

Building and Managing a Multidisciplinary Materials Research  
Science and Engineering Center at the University of Alabama

David E. Nikles  
Department of Chemistry and  
Center for Materials for Information Technology  
The University of Alabama

The Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers program the Division of Materials Science at the National Science Foundation supports multidisciplinary university research centers to pursue cutting edge materials research and conduct education and outreach programs. From 1994 to 2008 the Center for Materials for Information Technology at the University of Alabama won three consecutive MREC competitions. The MRSEC supported basic research in the materials underpinning magnetic recording science and technology. The Center was divided into two different interdisciplinary research groups IRG-1 Materials for Recording Heads and IRG-2 Materials for Recording Media. This presentation will describe the genesis of the Center, including team building, preparation of pre-proposals and full proposals and reverse site visits. The management of the highly diverse research teams of faculty, visiting faculty, post docs, graduate students, undergraduate research assistants, high school students and high school teachers will be discussed. The theme of the presentation is lessons learned. The program solicitation for the next MRSEC competition will begin in 2016. Now is the time for identifying teams of faculty in anticipation of submitting a pre-proposal in the fall of 2016.