“Bridging Barriers” Call for Concept Papers  
Deadline: Thursday, December 15, 2016

“Bridging Barriers” is a university-wide initiative, supported by the Vice President for Research (VPR), the Provost, and the Colleges, Schools, and Institutes. It will include faculty lines, support for new infrastructure, a substantial startup fund, ongoing seed research funding, and help to secure significant extramural support. Each year, for the coming 3-5 years, we will select a new Bridging Barriers question to begin its decade-long journey of investigation and discovery. This new effort will supplement, not supplant, the vibrant research and scholarship efforts already taking place within individual disciplines or across closely related fields. The first question will launch in the 2016-2017 academic year. Concept papers are solicited from the UT Austin research community as a means to identify creative ideas that could mature into Bridging Barriers questions.

What is meant by “Bridging Barriers questions”?
To build upon President Fenves’ 2015 inauguration address, Bridging Barriers questions should reflect opportunities to apply interdisciplinary research to answer the hardest questions facing humanity and society today. These questions will address significant societal problems for the coming decades, problems in basic research that can expand the human imagination and set the stage for the practical solutions to problems that don’t yet exist, and problems in humanities and social sciences where answers will enrich and deepen our experience of the world and society around us. Bridging Barriers questions will be of a scope and complexity large enough to require a >10-year approach spanning multiple academic disciplines to address them.

In addition, Bridging Barriers questions must be non-generic. The questions must build on a problem that is unique to UT’s context in geography and society, or it must exploit strengths or combinations of strengths that are unique to UT. However, these conditions will not preclude a UT research team from involving community members or external collaborators in Bridging Barriers.

Who is eligible to submit a concept paper?
Concept papers should be submitted by interdisciplinary teams of UT researchers or by individuals with an overarching idea that spans well beyond the confines of their own and related disciplines. There is no limit to the size of a team. The expectation is that these research teams will have a chance to shape and join the Bridging Barriers questions as these are further explored throughout the spring. Therefore, you need not have the entire research team identified at the time of concept paper submission.

Each concept paper must have a single designated contact author, who will be available for follow-up discussions and to communicate with the rest of the concept paper team as concept paper ideas are explored further. This contact author may be a UT Austin faculty member (tenure- or non-tenure-line), permanent research staff member, visiting/adjunct faculty member or postdoc/research fellow. If the contact author is a visiting/adjunct faculty or postdoc/research fellow, at least one other co-author on the concept paper must be a tenure-line UT Austin faculty member.
Required Submission Materials:

Submit a single, 3-page PDF document that includes:

1. **Title page** (one page) including a descriptive title for your idea using **10 words or less**, and a list of concept paper co-authors with title and unit affiliations. One author must be designated as a **contact author**, including email address and phone number. The **contact author must meet the eligibility criteria described above**.

2. A **two-page concept paper**, submitted as a PDF file, that includes only the following four sections:
   a. **The Question**: A problem statement that articulates the question to be addressed. Why is this important? How does the State of Texas, the nation, and society and human knowledge and culture at large benefit from a massive UT-led effort to address this question? How will UT benefit from the opportunity to tackle this question? The question should require experts from a broad range of fields to work together in new ways for a solution. We encourage ideas that look outside the fields of your team’s experts for help in meeting the challenge.
   b. **The Approach**: Explain the 5- to 10-year research plan for addressing the question. What types of research expertise are required to make it a success? What unique people, resources or infrastructure at UT make our campus competitively positioned to address the question?
   c. **The Interdisciplinary Team**: List the research disciplines and/or researchers who would be needed to approach this question. If you have needs in some areas but no individuals in mind, describe the attributes or qualifications of these needed team members. Community members or external partners may also be included, although the largest portion of expertise should reside within UT. If you have collaborated previously, explain the context. If you haven’t, why not? What barriers exist and how do we bridge them? What expertise is needed that might be provided by addition of new faculty and staff researchers to our community?
   d. **What’s Needed for Success**: Explain your vision for a broad campus effort focused on addressing this question. What people, resources, infrastructure or external support need to be brought to UT to bridge the barriers and tackle this question? Note: no budgets or budget estimates should be submitted.

Concept Paper Submission Instructions:

**Application website:** [https://utexas.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1754684](https://utexas.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1754684)

To submit your contribution to Bridging Barriers, upload your concept paper in PDF format at the website above. A UT EID and password is required. A staff member or assistant may upload the concept paper on your behalf by logging in with their own EID and password and selecting you as the applicant.

Concept papers cannot be accepted as email submissions. All concept papers must be submitted via the website above.
What happens after I submit my concept paper?
The VPR office will collect concept papers through December 15, 2016. The VPR team, with help from Associate Deans for Research, will then organize the concept papers by topic into a set of larger core themes. Each core theme will have an assigned “convening team” led by faculty with subject matter expertise and with organizational expertise. The convening team and VPR team will invite groups of co-authors that submit concept papers to join in the process of shaping multiple submitted concepts into a broader Bridging Barriers question. A more detailed timeline for the process is provided at https://research.utexas.edu/vpr-initiatives/bridging-barriers/timeline/.

What review criteria are being used to rank or downselect concept papers? Who will be ranking the concept papers?
This is an open call for ideas, not a competition amongst ideas. We will not be paring down or ranking submitted concept papers. Instead, the VPR office and Associate Deans for Research will be reading each submitted concept paper and summarizing the essence of its main idea or question. Then, together with the faculty- and researcher-led convening teams, we will organize groups of related questions into core themes. The convening teams will then invite all the co-authors from the concept papers that comprise a core theme to join them in shaping the core theme into an overarching Bridging Barriers question. In addition, anyone in the research community may join discussions for shaping core themes into Bridging Barriers questions. The core themes, with all of their component ideas, will be posted on a secure UT site (UT EID required) for the research community to view.

Are multiple submissions allowed? Can I be named on multiple concept papers?
An individual may be named on multiple concept papers, but the submission interface used to collect the concept papers allows only one submission per contact author UT EID. If you plan to be a contact author for more than one concept paper, you may submit one of the papers, and then have a co-author submit the other.

What if I still have questions about the process?
Consult the Bridging Barriers FAQs page. If your question is not answered there, you may email vp-research-sr@austin.utexas.edu.

If you are a Dean, Department Chair or Unit Director, you may request a visit from a VPR senior team member to explain the Bridging Barriers initiative to your constituents. Submit your request at https://research.utexas.edu/vpr-visit-request-form/.