Partnerships:</i></u> Describe the level of engagement and enthusiasm for the proposed TUNE across the institution, and from external communities (including industry, government, or philanthropic stakeholders/sponsors). If applicable, include a description of internal or external partners that will be involved or impacted by the TUNE, including what value they bring to the program.• <u><i>Sustainability:</i></u> A plan for sustainability and continued success, including identification of potential internal/external resources or sponsored funding opportunities to grow the research and/or scholarship enterprise.• <u><i>Program Plan and Assessment Milestones:</i></u> Include the metrics or observables that will be used to benchmark activities at	
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	1, 3, and 5 years, identify key milestones of success, and provide a timeline of activities and outcomes assessment.	
Appendix	List of demonstrable quantitative/qualitative excellence, accomplishments, and impacts associated with the proposed TUNE (e.g. list of awards, recognitions, publications and other scholarly impacts, patents, citations, funding history, external partnerships, number of graduate students advised, etc. as appropriate as measurements of excellence for the field).	3-5
References	References cited	2
Funding Justification	Provide a justification of anticipated costs and how funds will provide impact. Include a timeline of expenditures. Describe all sources of support, including committed cost share and/or leveraged resources.	1
Funding Request Form	Provide a breakdown of requested and cost-shared/leveraged funds. Use the provided template.	1
Biographical Sketches	Include a NSF- or NIH-style biographical sketch for the director and other key personnel (e.g. associate director). Please utilize the SciENcv system to generate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/ 	2 (NSF) or 5 (NIH) per biosketch
Letters of Support	2-3 letters of support, from departments, colleges, centers, or other stakeholders, combined into a single document.	1 per letter

SEMI-FINALIST OPEN PRESENTATION SESSION FORMAT

As part of the application review and selection process, semi-finalists will be invited to participate in an open presentation session. The session will allow applicants 20 minutes in an open forum to present their proposed TUNE ideas, address comments raised by reviewers, and answer real-time questions from institutional leadership, as well as others in attendance. Each group will have 10 minutes to present slides, 10 minutes to discuss, and 5 minutes for transition. All campus community members are invited to attend.

EVALUATION

Institutional leadership will participate in the selection and management of the TUNE designation process, and will be involved in the evaluation of the outcomes of investment. All applications will be reviewed, with selection recommendations made by a selection committee that will include representatives from institutional leadership, as well as internal and external research and educational leaders. *All applicants are asked to identify potential internal and external reviewers on the cover page of the application.* The final decision on TUNE designations will be made by the VPR, in consultation with the selection committee.



Review criteria will include:

- Overall quality of the program, including demonstrated excellence and future potential for high-impact research, scholarship, and/or artistry outcomes
- Degree of anticipated innovation and impact on a local, regional, national, or global scale
- Alignment with current/future institutional priorities, strengths, and infrastructure; Alignment with the external support and priority landscape
- Qualifications and structure of the TUNE leadership and key personnel
- Level of support and investment from participating colleges and departments
- Nature of internal and external partnership and engagement
- Long-term sustainability, including potential for contributions to/from external programs

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applications are **due by 5:00 p.m. MT on the submission deadline date (January 31, 2023)** and must be submitted through the CSU InfoReady Review system (<https://colostate.infoready4.com/>). The system will not accept applications after 5:00 p.m. and no late applications will be accepted.

Accessing the CSU InfoReady Review system to submit:

1. From the opportunities list found at <https://colostate.infoready4.com/>, locate the “CSU – Thematic Units of Excellence (TUNE) Program” opportunity, and click on the title to open the opportunity information page.
2. From the opportunity page, click on “Apply”.
3. Log into the system by clicking on the blue “Colorado State University Login” button and using your CSU eID and password.
4. Complete all fields and upload all required components. You can save your application as a draft prior to submission.
5. Be sure to “Submit” your application. Applications left as “draft” will not be reviewed.

CONTACT

Questions about this program should be directed to:

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