MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 12, 2014

TO: RBHS Faculty

FROM: Kathleen Scotto, PhD
Vice Chancellor for Research
Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences

RE: TEAM SCIENCE INITIATIVE AWARDS

Purpose:

The Team Science Initiative ("TSI") grant program is intended to foster the creation of viable multi-disciplinary research teams that can tackle the complex, multi-faceted biomedical research questions that face us today. A TSI award will support the establishment and growth of faculty research teams with the intent of enabling these research teams to compete effectively for extramural support. A TSI award may be used to support the establishment of a new multi-faculty research program or the addition of a substantial and enduring new discipline/element to an existing program.

Applicants will need to clearly describe the vision for their research program and the potential impact of the research and competitive position of their proposed team. Applicants must also adequately describe, as specifically as possible, their plans to obtain sustained extramural support. Teams should take advantage of their multi-disciplinary nature to identify multiple sources to which they can offer value.

Award:

A TSI grant can provide funds up to $40,000 direct costs, provided in two distinct phases:

- In Phase I, the successful applicant will receive up to $20,000 to be spent over a period of 6-12 months to build a viable research team and craft a plan to seek external support. Activities include, but are not limited to, hosting guest speakers, conducting scientific retreats, identifying potential external funding sources/opportunities, and conducting pilot collaborative studies. At the conclusion of Phase I, the awardees will be asked to submit a brief report and present their accomplishments to the TSI Selection Committee who will determine if sufficient progress has been made. Successful completion of Phase I will trigger release of Phase II funds.

- In Phase II, successful applicants will receive up to $20,000 to be spent over a period of up to 12 months. Activities may include, but are not limited to, continued support of collaborative studies, publication expenses, and expenses related to the preparation of a written proposal. At the end of the Phase II funding period, applicants are expected to have created a draft proposal directed to an external funding sponsor.

- No indirect costs are allowed in either Phase I or Phase II. The actual budget must be commensurate with the specific needs of the research project.

Awards may not be used to replace or supplement current funding. Awards may not be used to conduct work for a grant application already pending. However, we anticipate that the award will enable the development of major new programs from existing strengths or may be used to catalyze the significant expansion of existing teams and/or new innovative scope of existing programs.
Eligibility:

The proposed project must involve at least two faculty members from within Rutgers, at least one of whom must be resident at an RBHS school. Preference will be given to senior faculty PIs; if the PI is not a senior faculty member, it is expected that a senior faculty member would serve as a mentor and be identified in the application. Preference will also be given to proposals that bring together faculty from multiple schools and/or disciplines. Faculty members must be committed to ongoing involvement with the project and should be capable of sustaining the effort. One RBHS faculty member will be designated as PI for purposes of this award and will receive all correspondence, manage the budget, and be responsible for reporting the results of the award.

Review Process:

An internal review committee will be constituted specifically for the purpose of reviewing the TSI proposals. Committee members will be selected by the RBHS Council of Research Deans.

Reviewers will be evaluating proposals within and across subject areas. Therefore, proposals should describe the project and its significance in a manner that can be readily appreciated by a non-expert in the field. Details required for evaluation by an expert should be concisely described.

Proposals will be judged by the following criteria:

- **Opportunity, originality, and impact**
  - Is this an opportunity to build a sustained multi-investigator research program with broad impact? Is the field of study described of rising importance? Does the team envisioned present a combination of talents, experience capabilities, or perspectives that confer a distinct advantage to the proposed work over time?

- **Quality of team-building plan**
  - Are the proposed team building activities of Phase I well-organized, thematically linked to the stated goals? Do they appear logically related to the proposed research program?

- **Quality of the research plan**
  - Is the proposed plan well-conceived, focused, and feasible? Is the long-term promise and viability of the approach clear? Are the budget and proposed time line appropriate for the scope of the plan?

- **Continuation plan**
  - Are potential funding sources identified and timely plans for pursuing such described? Does the vision for the project serve the mission and priorities of the identified funding sources? If expected outcomes are achieved, are the applicants likely to be competitive for extramural funding in the near term? How viable is the proposed funding strategy?

- **Long-term potential and strategic fit**
  - Does the proposed program fit within the Rutgers strategic plan? Does it offer significant opportunity for growth and engagement of additional co-investigators and/or other programs, especially at Rutgers? Is future development of the program supported by existing or planned facilities or programs at RU?

