



Convergence Labs @VCU

Operating Manual

Revised October 2024, December 2024

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Background

VCU has had several faculty focused efforts for advancing transdisciplinary research aimed at addressing persistent societal challenges in the local community while advancing research innovation and impact at scale. One of these efforts included the formation of the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry and Innovation (iCubed) in 2015, with the primary goal of promoting and sustaining transdisciplinary research designed to solve the enduring challenges experienced by urban communities. In order to achieve this goal, iCubed implemented several strategic efforts to recruit diverse faculty, postdoctoral fellows and VCU students to the core research programs. These efforts included the Cluster Hiring Initiative and Program, Visiting Scholars Program, Pathways to the Professoriate and the Commonwealth Scholars Program. All VCU schools and colleges were eligible to submit collaborative concept proposals to promote diversity and inclusion in urban-focused research, creative activity and scholarship, to establish the transdisciplinary cores. Approved proposals informed the interdisciplinary focus for the cluster hiring and visiting scholar initiatives. An initial five transdisciplinary cores were formed based on the 2015 concept proposals and the iCubed hiring initiatives. The call for concept proposals was reissued in 2018. Since 2015 eight iCubed cores have been developed (see Appendix A). In spring 2023, the oversight of iCubed was moved under the Office of the Provost and housed in Faculty Affairs. This also led to a review of the structure and processes of iCubed by the Office of the Provost. It resulted in a separation of the Commonwealth Scholars Program (CSP) and iCubed. The CSP was moved to Academic Affairs and is now merged with the undergraduate research programs/initiatives. iCubed is with Faculty Affairs.

During the 2023-24 academic year, The One VCU Academic Repositioning Task Force put forth recommendations for new structural models to enhance support of transdisciplinary research and collaboration including virtual consortia. The Convergence Labs @VCU stems from these recommendations and it is developed in partnership between the Office of the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, and the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI). Convergence Labs @VCU will be a model for supporting an interdisciplinary collaborative research culture and sustainable infrastructure to encourage research that fosters innovative advancements, cultivates diversity and inclusion while creating experiential learning opportunities for students, and contributes curricular innovations. The review of proposals for new Convergence Labs will follow a standardized process in order to prioritize strategic investments in new Convergence Labs.

¹ Acknowledgments: The initial draft of this manual was shared with Deans, faculty members of the former i-Cubed initiative, and Senior Vice Provosts in the Office of the Provost for comments and suggestions. This revised version (December 2024) of the Operating Manual considers all the comments received. Recommended citation: Abrams, L. and Subramaniam, M. (2024). *Convergence Labs@VCU - Operating Manual*. VCU Office of the Provost - Faculty Affairs internal document. Unpublished.

This document describes the structure, goals, types of faculty membership and roles, and networking activities that are central to the ways in which Convergence Labs is envisioned. The existing 'iCubed cores' will be realigned within the Convergence Labs @VCU as clusters within an overarching area of research. The current iCubed cores will be clusters within two main areas: Convergence Lab @VCU Health Equity and Convergence Lab @VCU Thriving Communities.

I. GOALS

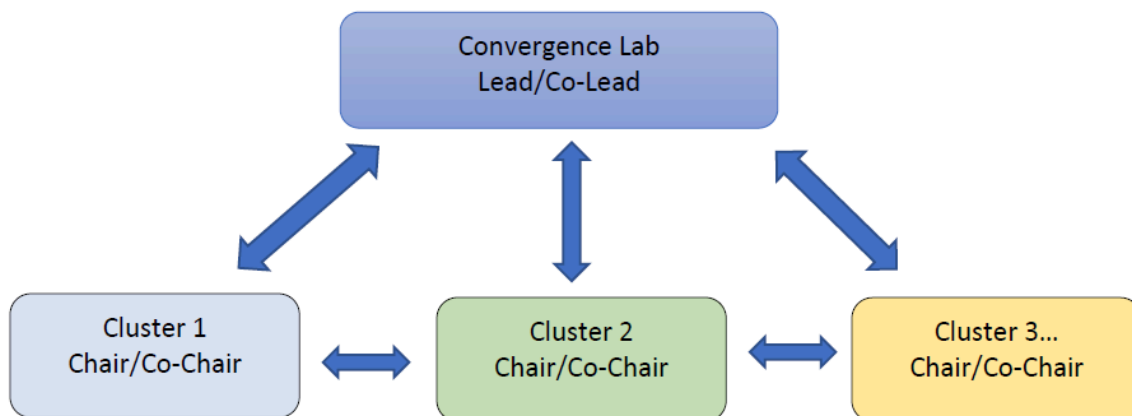
The goals of the Convergence Labs @VCU build and expand on the original mission of iCubed and include the following:

