



Policies and Guidelines Related To Multidisciplinary Centers and Institutes

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is to set forth policies and guidelines to govern the creation, modification, termination and reporting relationships of centers and institutes that are not graduate centers or mandated centers.

II. Organizational Structure

A. Basic Organization

The basic organization of the educational units of the University shall be departments, schools, colleges, graduate centers, and multidisciplinary research centers and institutes. The University currently recognizes three types of centers and institutes: graduate centers, mandated centers and institutes, and multidisciplinary centers/institutes that are primarily research in nature. Multidisciplinary centers/institutes may also have a clinical and/or service role.

1. A mandated center or institute performs a function that the Commonwealth or federal government has specifically requested that the University manage.
2. A multidisciplinary research center/institute is an educational unit established for the administration of multidisciplinary programs that are primarily research in nature. (GR VII-A.1) The chief administrative officer of a multidisciplinary center/institute is a director. (GR VII-A.1)

3. A graduate center is an educational unit of an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature, which is equivalent to a department and is located administratively in The Graduate School. These graduate centers are associated with graduate programs and their attendant courses and research. (GR VII-A.1) Its faculty have primary appointments within a college, or in some cases within the graduate center. Graduate center directors shall report to the Dean of The Graduate School, who in turn reports to the Provost. Academic programs and courses are approved, dropped, suspended, or terminated in accordance with University and Council on Postsecondary Education policies.

B. Types of Centers

Although the University currently recognizes three types of centers and institutes, it may be possible for centers and institutes to perform functions that embrace more than one of these three categories. In those cases, the reporting relationship will be in accordance with the defined function.

1. In cases where a center/institute has a graduate degree program, the center/institute will report as defined for a graduate center.
2. In cases where a center/institute has a mandated function as well as other functions such as multidisciplinary research but excluding a graduate degree program, the center/institute will report as defined for a mandated center.
3. In cases where a multidisciplinary center/institute also has a clinical and/or other service functions, the center/institute will report and be handled as a multidisciplinary center/institute as described in this AR.

III. Creation of New Centers / Institutes

There are many mechanisms that bring faculty together in informal working groups with a research focus. Some of these working groups are in response to national initiatives; some grow out of campus initiatives; and still others result simply from the broad interaction among faculty that characterizes a great, research-oriented university. These working groups often interact for a period of time in which they discuss mutual interests and seek funds that will enable them to test the feasibility of their multidisciplinary interests. As the discussion proceeds and the group decides on a particular focus, it may become desirable to organize the working group formally as a center/institute.

During these formative stages and particularly as working groups respond to funding initiatives, it may be desirable to use the terminology “center” or “institute” as the title for a working group submitting a particular proposal. In these situations, the working group should inform and seek approval for this tentative use of the “center” or “institute” title from appropriate chairs and deans. This tentative use of the center/institute title is designed to give faculty flexibility in the early stages of the development of a center/institute. If funding is secured from internal and/or external sources, the working group is required to begin the formal approval process, described in this AR.

The deans, Provost and the Vice President for Research have a role to play in the successful development of research programs in general and multidisciplinary activities specifically. The sections that follow provide the overarching principles that guide the development and establishment of a center/institute, provide the mechanism for formally creating a center/institute, define the reporting relationships within and external to the center/institute, and define the procedure for terminating a center/institute.

- A. It is appropriate, at all stages of the discussions that may lead to centers/institutes, for faculty to keep their chairs, deans, and other administrators apprised of their activities. Such notification need not be formal but is meant to keep all parties well informed on the progress of any discussion that might directly or indirectly impact faculty time and effort.

- B. Multidisciplinary centers/institutes shall be established and administered in a way that maximizes their flexibility to respond to new research priorities and their ability to maintain academic integrity.

