



Research Chairs Program Policy

Jan 21, 2008¹

Purpose:

The Chairs Program is a cornerstone of SHARCNET's mission. Its goals are to enhance research requiring high performance computing (HPC), to build a community of expertise in HPC amongst its partners and to attract world-class researchers. The program provides bridge salary funding for tenure-track faculty positions for up to two years. SHARCNET Research Chairs are expected to enhance research using HPC and to promote interdisciplinary studies and interactions among departments and partner institutions. The program is intended to attract new recruits to a department or faculty rather than supporting an existing faculty member.

Policy:

1. Funding for the Chairs program will be allocated within the financial means of SHARCNET as part of the Board approved annual operating budget.
2. Allocation of Chairs
 - a. The nomination and approval of SHARCNET Research Chairs shall be a competitive process.
 - b. Chair positions will be for the establishment of academic appointments that will advance SHARCNET's goals and objectives.
 - c. Allocations of these positions will be made to institutions based on proposals submitted to the SHARCNET Board, as a result of a formal call for proposals. The positions will be approved by the SHARCNET Board based on the recommendations of the Chairs Selection Committee.
 - d. A Chair position will be attached to a Faculty, School, Department or Centre from within the SHARCNET member institutions as identified in the operating agreement.
 - e. SHARCNET will entertain applications for joint appointments between institutions.
 - f. The SHARCNET Board reserves the right to reallocate funding for Chair positions if the positions are not filled expeditiously.
3. Selection Criteria

All Chair nominations will be expected to have the following characteristics:

- a. the nominee will undertake, or has the potential and expectation of undertaking, outstanding research
- b. the research interests will be highly appropriate to the goals and objectives of SHARCNET as defined in the call for proposals
- c. the Chair position will enhance the activity of the academic unit at the institution in the area of high-performance computing

¹ This policy and the attached guidelines apply to the current Chairs call and may be amended for future rounds.

- d. the nominee has the potential to develop inter-institutional activity in the area of HPC among the SHARCNET partners
 - e. it is expected that the nominee will be a new recruit as a result of the Chair allocation and not already hold a tenured or tenure-stream position at a SHARCNET institution nor be recruited as the result of a process already in place prior to, or independent of, a Chair allocation.
 - f. it is expected that the nominee will hold a full time tenured or tenure-track academic appointment at the SHARCNET member institution.
4. The incumbents holding these positions will be designated as **SHARCNET Research Chairs**.
5. SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee
 - a. A selection committee will be formed to review nominations and make a final ruling on the suitability of a candidate for a SHARCNET Research Chair position.
 - b. The committee will ensure that the identified candidates meet the agreed upon criteria.
6. All SHARCNET Research Chairs established under this policy will follow guidelines and procedures which will be reviewed and approved by the Board prior to each competition.
7. Award Notification and Acceptance
 - a. The SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee will inform the member institution of the decision regarding the nomination on behalf of the SHARCNET Board.
 - b. The nominating institution will negotiate the final contract details with the nominee as soon as possible prior to acceptance of the award.
8. Appeals
 - a. In the case of a negative decision from the SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee, the nominating institution has the right to appeal the decision to the SHARCNET Board of Directors.
 - b. In this eventuality the Selection Committee will forward written reasons for the negative decision to the proposing institution and the SHARCNET Board.
 - c. The proposing institution may then make a written appeal to the Board specifically addressing the points identified in the report of the Selection Committee.



SHARCNET Research Chairs Program Guidelines and Procedures

Jan 21, 2008

Establishment of Chair Positions:

SHARCNET will issue a call for proposals to its member institutions to establish SHARCNET Research Chairs, which are in-line with SHARCNET's goals and objectives and in accordance with the Board Policy entitled "SHARCNET Research Chairs Program".

Proposals should describe how such positions will bring research excellence and HPC expertise to the SHARCNET community.

Proposals will be reviewed by the SHARCNET Board which will determine whether the proposals fit within SHARCNET's overall objectives. The total number of SHARCNET Chairs and the duration of the funding will be determined by the final budgetary resources within SHARCNET. The expectation for this round is that SHARCNET will fund ~6 years of faculty support within a total budget envelope of \$420,000 (nominally three, two-year Chairs).