- Promote transdisciplinary research
- Create connections among faculty to develop innovative courses related to topical areas
- Facilitate collaborative teams that can respond to RFPs, collaborate on large-scale grant proposals and projects, and lead center grants by creating synergy around topics
- Increase coherence among efforts across clusters and within various Convergence Labs to address strategic priorities
- Enhance community relationships and partnerships to broaden VCU's local and state impact
- Diversify faculty within clusters to foster inclusion and ensure multiple perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences influence creative methods and inventive solutions to societal problems

II. STRUCTURE

Convergence Labs @VCU is tiered, where each lab houses various clusters representing interrelated topics (see Figure 1). This structure supports efficient communication and nimble approaches to collaboration and team science. Further, the structure encourages innovative and creative collaborations within and across labs that can shape interdisciplinary academic programs, foster innovative student learning and enrichment opportunities, and heighten community impact.

Figure 1. Example of Structure of Convergence Labs @VCU



Transitioning existing iCubed cores into Convergence Labs: Revisioning the current iCubed cores within the Convergence Lab @VCU concept and structure involves the creation of two Convergence Labs with the associated clusters (formerly cores):

- (1) Convergence Lab @VCU - HEALTH EQUITY: Culture, Race and Health; Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan; Oral Health Research in Children and Adolescents; Sustainable Food Access clusters
- (2) Convergence Lab @VCU - THRIVING COMMUNITIES: Family and Community Empowerment; Intersections in the Lives of LGBTQIA+ Communities; Racial Equity in Arts and Culture clusters

New **Convergence Labs @VCU** will be identified in partnership with faculty and will focus on advancing VCU's strategic research and educational priorities. Current priority areas identified by faculty include: (a) AI for the betterment of society, (b) mental health, and (c) environment and sustainability.

Initial brainstorming sessions have been organized for the Convergence Lab @VCU-AI+ and for the Convergence Labs @VCU - Mental Health. The initial brainstorming session for the Convergence Labs @VCU - Mental Health was organized in fall 2024. An additional Convergence Lab - Mental Health session with selected faculty from the Monroe Park and Health Sciences campuses will be organized in early spring.

New faculty-led proposals for Convergence Labs will be considered by the Office of the Provost in partnership with the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, and the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

Leadership Structure: Convergence Labs could be led either by a single faculty leader or by two co-leaders as appropriate. Clusters under a Convergence Lab will operate with a chair or co-chairs. Details are provided below.

III. CONVERGENCE LABS@VCU MEMBERS, ROLES and EXPECTATIONS

Convergence Labs @VCU aims to promote transdisciplinary research and community engaged projects within and across clusters. There are general expectations for all members:

- Collaborate on grants, projects, publications, building or creating new courses/minors within each cluster
- Engage and respond to programmatic communications in a timely manner
- Participate in all requests for feedback and evaluation
- Attend meetings consistently within the cluster and with cluster and lab leadership as required
- Attend Convergence Labs @VCU events, showcases, panels, proposal development sessions, etc.
- Faculty engaged in Convergence Labs may have different roles and responsibilities. They include:
 - Convergence Lab Leads/Co-Leads
 - Cluster Chairs/Co-Chairs
 - Faculty – funded or non-funded (depending on whether the faculty line is funded partly by the Office of the Provost)
 - Community Partners or Associates (non-funded)

A. Convergence Lab Leads/Co-Leads

1. Appointment: All Leads/co-leads hold faculty appointments in their School/College and are appointed by the Office of the Provost to the lab leadership position. Leads must be tenured faculty, preferably full professors with significant research experience in the area as well as working and/or leading collaborative projects. Tenured associate professors may be considered if no qualified full professors are available. Lead/co-leads must have a full (100%) appointment with VCU.

2. Research and collaboration expectations:

- Promote transdisciplinary, team science research and collaboration/s within the lab and clusters to sustain the long-term work of the lab.
- Oversee and/or monitor the submission of grant proposals within and across clusters within the lab and across labs as appropriate.
- Meet with other Convergence Labs @VCU lead and co-leads to promote cross-lab collaborations that are responsive to funding opportunities and academic program needs.
- Engage in outreach efforts to maintain community partner relationships and identify additional community partners and stakeholder groups aligned with the strategic priorities of the lab.

Additional details are available in the Convergence Labs @VCU Operating Manual.

