

May 10, 2013

From: Stephen Welter, Vice President for Research & Dean of Graduate Affairs; and Nancy Marlin, Provost

Subject: Area of Excellence

I am very pleased to announce the four areas of excellence selected. The competition was intense such that many very good proposals were not selected. The faculty on our campus responded wonderfully to the call for areas of excellence with 28 full proposals submitted. Eight proposals were selected as finalists by the faculty review committee. A faculty member from each of these eight proposals was asked to make oral presentations to a combined audience consisting of 3 outside reviewers, college deans, the 9-member faculty review committee, and the Vice President of Research. The outside reviewers consisted of a faculty member from UC Berkeley (Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management), UC Irvine (Department of Economics), and UCSD (Department of Literature).

Although only four proposals were selected, the quality of other proposals was stellar and I would like to encourage departments to give further considerations to these hiring lines as they plan their requests for new faculty.

Descriptions of the four selected areas of excellence are provided below. The faculty lines selected in the new areas of excellence includes 16 new positions within 4 colleges (College of Arts and Letters, College of Sciences, Health and Human Services, and Professional Studies and Fine Arts).

1. Climate and Sustainability Studies - This area of excellence provides an opportunity for SDSU to fill the gap in a few critical interdisciplinary research fields to complement existing expertise and to leverage the SDSU capability for solving important and pressing climate and sustainability issues at both regional and global scales. The proposed hire of four faculty members will help SDSU to achieve four main objectives: 1) fill critical expertise gaps in the current SDSU excellence of research and teaching in the area of climate and sustainability studies, 2) enable the SDSU faculty to have the capacity

to successfully compete for the interdisciplinary call for interdisciplinary, block, and center funding from federal and other agencies, 3) form a unique regional resource in a critical area, and 4) equip SDSU undergraduate and graduate students to successfully tackle the urgent and challenging climate and sustainability problems faced by human societies at both regional and global scales in the 21st century.

2. Clinical and Cognitive Neuroscience - This proposal builds upon SDSU's strengths in human behavioral neuroscience and clinical neuropsychology, and leverages existing faculty expertise in human neuroscience methods such as neuroimaging, the campus expertise in the application of these methods to clinical populations with brain-based disorders, as well as in neurotypical populations from childhood to old age. The overarching goal of our proposed area of excellence is to address susceptibility to cognitive changes and recovery of function across the lifespan with focus on brain-behavior relations. New area of excellence faculty hires would target cognitive and/or clinical neuroscientists with expertise in neural plasticity, neurocognitive effects of intervention (evidence-based practice) and recovery, and human neurogenetics.

3. Human Dynamics in the Mobile Age - The proposal addresses the opportunities that spring from the convergence of new developments in spatial science, mobile technology, big data, and social behavior research. There is the growing recognition of the importance of spatial and temporal dynamic relationships in explaining processes relevant to human behaviors, public health, and social activities, which has become known as the "spatial turn." A maturing of mobile technology and smart phone devices enables social scientists to collect data on human activities and behavior digitally and to transform their research from qualitative analysis to computational modeling, simulation, and predictions with the focus on dynamic spatial and temporal relationships.

4. Viral Information Institute - The goals of the Viromics Information Institute, "VII", are to study the interactions between the virosphere and the biosphere, in order to understand how viruses affect all aspects of the biosphere and to be able to manipulate such interactions in order to benefit human health as well as the health of the environment. SDSU's VII comprises a unique cross-disciplinary collaborative research collective of investigators across three colleges. The members of the VII institute will continue their commitment to discovery-based

learning, by providing an environment where undergraduates can participate in meaningful independent research projects and by continuing to pursue funding to expand such opportunities.