IV. Approval Procedures for Creating a Center / Institute

- A. When discussions among faculty and/or administrators reach a level where there is agreement to proceed with the creation of a center/institute, the faculty and/or administrators should prepare a proposal that addresses the topics in Section V of this AR.
- B. When the proposal has been finalized, the evaluation process described in Section V of this AR should be followed. Depending on the reporting relationships of the center/institute, the evaluation process will require the following approvals.
1. Centers/institutes within a college. Recommended by appropriate chairs, recommended by the dean of the college, and recommended by the Provost to the President. If the President supports the recommendation, the President will submit it to the Board of Trustees for action. The Provost will consult with the Vice President for Research as part of the approval process.
 2. Centers/institutes among colleges. Recommended by appropriate deans and the Vice President for Research to the Provost, who makes a final recommendation to the President. . If the President supports the recommendation, the President will submit it to Board of Trustees for action.

V. Proposal Preparation and Evaluation

- A. Proposal Format. A proposal for a new center/institute will contain the following information:
1. Goals and significance of proposed center/institute. The proposal should have a concise summary of what the center/institute hopes to achieve and why this activity is important.
 2. Justification for creating a center/institute. The proposal should delineate the advantages of working together under the auspices of a “center/institute” rather than a “working group” or some other title.
 3. Faculty leadership. No center/institute will succeed without the committed leadership of the faculty. The proposal should indicate the person who will act as the center/institute’s spokesperson. The spokesperson may or may not ultimately become the center/institute’s director. (See Section VIII for the appointment process)
 4. Reporting relationships. The proposal should indicate the reporting relationships for the new center/institute according to the following guidelines.
 - a. Centers/institutes within a college. A center/institute involving faculty and resources from two or more departments within the same college may be established within the college. For the purposes of the research component of their activity, faculty involved in the center/institute shall report to a director. The director will report to the dean of the college.
 - b. Centers/institutes among colleges. A center/institute involving faculty and resources from two or more colleges may be established within the University. Faculty involved in such a center/institute shall report to a director typically chosen from one of the colleges. The director will report to the Vice President for Research. In cases where a multidisciplinary center/institute has other functions such as clinical services, it may be appropriate for the Vice President for

Research to delegate management of the center/institute to another senior administrator where the clinical services are provided.

5. Staff and facilities requirements. The proposal should indicate whether additional staff and facilities will be needed, what they are needed for, and what interim measures would be workable if new staff or new facilities are not forthcoming. The proposal should focus on critical needs, not just needs that would be described as helpful.
6. Equipment or instrumentation, if any, that will be needed. The proposal should indicate if a new center/institute will result in the need for equipment that is not satisfied by the equipment currently available on campus.
7. Projected operating costs and proposed source of income. The proposal should provide a proposed three-year operating budget. Expenditure categories should include personnel, benefits, supplies, equipment, travel, and other needs (*e.g.*, consulting, etc.).
8. Potential for generating extramural funds. The proposal should indicate possible sources of support such as specific state and federal agencies as well as private-sector entities.
9. Other proposed benefits of the center/institute. The proposal should summarize other potential benefits of the center/institute (*e.g.*, training of students, service to the Commonwealth).

B. Proposal Evaluation

1. Centers/institutes within a college. A proposal for a center/institute involving faculty and resources from two or more departments within the same college should be circulated to other chairs or division directors within the college. A copy should be sent to the Vice President for Research who will circulate the proposal to any other centers and institutes that might have an interest in the proposal. Written comments regarding the proposal should be forwarded to the dean of the college.
2. Centers/institutes among colleges. A proposal for a center/institute involving faculty and resources from departments in several colleges should be circulated to all deans of those colleges and to those appropriate chairs or division directors within the colleges. A copy should be sent to the Vice President for Research who will circulate the proposal to any other centers and institutes that might have an interest in the proposal. Written comments regarding the proposal should be forwarded to the Vice President for Research, who will submit the comments to the Provost.