B. Cluster Chairs/Co-chairs

1. Appointment: Cluster chairs and co-chairs hold faculty appointments in their School/College and are appointed by the Office of the Provost in consultation with the Convergence Lab Lead/Co-Lead. Tenure-eligible or non-tenure eligible assistant professors with at least four years of service, associate or full professors are eligible to serve as chairs or co-chairs. Tenure-eligible or non-tenure eligible assistant professors need a statement of support from their department chair and sign off from their dean prior to consideration.

Additional details are available in the Convergence Labs @VCU Operating Manual.

C. Members: Members can include Office of the Provost-funded faculty, affiliated faculty (non-funded members), community partners, associates and students. Cluster members can include VCU faculty who are 100% funded by their School/College and community partners or associates who are not VCU faculty or staff.

D. Student Participation in Convergence Labs: Convergence Labs and clusters are encouraged to involve interested students (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) in their activities as this engagement provides valuable learning experiences and mentored research opportunities.

E. Meeting Expectations of Labs and Clusters: The suggested meeting schedule is designed to support effective communication within and across clusters in a Convergence Lab and ensure bi-directional pathways of communication between clusters and Convergence Lab leads.

- Labs: The entire lab, including all cluster members, meet once a semester or as needed if say responding to a call for proposals.
- Clusters: Expected to hold regular meetings as determined by cluster needs and activities to ensure consistent progress towards goals and project implementation.
- All Convergence Labs@VCU Leads and Co-leads **are encouraged** to meet once a semester to identify areas for potential collaboration.

F. Resources and Strengthening Convergence Labs @VCU

The Office of the Provost will provide guidance, resources, and organize research sessions for the Convergence Labs @VCU. Some offerings may be jointly with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and Government Relations. Additional details are provided in the Convergence Labs @VCU Operating Manual.

G. Proposing New Topics for Convergence Labs @VCU

The Office of the Provost will consider proposals for new Convergence Labs @VCU topics that are aligned with VCU's strategic priorities. The Convergence Labs @VCU model offers a unique lens for transdisciplinary collaboration that integrates interdisciplinary research and curricular areas to provide experiential learning opportunities for students. Proposals will undergo an internal review process by the Office of the Provost in partnership with the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, and the Vice President of Research and Innovation.

A separate internal document provides additional details for Schools/Colleges and for faculty engaged in Convergence Labs.

Convergence Labs @VCU
Office of the Provost
Operating Manual as of March 2024; revised December 2024
(For Internal Use Only)

Prepared by Lisa Abrams and Mangala Subramaniam

The Operating Manual lays out details of responsibilities for the various categories of faculty associated with the Convergence Labs @VCU, the payment structure, and additional guidance.

I. Expectations and Responsibilities

Below are the expectations and processes associated with each role and type of membership with the Convergence Labs @VCU.

A. Convergence Lab Leads/Co-Leads

1. Appointment: Leads/co-leads are appointed by the Office of the Provost and must be tenured faculty, preferably full professors with significant research experience in the area as well as working and/or leading collaborative projects. All lab leads/co-leads will hold faculty appointments within their unit. Tenured associate professors may also be considered if they have skills to lead. Lead/co-leads must have a full (100%) appointment with VCU. Appointments will be renewed on a yearly basis based on assessment of the accomplishments of the lab (vis-à-vis the goals).

The process for the appointment of a Convergence Lab Lead or Co-Lead is as follows. Members of the Convergence Lab (all clusters) will convene to nominate individuals to be the Lead. Convergence Lab members who meet the criteria indicated above can self-nominate or nominate others for the lab lead/co-lead position. A member of the Office of the Provost - Faculty Affairs will attend the meeting as a non-voting, non-participating member to assist with the process. Closed ballot voting will be conducted, and the top three choices will be forwarded to the Provost for consideration and selection of a lead or co-leads.

2. Primary leadership responsibility for Leads/Co-Leads

Convergence Lab Leads/Co-Leads pursue a strategic direction and priorities of the lab ensuring that the goals and efforts of each cluster align with the priorities of the Convergence Lab. Lab leads/co-leads oversee cluster chairs/co-chairs, faculty and members to foster productive collaboration and ensure the achievement of planned outcomes.

3. Administrative and management expectations of Leads/Co-Leads

- Develop the strategic priorities of the lab and ensure cluster goals, activities and outcomes align with the lab's research and curricular priorities.
 - Organize and oversee the submission of grant proposals
 - Guide and support proposals for new curricular offerings intended to create transformative learning opportunities.
 - Engage students in Every Ram's a Researcher initiative through participation in lab and cluster activities.
- Set and adhere to a meeting schedule with cluster chairs and co/chairs; individual clusters and entire lab membership.
- Work with cluster chairs and co-chairs to ensure productive cluster collaboration and address any barriers or challenges to achieving cluster goals and outcomes.