Call for Proposals:

A Call for Proposals will be issued by SHARCNET with a deadline of July 1st, 2008. Proposals must have the support and approval of the appropriate institutional authority (usually a faculty dean) and multiple proposals from a given SHARCNET institution must be presented as a coordinated submission together with an internal ranking. To build on the former Chairs Programs and to align with SHARCNET's strategic objectives, the SHARCNET Board has agreed that proposals will only be considered that satisfy at least one of the following two categories:

- Proposals to bring HPC strength to disciplines not already well represented in SHARCNET (e.g. candidates from the Humanities or those who have potential to drive significant new interdisciplinary linkages with under-represented disciplines); or
- Proposals that are targeted towards tools and techniques that will build expertise in the SHARCNET community, e.g.
 - Parallel programming languages
 - Parallel symbolic computation
 - Advanced visualization
 - Collaborative technologies; the Human-Computer Interface as related to HPC
 - HPC architecture, design and engineering

In the latter category, we are explicitly seeking developers and innovators in HPC architecture, tools, techniques and methodology rather than merely sophisticated end users of these same components. Institutions should clearly identify how their proposal will attempt to meet these strategic goals.

Allocation of Chair Positions:

Following a call for proposals, the SHARCNET Board will allocate Chair positions to the institutions to initiate recruitment efforts. Proposals should consist of the following:

- A proposal of no more than 4 pages in length that addresses the criteria listed below. Any cover letter should be included in the four page limit. Longer applications will not be considered.
- A statement signed by an appropriate institutional authority indicating that the proposal is eligible in terms of the restrictions on existing positions or hires as described next and that the associated position will be a regular full-time tenured or tenure-track appointment.

Recommendations for chair allocations will be made by the Chairs Selection Committee on a competitive basis from amongst the proposals received. To be considered all proposals must:

- Clearly demonstrate a clear incremental benefit to SHARCNET resulting from its investment of a Chair. If this cannot be demonstrated the proposal will not be considered. Specifically note the following:
 - The impact on, use of and need for high-performance computing at SHARCNET and not just the need for, impact on or use of computing must be clearly demonstrated.
 - Requests for chairs for faculty who have joined, or are about to join, an institution or requests for chairs to augment a hiring process that is already advertised or in progress are ineligible. Institutions must sign a statement in their application package that affirms conformance to these conditions.
- Justify why SHARCNET should fund the position at the proposing institution. This could include its relevance to the institutional Strategic Plan and/or its ability to leverage other initiatives at the institution.

Proposals that satisfy the above conditions will be judged using the following criteria. Proposals will be scored primarily on the first two criteria.

- The clarity, strength and vision of the scientific basis underlying the proposed research. Whilst it is recognized that institutions will always attempt to hire excellent people and that finding candidates to fit precise research areas is challenging, the proposals must articulate a clear and compelling vision for what the institution hopes to achieve in making the hire.
- Fit within SHARCNET's strategic objectives as indicated above and in the Call for Proposals. The ability to meet the requirements of either or both of the categories listed in the previous section will be critically important this round.
- Ability to develop new HPC-related methodologies or tools that will benefit the wider SHARCNET community or by forging inter-institutional and/or inter-disciplinary linkages within SHARCNET that will support its mission.

Following approval of a proposal and allocation of a chair, it is expected that each institution will proceed with its normal academic practice for the recruitment of faculty/chair positions.

In the case of a negative decision from the SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee, the proposing institution may request written reasons from the chair of the Chairs Selection Committee. If the reasons given are deemed insufficient, the proposing institution may then make a written appeal to the Board. It is worth emphasizing that a very limited number of chairs is available and that these are awarded on a competitive basis to proposals that the Selection Committee judges will best benefit SHARCNET: there should be no expectation of an institutional "share" of the awards.

