



Policy Title: RE7008 - Centers and Institutes Policy

Subject Area: Research

Responsible Official(s): Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation

Responsible Office(s): Research and Innovation

Policy Statement

The increasing complexity and interdisciplinary nature of university programs necessitates collaborative efforts within Centers and Institutes to reach their full potential. Centers and Institutes bring together internal and external resources to address challenging problems and are valued for far-reaching benefits in education, research, innovation, and in community engagement. Centers and Institutes should help expand and promote the University's mission to enhance intellectual merit, broaden impact, and expand extramural funding. This policy serves to provide guidance on the creation, maintenance, and sunseting of Centers and Institutes, clarification of their purpose, and definitions of the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organizations associated with them.

Definitions

UMRC – The UMRC, or University of Memphis Research Council, is the primary liaison between faculty researchers and university leadership on all issues related to our research environment, research policies, research compliance, and strategic research directions. The UMRC serves in a consultative role to the Vice President of Innovation and Research (VPIR) or equivalent role.

Center – A unit involving more than one faculty member established to pursue a well-defined, narrower area of instruction, research, or outreach as compared to an Institute. Typically, a Center resides in a single college or school. Centers receiving funding from the University must comply with the guidelines in this policy and pursue external funding to support their work.

Institute – An organization established via intramural or extramural funds to pursue transdisciplinary activities that engage multiple units. An Institute may consist of multiple Centers, can serve as the incubator for new Centers, and act as the public partner in Public-Private Partnerships. Compared to Centers, Institutes often manage more space, staff, and equipment. To continue receiving funding from the university, Institutes must comply with the

guidelines in this policy. Institutes must also pursue external funding to support their work and to ensure continued sustainability of the Institute.

Major Center or Institute – At times, the senior leadership may designate a major Center or Institute that focuses on a topic relevant to their interests and that of the University, and whose funding structure may be supported through extramural as well as intramural funding.

Externally Sponsored Centers and Institutes – A unit that receives more than 50% of its budget from funding sources outside of the University of Memphis.

Policy

Formation of a New Center or Institute

New Centers or Institutes should be based on: (a) a well-defined purpose, (b) advancement of the strategic plan of the University, (c) alignment with existing infrastructure and organizations, and (d) the ability to sustain itself. If these requirements are met, then the following information is required from those proposing the Center or Institute:

- Faculty members should develop a proposal that outlines their five-year strategic plan, the resource requirements, sources of funds, and target outcomes. Review criteria and indirect cost recovery IDCRC distribution for the unit should be included.
- Proposals must be approved by personnel who manage University resources/assets committed to the Center/Institute via signed letter. This commonly includes the heads of organizations and units involved.
- For proposed Centers and Institutes that are considered research focused, the UMRC will review the proposal and provide its recommendation to the VPIR and Provost for acceptance, denial, or reconsideration of the Center or Institute's purpose or design. Other proposed Centers and Institutes without a major research focus will be reviewed by the appropriate administrative leadership. This will generally be the Provost or their council.
- For Centers, the approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers) will establish new Centers. For Institutes, the recommendation of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Institutes) will be advanced to the President for final approval.

A new Center or Institute at the UofM can be created by an extramural center grant that is headquartered at the University. In such cases, resource commitments from the University should be secured at the time of proposal submission.

Administrative Oversight

Director: Each Center and Institute must have a director who is responsible for day-to-day administration and for defining the entity's mission. Directors may be part-time or full time, and may receive time release from other duties such as teaching.

Advisory Board: Each Center and Institute must have an Advisory Board with representatives from its academic disciplines and, if engaged in the community, from regional stakeholders with an interest and expertise related to the Center or Institute's mission. The composition of advisory board membership should follow University standards. The roles, responsibilities, expectations, and term conditions of Advisory Board members will be detailed in founding documents of the Center or Institute.

Fiscal Organization: A Center or Institute will be assigned an organization code that places it under a department, school, college, or a higher level of authority (e.g., dean, provost, Vice President of Innovation and Research (VPIR)). Indirect Cost Recovery (IDCR) distribution to the Center/Institute shall be determined at time of establishment as part of the proposal process. These distributions should be consistent with current University standards on IDCR.

Annual Report: Centers and Institutes shall produce a brief annual report at the end of each fiscal year summarizing their membership, their activities, and their plans. The report shall be provided to the VPIR, Provost, and heads of the organizations and units involved. The Advisory Board shall be provided with the report and may provide feedback to the Center/Institute on their progress. During the annual report phase a Center or Institute may request changes to its strategic plan and goals. Changes to the strategic plan and goals require approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers and Institutes).

Periodic Review of Centers and Institutes

All Centers and Institutes will be reviewed every four years, or at any time requested by the Provost, or VPIR for research Centers and Institutes.. The Center or Institute should have at least six months to respond to such a request. Research Centers and Institute will be reviewed in accordance with their strategic plan, goals, and any other review criteria set forth in the founding documents. The Director will prepare a report that describes the achievements of the Research Center or Research Institute in accordance with its strategic plan and goals. This report will be provided to the Advisory Board who will prepare a covering letter that describes the Advisory Board's suggestions for possible revisions to the strategic plan and goals and situating the performance of the Center or Institute within the broader community of such centers or institutes. The Director's report and the associated covering letter will be sent to the VPIR and the Provost.

Approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers) concludes successful review for Centers. For Institutes, the recommendation of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Institutes) will be advanced to the President for final review approval. Centers or Institutes not in compliance with expectations in the review process (which includes strategic

plan, goals, financial sustainability information, and any other relevant information) are subject to Sunsetting.

Sunsetting

Sunsetting is defined as the planned dissolution of a Center or Institute. Centers or Institutes may sunset voluntarily with the approval of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers and Institutes). Any Center or Institute not in compliance with the review process, missing requirements, or found during Periodic Review to not meet their objectives will have a one-year probation in which to address gaps in performance and resubmit their review materials. If after one year the organization has not met the metrics required to maintain the Center or Institute status, it will be considered sunset.

Externally Sponsored Centers and Institutes

Administration and reporting requirements in this policy will be superseded by sponsor requirements. Where sponsor requirements are silent, the provisions provided here remain in force. All reports for sponsored centers should be submitted to the Vice President of Innovation and Research's (VPIR's) office along with any reports required by the funding agency or the University

Existing Centers and Institutes at Time of Policy Development

Any organization calling itself a Center or Institute on the University of Memphis campus will submit to the review process established here within three years of adoption of this policy. Organizations that have "center" or "institute" in their title that pre-exist this policy and conform to the definitions above, will be treated under this policy as either a Center or Institute according to the definitions given above, but may maintain their current nomenclature.

Last Revision Update Log: 12/11/2024