- Lead the preparation and timely submission of Convergence Lab activity reports (e.g., accomplishments). See Appendix C for report content and guidelines.
- Set expectations for clusters related to member contribution and co-authorship in collaboration with each cluster chair/co-chair.
- Facilitate and coordinate the new member enrollment process and keep the Office of the Provost apprised.
- Communicate and consult the Office of the Provost about any potential changes in lab or cluster structures, including departing members, and changes to leadership to seek approval.

4. Letters for Annual Review and P&T

Convergence Lab Lead/Co-Leads are responsible for writing a letter describing a funded faculty member's contributions to the goals and accomplishments of the cluster and lab for inclusion in the lab member's annual review and promotion/tenure documents. This letter will be sent to the department chair and/or dean of the School/College prior to each unit's annual review process. The letters are intended to:

- describe the faculty members' work and contributions specific to the Convergence Lab goals,
- supplement information on the CV,
- serve as artifacts/documentation that is part of the annual and or promotion and tenure review.

As such, the letters are intended to provide additional information that can be considered as part of the review conducted by the department, school and/or college for annual evaluation and/or promotion/tenure.

See Appendix D for guidance.

B. Primary leadership responsibility for Cluster Chairs/Co-Chairs: Cluster chairs/co-chairs lead and manage the day-to-day operations of the cluster. They develop annual cluster goals and objectives in collaboration with the cluster membership to advance research, academic programming and community engagement efforts specific to the cluster focus and in alignment with the lab priorities.

Expectations:

Cluster chairs/co-chairs work with the cluster members to:

- Foster a productive culture of collaboration and ensure the achievement of planned outcomes.
- Lead the curation of cluster-related projects throughout the year.
- Ensure each cluster member has current project expectations and measurable goals. At a minimum, every cluster faculty member should work on at least one project with at least one other cluster member during the academic year.
- Ensure community partner members are appropriately engaged in the development and implementation of cluster projects.
- Report on the progress of cluster activities and annual accomplishments to the lab lead/co-lead.
- Communicate any potential changes to cluster membership or leadership structure to the Convergence Lab lead/co-lead for consultation with and prior approval from the Office of the Provost.

C. New Cluster Affiliated Faculty and Member Enrollment Process:

In consultation with the lab leadership, clusters may seek to add non-funded team members.

Convergence Labs @VCU does not provide an open application for new members, as team members are typically recruited through program opportunity announcements or national searches. However, any added members to cluster must adhere to the following New Member Process:

- Prepare a brief proposal (one page) that provides a rationale for adding a new member.
- Send the proposal and the prospective member's CV to the Convergence Lab Lead. If the proposed new member is a faculty member these materials need to include a letter of support from their department chair and/or dean. The lab lead will consult with the Office of the Provost about the appointment of new cluster members.
- In all communications with the prospective member, please note that: "This opportunity does not carry a guarantee of Convergence Lab funding support."
- This is *not* the process for hiring funded members. This is a standard process that lab leads/co-leads, cluster chairs/co-chairs, and members must follow when new members seek to join. *New members must communicate with the Office of the Provost for approval prior to being officially included into the lab.*

Guidelines:

- The request should reflect a demonstrated programmatic need within the cluster.
- The new member's expertise and contributions should complement that of existing cluster members.
- New members should enhance the Convergence Lab's overall transdisciplinarity.
- New members should augment the capabilities, capacity, and skillset of the lab and respective cluster.
- Cluster leadership and members must have the capacity to engage and guide the new member in a meaningful way within the established leadership structure.

II. Payments: Leads, Chairs, Funded Faculty

A. Lead, Co-Lead & Cluster Chair, Co-Chair Payments

The role of Convergence Lab Leads or Co-Leads and Cluster Chairs or Co-Chairs will be treated as secondary assignments. Leads will receive \$6000/year; if labs are of a size requiring a co-lead, the co-lead will receive \$3000. Each cluster chair will receive \$3000/year; if the clusters are of a size requiring a co-chairs, each co-chair will receive \$1500/year. Units are not expected to provide additional compensation to lab leads/co-leads or cluster chairs/co-chairs (e.g., teaching releases). All compensation for the leadership roles will be from the Office of the Provost as secondary assignments.