VI. Approval Process for Changing a Center / Institute

- A. From time to time, it may be necessary and desirable for a center/institute that has already been established to change its focus or expand its membership to include faculty from other colleges.
- B. In some cases, these changes may be quite substantive; in others, the changes may be minor.
 1. In cases where the director and the faculty associates deem the changes to be major (*e.g.*, a college will withdraw from an intercollege center/institute), the procedures described in Sections III and IV will need to be repeated.
 2. In cases where the director and the faculty associates deem the changes to be minor (*e.g.*, a new faculty member from a college not previously associated with the center/institute seeks associate membership in the center/institute), the director should contact the appropriate chair and dean of the new faculty associate and seek their written permission.

3. In cases where it is not clear whether a change is minor or major, the director and faculty associates should meet with the Vice President for Research who will provide guidance on this decision.

VII. Role and Responsibilities of a Director of a Center / Institute

See GR VII-B.6.

VIII. Appointment of a Director, Faculty Associates, and Staff of Center / Institute

A. Director

1. Selection Process. Recommendations on the appointment of the director will be in accordance with GR VIII-A.3.
 - a. Centers/institutes within a college. The dean of the college, with the advice of the college's chairs, will select the director for recommendation to the Provost. The dean is encouraged to seek the advice of the Vice President for Research.
 - d. Centers/institutes among colleges. The Vice President for Research, in consultation with the appropriate deans, any relevant center and institute directors, and the Provost, will select the director for recommendation to the President.
2. Term of Appointment - See GR VIII-A.4.d.
3. Qualifications - See GR VII-B.6.

B. Faculty Associates and Staff of a Center/Institute

A center/institute shall consist of a director; faculty members who will be appointed on a faculty associate basis; and non-faculty employees. Each faculty associate will be appointed on the recommendation of the director of the center/institute and the appropriate educational unit administrator. Academic rank shall not be conferred by a multidisciplinary center/institute nor tenure acquired solely through service in such a unit. Faculty associates will report directly to a chair and dean of an academic college; the director will consult with the chair and dean in determining the time and effort that a faculty associate can devote to center/institute activities.

C. Recruitment

Recruitment shall be done in accordance with AR 3:5.

IX. Review of Centers / Institutes

The performance of each educational unit, including any college, community college, school, department, graduate center or interdisciplinary instructional program in the University as well as its chief administrative officer, will be reviewed annually and evaluated periodically (GR IX; AR 1:4). Centers/institutes will be evaluated in the context of the unit or units in which they are housed.

X. Termination of Centers / Institutes

- A. Centers/institutes within a college. Decisions as to the status of the centers/institutes within a college will be made in consultation with the director, the faculty associates, and other administrators, depending on the reporting relationship of the center/institute. The director and appropriate administrators should also consult with the Vice President for Research. If the unit is no longer viable in its present status, based on a review of the unit and the judgment of and consultation of those identified above, a recommendation to terminate the unit shall be made from the dean, to the Provost, to the President, and finally to the Board of Trustees who will act on the request to dissolve the center/institute.
- B. Centers/institutes among colleges. Decisions as to the status of the centers /institutes among colleges will be made in consultation with the director, the faculty associates, and other administrators. If the unit is no longer viable in its present status, based on a review of the unit and the judgment of and consultation of those identified above, a recommendation to terminate the unit shall be made from the appropriate deans to the Vice President for Research and the Provost, to the President, and finally to the Board of Trustees who will act on the request to dissolve the center/institute.

XI. Budget Policies, Salary Reimbursement, and Incentive Awards

The director of the center/institute should consult with the appropriate administrators to determine administrative policy with regard to budgets.

References and Related Materials

GR Part VII, University Organization

GR Part VIII, University Appointments

AR 3:5, Statement for Recruitment and Selection of Faculty

AR 1:4, The Planning, Budgeting, and Assessment Cycle

Revision History

AR II-4.0-5: 9/18/1995

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For questions, contact: [Office of Legal Counsel](#)