Deadline and Submission Instructions:

The application forms and instructions are included with this memo and are available in your school’s research office. The deadline for a full application is Friday, April 25, 2014. Please submit applications as a single PDF to research@ca.rutgers.edu (Insert “TSI Application” in the subject line). NO PAPER APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.
Funding decisions will be announced by mid-May. For more information regarding this awards program, please contact Neil Grant in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (neil.grant@rutgers.edu / 973-972-3325).

Research Proposal Details

1) Up to $40,000 per award
2) Phase I funding period 6-12 months; Phase II funding period up to 12 months. Extensions available upon request if sufficiently justified.
3) Eligible faculty: At least 2 faculty must be involved with at least 1 faculty member from and RBHS school/institute. Clinical as well as tenure-track eligible faculty may apply
4) Proposals are expected to describe the establishment of a new multi-faculty research program or the addition of a substantial and enduring new element to an existing program and outline strategy for pursuing extramural funding

GRANT APPLICATION: ORDER OF DOCUMENTS

In order to ensure that every application is complete and to ease the job of the reviewers, applications must be submitted in the following format. All applications must be organized in the order indicated below:

1. COVER SHEET
   a. Descriptive Project Title
   b. Name, Position, and Department of each participating faculty member (PI listed first)
   c. Total Budget Requested
   d. Requirement for IRB or IACUC approvals (and if approval has already been sought and/or granted)

2. ABSTRACT – 250 words
   Provide a 250 word abstract that describes the project’s broad impact, the proposed activities, and the project’s expected outcomes for both Phase I and Phase II.

3. RESEARCH PLAN – 4 pages
   Applications should be in Arial 11 font (or larger), single-spaced and should not exceed 4 pages. Research plan should address:
   a. Opportunity, Long-term Goal and Barriers -- Describe the long-term goals and potential of the proposed research program. Describe how the program can overcome existing barriers and open up new innovations and opportunities. Highlight capabilities, expertise and resources of the team members and how the team might distinguish itself. Identify the most critical barriers for moving forward with the project (emphasizing what must be established or completed to seek funding support from external sources).
   b. Project Plan – Describe proposed work and expected outcomes for both Phase I and Phase II. The plan should make good use of the talent and experience of the team members and existing resources. The plan should impress on reviewers how the expected outcomes will address the critical barriers identified in part a.
   c. Plans for Continuation – If known for Phase I, identify expected sources of extramural support. For each, include (1) the agency or organization and the program to which you expect to apply (include deadlines, if known); (2) a description of how the project will be responsive to the funding source’s priorities and/or requirements of a specific program; and (3) a description of how funding through this source will advance the project in accord with its long-term goals. Continuation plans may include intent to apply for one or more large, multi-investigator grants and/or a combination of single- or multi-investigator grants that, collectively, will enable the team to continue its work. In addition, applicants can cite agency priorities and plans that align with the team’s goals and capabilities that would support the expectation of success for future sustenance. This information is required for Phase II funding.
   d. Timeline (assume start date of 6/1/14) – a proposed schedule, including expected milestones, is required.
4. BUDGET
Provide an itemized budget with anticipated categories and expenses. Emphasis should be given to items/activities that specifically support the project goals. Salary support for faculty or laboratory/study personnel cannot be included. Salary support for other personnel that may be required for team building or proposal development (such as part-time administrative assistant) will be considered, but must be well justified.

5. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION – 1 page
Attach a separate page that provides a justification for the requested funds.

6. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
Each faculty member involved in the project must provide an NIH-style biographical sketch (up to 4 pages for each).

7. OTHER SUPPORT
List current and pending internal and external grants for each faculty member involved in the project. Include the following:
   a. Funding Agency
   b. Title
   c. Award Amount (specify if direct costs only or total award)
   d. Funding Period

   Indicate if the funding has “no relationship” to this TSI proposal or briefly describe the relationship between the work supported by the grant and the proposed TSI project.

After Phase I is successfully completed, the research team should submit a report to the TSI Review Committee. The report should include an update of the Research Plan to take into account the results of Phase I activities. Part c of the Research Plan must be completed for the release of Phase II funding. A new budget for Phase II may also be submitted at this time, not to exceed $20,000.