Selection of Individual Candidates for Designated Chair Positions:

Once a suitable candidate has been identified, the institution will submit its recommendation and nomination to the SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee, for final approval of SHARCNET funding support. The nomination package for a candidate will include:

- the details of the search conducted for the Chair position including a copy of the advertisement used
- a statement of how the research interests and HPC experience of the nominee will advance the aims and objectives of SHARCNET as outlined in the call for proposals
- the CV of the nominee
- letters of recommendation
- information regarding start-up grants and support from the institution
- evidence of decanal support for the position
- a letter of support from the appropriate academic official of the institution

The SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee will review nominations and make a ruling on the suitability of a candidate for a SHARCNET Research Chair position. All Chair nominations will be expected to have the following characteristics:

- the nominee is, or has the potential and expectation of, undertaking outstanding research.
- the research interests will be highly appropriate to the goals and objectives of SHARCNET as defined in the call for proposals
- the Chair position will enhance the activity of the academic unit at the institution in the area of high-performance computing
- the Chair has the potential to develop inter-institutional activity in the area of HPC among the SHARCNET partners

The Committee will respond to the nominating institution as quickly as possible, so that recruitment may proceed expeditiously, and certainly within three weeks.

Acceptance of candidates:

The SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee will inform the member institution of the decision regarding the nomination. If accepted, the nominating institution will then be expected to negotiate the final contract details with the nominee as soon as possible. In the case of a negative decision from the SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee, the nominating institution has the right to appeal the decision to the SHARCNET Board of Directors. In this eventuality the Selection Committee will forward written reasons for the negative decision to the nominating institution and the SHARCNET Board. The nominating institution may then make a written appeal to the Board specifically addressing the points identified in the report of the Selection Committee.

Guidelines to the Policy for Research Chair Positions:

- The bridge funding from SHARCNET for a Chair position will be \$70,000/year to defray the salary and benefits of the incumbent.
- SHARCNET will not make any contribution to the research operating costs of the Chair nor will SHARCNET pay any indirect costs to the institution arising from the Chair appointment, including recruitment costs.
- The Chair appointment must be a full-time, tenured or tenure-track position.

- Advertising should identify the position as a SHARCNET Research Chair[#].
- Chairs will be funded by SHARCNET on a term basis, for a period of up to two years, not to extend beyond July 31, 2011.
- The Chair must provide an annual report on activities to SHARCNET Management. The Academic unit will provide quarterly reporting of the SHARCNET bridge funding, in accordance with regular grant reporting for SHARCNET.
- If SHARCNET Management determines that the research activity as reported in the annual summary of the Chair is not consistent with the original nomination or with the goals of SHARCNET, then they may recommend to the Board that funding for the Chair be discontinued.

SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee:

Mandate: The Committee is responsible for making the final determination of the suitability of candidates recommended for SHARCNET Research Chair positions.

Membership: The SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee shall consist of at least one full-time faculty member from each of at least eight partner institutions, along with the Scientific Director, who will Chair the committee. The committee is constituted so that the major areas of SHARCNET supported research are represented. To achieve this, a number of potential members are nominated from amongst the senior, HPC-knowledgeable faculty from each partner institution, in consultation with the Site Leader and institutional Board member. The committee is selected from the list of nominated candidates, and is submitted to the Board for comment, modification and eventual approval. Appointments to the SHARCNET Chairs Selection Committee are for one year, with the possibility of renewal, for a maximum of two terms.

Terms of Reference: The Committee will examine proposals for Chair allocations and, at the second stage, the suitability of candidates nominated by member institutions for the allocated Chair(s). At each stage the respective criteria listed above will be used. For particular cases, the Committee may seek additional expertise to properly evaluate nominations. A committee member may not judge a nomination in the case of a conflict of interest. Such conflicts include: if the proposal/nomination concerns a chair at her/his institution; if the nominee is a former student; if the nominee is a collaborator; or if there is a close personal or other professional relationship.

[#]SHARCNET may enter into discussions with the institutions about placing a joint advertisement for several SHARCNET Research Chairs. This may raise the profile of the positions and facilitate recruiting the very best candidates.