B. Funded Faculty in Convergence Lab @VCU

Appointment:

- Convergence Lab Faculty are faculty lines funded by the Office of the Provost and their respective School/College.
- Faculty lines (MP Campus) belong to the Office of the Provost. If a Convergence Lab faculty member leaves VCU, the faculty line will return to the Office of the Provost.
- All Convergence Lab funded faculty have a department/unit home and will be included in the annual review process and/or tenure and promotion process of their unit home.

Convergence Lab funded faculty hired with a joint appointment must have a primary department/unit home which will be documented in a MOU between the units.²

- All faculty funded by the Office of the Provost are expected to adhere to their unit workload guidelines and expectations in alignment with their effort appointment.
- Any changes or alterations in faculty appointments or teaching loads cannot be made without the prior approval of the Office of the Provost. This also applies to Convergence Labs @VCU Leads/Co-Leads and Cluster Chairs/Co-Chairs who are funded by the Office of the Provost.
- The Office of the Provost provides salary support for up to 75% for some Convergence Lab faculty for up to 6 years. The School/College will provide the remaining 25% of the faculty salary as well as any additional increases.
- Reviews are required every 3 years to inform decisions about continued funding by the Office of the Provost and, if appropriate, determine the timeline for reverting funding to the unit and/or any bridge funding based on the potential for continued productivity and contribution of the faculty member. These decisions will involve discussions between the Office of the Provost, the Dean of the School/College, and the Convergence Lab Lead/Co-Lead as applicable.
- If a funded faculty member leaves the University within the period that funding is provided by the Office of the Provost, the line will return to the Office of the Provost to be re-assigned. If the faculty member leaves the University after the period of funding from the Office of the Provost ends, then the Dean of the School/College will need to request approval from the Office of the Provost to fill the line.
- Salary support/funding for cluster hires for Convergence Labs with two options are detailed in a separate cluster hires document.

Funded faculty apportionments: Some faculty (from the previous i-Cubed model) in the Convergence Labs @VCU are funded by the Office of the Provost to the extent of 75%. The remaining 25% is supported by their School/College. Funded Convergence Lab faculty have a standard teaching load of one 3-credit course per semester, or 1:1, assuming that they remain productive in research and contributions to the overall Convergence Lab mission. The specific faculty workload will be determined as part of the faculty annual review process by the department chair and/or dean with input from Convergence Lab leadership. Any change in teaching load will need the approval of the Office of the Provost.

Continued funding: Continued funding for Convergence Lab faculty is dependent on their contributions to cluster goals, activities and outcomes; research and scholarly productivity³; and department chair annual evaluations. If cluster faculty members are not meeting their unit's expectations for research, they will work closely with the cluster chair, Convergence Lab lead and department chair to develop a feasible action plan to be productive. If contributions and productivity do not improve following implementation of the action plan, continued funding is not guaranteed.

C. Payment Process: Payments for leads, co-leads, cluster chairs, cluster co-chairs and funded faculty will be made each April.

- At the beginning of March, a detailed list of payees (Leads, Chairs, funded faculty) will be generated by Finance in Academic Operations (AO) and shared with Faculty Affairs.

² The Office of the Provost is developing a template for jointly appointed faculty at VCU.

³ Research and scholarly productivity is defined as the outputs of research effort such as published articles, submitted grant applications, grant awards, creative work, or other evidence of research effort as determined by unit-level annual review expectations and/or unit-level promotion/tenure guidelines.

- The list will be verified and confirmed to AO.
- Payments will be routed in April.

III. Resources to Support Lab Leads and Cluster Chairs

Resources are available to support the Convergence Labs @VCU Leads/Co-Lead and Cluster Chairs/Co-Chairs in the implementation of their responsibilities. For example:

- Support for leading, managing and fostering productive collaborative cultures and relationships.
- Guidance and consultation for developing lab and cluster goals, both short and long-term, as well as aligning strategic priorities and related efforts across clusters.
- Guidance for leads on how to write annual letters for cluster faculty members.
- Administrative assistance to support the scheduling of meetings and communications for the labs.
- OVPRI resources for developing and submitting large-scale proposals.
- Administrative support for convening Convergence Labs meetings etc. will be provided from Faculty Affairs, Office of the Provost.

IV. Strengthening and Sustaining Network of Convergence Labs @VCU

The Office of the Provost will continue to bolster the transdisciplinary research collaboration among the Convergence Labs and clusters by:

1. Providing seed money to initiate projects, conduct preliminary research, or provide bridge funding across grant-funded projects.
2. Facilitate presentations by Convergence Lab faculty presentations each year at a Faculty Club event.
3. Promote a brown bag series highlighting the research and academic contributions of the Convergence Labs especially those creating innovative learning experiences for students and community impact.
4. Develop a website curated through the collaboration among the Office of the Provost, Government Relations and OVPRI to highlight the Convergence Labs@VCU and aligned clusters and identify funding opportunities and resources.

Appendix A
iCubed Cores and Transdisciplinary Focus

iCubed Core	Vision¹	# of Members³	Website
Culture, Race and Health ²	The Culture, Race and Health Transdisciplinary Core addresses how culture and race/ethnicity impact health and overall well-being. Populations of particular focus include Black, Latinx, and multi-racial communities, and citizens of the Greater Health District, Richmond, and communities in need across Virginia. Our work is focused on informing and developing interventions to promote health equity. Environmental and social factors, along with cultural beliefs and experiences, influence how health and illness are faced and how health services are accessed and received. This core engages in collaborative team science to understand the mechanisms underlying health disparities and also develop culturally informed interventions that are acceptable to community members and likely to reduce or prevent health disparities; thus, promoting health equity.	6	Culture, race and health — VCU iCubed
Disrupting Criminalization in Education	Disbanded in 2023	NA	Disrupting Criminalization in Education — VCU iCubed
Education Equity and Excellence ² (now Family and Community Empowerment)	<p>The Urban Education and Family Core is a transdisciplinary community of scholars who seek to empower Black and Latine learners and their families to help them attain educational excellence and equity. Utilizing an ecological, participatory, and holistic strategy, the core seeks to empower and develop community leaders, address access gaps through policy, and improve community wellbeing through a model of family and community engagement.</p> <p>The core will create an Urban Education and Family Institute that will serve as a hub and catalyst for equity and excellence for Black and Latine learners. This institute will be unique because of its transdisciplinary partnership with the School of Education, College of Humanities & Sciences, and the School of Social Work.</p>	8	Urban Education and Family — VCU iCubed
Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan ²	The Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan Transdisciplinary Core addresses problems of older and disabled adults “aging in place” within low-income senior housing apartment buildings and surrounding neighborhoods in	20	Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan — VCU iCubed

	<p>urban Richmond, Virginia. Many of the issues impacting the health and welfare of this primarily African-American population are related to social determinants of health and health disparities. This core focuses on the development of an interprofessional education and collaborative care practice model providing enhanced care coordination, education, medication and chronic disease counseling within senior apartment buildings in Richmond.</p>		
<p>Intersections in the Lives of LGBTQIA+ Communities</p>	<p>The Intersections in the Lives of LGBTQIA+ Communities Transdisciplinary Core promotes empowerment, inclusion, and equity for LGBTQIA+ people with multiple marginalized identities in Richmond, Virginia. Based on a dual-pronged approach that elucidates experiences and effects of discrimination while also highlighting resilience and resistance, we frame our work according to four “i”s:</p> <p>Injustice: Recognizing the reality of discrimination Involvement: Emphasizing identification with communities and activism Imagination: Underscoring the way LGBTQIA+ people with other marginalized identities help all of us to reimagine ways of creating/enacting relationships, commitments, and families Instigation: Focusing on efforts to bring about social change</p>	9	<p>Intersections in the Lives of LGBTQIA+ Communities — VCU iCubed</p>
<p>Oral Health Research in Children and Adolescents²</p>	<p>The Oral Health Core seeks to identify and remove the educational, political, psychological, social, and nutritional barriers to the prevention and treatment of dental disease in the Richmond Region. This transdisciplinary core promotes teamwork toward innovative solutions for improving oral and overall health outcomes for children and adolescents. This core also provides a rich environment for the recruitment and engagement of diverse and underrepresented faculty and students to work and learn through solving oral health problems that disproportionately affect underserved populations.</p>	9	<p>Oral health — VCU iCubed</p>
<p>Racial Equity in Arts and Culture²</p>	<p>The Racial Equity, Arts and Culture Transdisciplinary Core functions as a collaborative network grounded in the principles of anti-racist cultural organizing and with a commitment to student-centered, community-led projects and ideas. The team’s work advances equitable access in opportunities (e.g., educational, financial, professional, etc.) among artists, cultural producers and organizations, and creates</p>	5	<p>Racial Equity, Arts and Culture — VCU iCubed</p>

	opportunities for the public to engage in arts and cultural activities that they have reason to value and/or that has potential to create social change.		
Sustainable Food Access	The Sustainable Food Access Transdisciplinary Core addresses the food desert problem through 'smart city' research, which embeds advances in technology and data collection into the infrastructures of urban environments. Through converging research, the core examines the conceptual relationship between governance, urban food, communities, technology, and social innovation. This core will also work collaboratively with other iCubed cores, such as The Oral Health in Childhood and Adolescence Transdisciplinary Core, since food access and related health problems disproportionately affect underserved populations.	10	Sustainable Food Access — VCU iCubed

1. Descriptions taken verbatim from the 2023 fall membership spreadsheet.
2. Initial iCubed transdisciplinary core
3. Based on fall 2023 membership spreadsheet

Appendix B

Convergence Labs@VCU Information and Guidance for Deans

The following details will be shared with Deans.

GOALS: Convergence Labs @VCU are designed to promote transdisciplinary research in ways that are flexible, efficient, and responsive to collaboration research opportunities and address community needs. The labs are designed to:

- Promote transdisciplinary research
- Create connections among faculty to develop innovative courses related to topical areas
- Facilitate collaborative teams that can respond to RFPs, collaborate on large-scale grant proposals and projects, and lead center grants, and create synergy around topics
- Increase coherence among efforts across clusters and within various Convergence Labs to address strategic priorities
- Enhance community relationships and partnerships to broaden VCU's local and state impact
- Diversify faculty within clusters to foster inclusion and ensure multiple perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences influence creative methods and inventive solutions to societal problems

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT: There are a number of ways faculty can engage in the work of a Convergence Lab and specific clusters focused on topics related to their expertise. The following provides guidance and expectations regarding the different types of faculty appointments

Funded Faculty in Convergence Lab @VCU

Appointments:

- Convergence Lab Faculty are funded faculty members hired by the Office of the Provost and their respective school/unit.
- **Faculty lines belong to the Office of the Provost.** If a Convergence Lab faculty member (MP campus) leaves, the faculty line will return to the Office of the Provost.
- All Convergence Lab funded faculty have a department/unit home and complete the annual review and the promotion/tenure process as determined by their home unit.
- Convergence Lab funded faculty hired with a joint appointment must have a primary department/unit home which will be documented in a MOU between the units.⁴
- Any changes or alterations in funded faculty appointments cannot be completed without prior approval of the Office of the Provost.

Funding and Effort Allocation: The Office of the Provost funds 75% of cluster faculty salary and the remaining 25% is supported by their School/College (specifically the former i-Cubed faculty).

- Funded cluster faculty have a standard teaching load of 1:1.
- Any changes to a faculty member's teaching load will need to be approved by the Office of the Provost.
- Research and scholarly products and disseminations activities should be commensurate with the research effort apportionment and aligned to unit expectations.

⁴ The Office of the Provost is developing a MOU template for jointly appointed Convergence Labs @VCU faculty.

- Continued funding is dependent upon faculty contributions to the cluster and Convergence Lab and productivity.
- As noted above, the Office of the Provost provides salary supportLab faculty for up to 6 years. The School/College will provide the remaining 25% of the faculty salary as well as any additional increases.
- Reviews are required every 3 years to inform decisions about continued funding by the Office of the Provost and, if appropriate, determine the timeline for reverting funding to the unit and/or any bridge funding based on the potential for continued productivity and contribution of the faculty member. These decisions will involve discussions between the Office of the Provost, the Dean of the School/College, and the Convergence Lab Lead/Co-Lead as applicable.
- If a funded faculty member leaves the University within the period that funding is provided by the Office of the Provost, the line will return to the Office of the Provost to be re-assigned. If the faculty member leaves the University after the period of funding from the Office of the Provost ends, then the Dean of the School/College will need to request approval from the Office of the Provost to fill the line.
- Salary support/funding for cluster hires for Convergence Labs with two options are detailed in a separate cluster hires document.

Affiliated Cluster Faculty:

- Are non-funded faculty members of the clusters.
- Processes for enrollment of affiliated cluster faculty are initiated by the cluster to enhance complementary expertise to achieve the cluster goals and outcomes.
- Require the submission of a proposal by the cluster chair/co-chair accompanied by a letter of support from the department chair and the faculty member's CV through the Convergence Lab Lead/Co-Lead to the Office of the Provost. Affiliated cluster appointments are made in consultation and with prior approval of the Office of the Provost.
- Affiliated faculty designations do not alter the baseline expectations for effort apportionment for teaching, research, and service as determined by their unit's guidelines.

Leadership Roles: Faculty who assume leadership roles within the Convergence Lab as Leads or Co-Leads or within clusters as chairs or co-chairs receive a salary supplement in recognition of these additional duties. These supplements are in the form of secondary assignments and are NOT part of the faculty member's base salary. Once a faculty member no longer serves in a leadership role, the salary supplement will be discontinued. Faculty who co-lead or co-chair will split the administrative supplement evenly.

Appendix C Convergence Labs@VCU Annual Reporting Guidelines

Each Convergence Labs@VCU lead/co-lead is responsible for submitting an annual report of the lab's accomplishments during the academic year and are **due by May 30th** to the Office of the Provost.

The Accomplishments Report should provide the following information:

1. Research & Discovery

Summary of research contributions (maximum 2,000 words)

1a. Published Work (indicate first author as *; otherwise equal authorship; Underline names of student authors).

In separate sections include refereed (peer reviewed) articles, non-refereed articles, articles in conference proceedings, book chapters, book review essays, books, other publications (such as encyclopedia articles, working paper series contributions). Do not include unpublished articles or articles or book manuscripts under review.

1b. Unpublished Works: Include articles or book manuscripts submitted and under review, revise and resubmits.

1c. Publication Procedures in Discipline and Ranking of Publications: Indicate range of impact factor of journals in which published, and ranking within topical areas of a discipline often referred to as specialty journals. Note that journal rankings are based on the two-year impact factor and are usually listed on the journal website. The website may also include the current year, 2-year, 5-year impact factor. There are some journals without an impact factor.

Example Format:

Journals & Rankings	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor
Journal Name 1 Ranking: Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary 15 out of 95	3.300	2.595
Journal Name 2 Ranking: Sociology 62 out of 142	1.200	1.164
Journal Name 3 Ranking: Criminology 32 out of 55	2.250	1.900

Continue to list all journals with impact factor, or other indicators of impact as relevant to your discipline. May include a citation account.

1d. Works in Preparation: Include a section of what work the Convergence Lab has planned or anticipated beyond what has been published this year.

2. Exhibition of Creative Work

2a. Presentations of Research Results at Academic Conferences

List Invited presentations and panel participation in separate sections. Indicate first authors with * and indicate equal authorship. Underline names of student authors.

2b. List Symposia, Conferences, Panels Organized

2c. Commercialization (Patents)

2d. Creative Works including exhibits

3. Research Grants and Awards (list study title, Funding Agency, Amount, years, Name/s of PI/s, Co-PIs, students – graduate and undergraduate, postdocs).

- Indicate collaborators outside VCU
- Indicate funding status: submitted/under review; submitted/not funded; awarded; continuing

4. Teaching-Related Activities

4a. Describe any work that created or contributed to experiential learning opportunities for students and increased engagement with Every Ram's a Researcher. Example engagement might include but is not limited to Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP), service learning, Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

4b. In what ways did the lab activities contribute to teaching and curricular innovation? Consider the different dimensions of teaching such as: course design and development, pedagogical/curriculum innovation, collaboration and mentorship, and student learning experiences via community engagement, stackable credentials and certificates, adult learning training, online offerings etc.

5. Current Work

5a. Describe ongoing work that can be linked to manuscripts in progress (above)

5b. Describe specific projects in progress

Appendix D

Guidance for Letters from Lead/Co-Lead for Assistant and Associate Professors Annual Reviews and P&T

Convergence Labs@VCU Leads and co-leads are expected to write a letter for all funded assistant and associate professors in the lab they can include in their annual evaluation and promotion/tenure materials. The purpose of the letter is to acknowledge the faculty member's work and assess productivity and contributions to the goals of the Convergence Lab. Note that this letter must focus on Convergence Lab related activities only.

Letters should be no more than 2 single spaced pages with standard margins and font size of no less than 11 point.

Letters can include the **faculty members' contributions** to the following areas as applicable:

Scholarship⁵:

- Published work
- Unpublished work
- Works in preparation

Exhibition of Creative Work:

- Presentations at academic conferences
- Symposia, conferences, panels
- Commercialization
- Creative work & exhibits

Teaching-Related Activities:

- Experiential learning opportunities for students through lab activities and/or community engagement
- Contributions to the curriculum
 - Course design and development
 - Pedagogical/curriculum innovation
- Collaboration & Mentorship

Research Grants & Awards:

- Contributions and role (e.g., PI, Co-PI, Investigator, Key Personnel) in grant submissions
- Contributions and role (e.g., PI, Co-PI, Investigator, Key Personnel) in implementation of awarded grants

⁵ Includes community-engaged research.