

## Centers and Institutes

### Introduction

Centers and institutes are important components of the academic, research, and service mission of the University of Arkansas. Centers<sup>1</sup> can traverse the boundaries of departments and colleges. They play an important role in enabling multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs and are a necessary part of the university's infrastructure.

Centers have the potential for strengthening disciplinary programs by providing interdisciplinary course work, offering service learning opportunities, facilitating certificate programs, supporting degree programs, enabling high levels of research productivity and providing external visibility for the university. Because centers are meant to be flexible units, their scope, their mission and their size vary considerably. Further, it must also be recognized that center activities can be limited within the boundaries of a single department or within a single college or they can reach across several colleges.

### Definitions

- **Center:** Centers typically involve faculty and staff from one or more departments, colleges, or units engaged in a dedicated research, educational or service activity.
- **Institute:** An institute is an organization intended for research and is broader in scope than a center; it is typically associated with a physical and organizational infrastructure for conducting research. It involves faculty and staff from multiple units who depend on a set of common facilities for their research. An institute may house within it one or more centers.

### Establishing a Center

The creation of a center begins with a proposal that is submitted by a department, school or college. Interdisciplinary center proposals that cross several colleges will be reviewed by all involved colleges for approval. Following college-level approval by the dean(s), the proposal is then forwarded to the Vice-Provost for Research and Economic Development (VPRED) for review; approval is required by the VPRED, Provost and Chancellor. Following campus approvals, the proposal is forwarded to the President for the approval of the Board of Trustees and the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB). Approved centers and institutes may begin operation only after the AHECB meeting at which the notification of the unit's establishment is made.

Centers are expected to secure their own funding to maintain their viability. These funds may come from grants and contracts, charitable gifts, internal awards, and/or internal sources.

Proposals to establish a center should follow the ADHE Letter of Notification-2 "Establishment of Administrative Unit". The ADHE form may be found at <http://www.adhe.edu/SiteCollectionDocuments/AcademicAffairsDivision/Letter%20of%20Notification.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "centers" and "institutes" are used interchangeably throughout this policy. When there is a difference between centers and institutes, the different meanings will be explicitly defined.

In addition, a center proposal should include the following items:

1. Name of the College, School, Department, or Unit in which the Center will be housed.
2. Name and title of the person(s) proposing creation of the Center.
3. The Center type (research, service, or instructional) that is requested.
4. The unique value of the program to the University, and the distinction to any similar programs in Arkansas.
5. Information on the Director position and the organizational structure.
6. Identification of faculty (or qualifications of type of faculty), other personnel, and academic units that will be involved with the Center.
7. Student involvement, if any.
8. Annual budget for the Unit or the estimated expenditures per year.
9. Estimated fiscal resources and potential sources of funding (e.g., state, private, endowment, grant, contract, or other).
10. Space and equipment needs of the Center and a description of how they will be met.
11. Description of administrative control and lines of authority for the Center.
12. Description of the advisory board including its size, the method of its selection, and length of terms.
13. The metrics to be used to evaluate the Center's feasibility at its five-year review.

### **Review of Centers**

Centers should periodically undergo a formal review to ensure viability and need for continuation. The review period should be consistent for all Centers, and shall be every 5 years, unless an exception is granted by the dean and VPRED. An intermediate review may be requested at any time by someone with administrative oversight, e.g., the dean or Provost. In addition, Centers are encouraged to submit an annual report to the direct supervising administrator.

To maintain campus-wide consistency, the Office of the VPRED will facilitate the 5-year reviews. This office will notify units when it is time to conduct the 5-year review, work with the colleges to ensure the thoroughness of the review, and serve as the single collection point for the review materials.

The periodic review would be completed by a review committee that is established by the dean and approved by the VPRED<sup>2</sup>. The committee should not consist of less than three members. No committee members should be directly associated with the Center. One member should be from outside the college. External experts are encouraged, but not required.

After the Center conducts a self-study report for the 5-year formal review, it submits the report to the review committee. The review committee will submit a review report with recommendations to the Dean/VPRED. The Dean and VPRED will each review the self-study and submit recommendations regarding continuation or termination of the Center to the Provost.

### **Termination of a Center**

A Center may be terminated through the review process. In any case, consideration should be given to the termination or transfer of any contractual obligations; the employment status of any Center employees;

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<sup>2</sup> For those centers or institutes that operate jointly between the UAF campus and the division of Agriculture, the Associate Vice President-Research in the Division of Agriculture is included with Dean, Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food, and Life Sciences.

the transfer of any capital equipment or space, and the transfer or reassignment of any funds, including foundation accounts.

## **Personnel**

### **Director**

Each Center should have a Director who manages the unit. The Director is responsible for managing the Center or Institute finances and staffing. The Director also manages the Center's day-to-day operation, including administrative review of expenditures.

The Director position may be filled by election from current Center faculty and staff members, through a formal search process, or through appointment by the Director's direct supervisor. The selection process should be determined when the Center is established, and may later be revised.

Center Directors must receive an annual performance evaluation (per UAF Policy 411.2). For Center Directors that are also faculty, the annual performance evaluation should include a review of their administrative performance.

### **Faculty**

Faculty members associated with a Center will retain all rights and privileges of their home academic unit. All salary, promotion, and tenure considerations will be made by their home department and college within the regular review and evaluation process.

Faculty with a joint appointment in a Center and an academic unit will hold their tenure in an academic unit.

The home academic unit's annual review of faculty associated with a Center should include contributions of the faculty member to the Center. A faculty member's research, teaching, and service contributions to a Center should also be considered in their promotion and tenure decisions. One means of doing this is for the Center Director to document the faculty member's contribution in a letter to be included in the annual review. A faculty member who serves as the Center Director can request a letter from the unit supervisor (e.g., department head/chair or college or school dean) to include in the annual review materials.

### **Staff**

Classified and non-classified staff may be assigned to a Center. Any Center staff position supported completely or partially by soft funds (e.g., a research grant) is dependent on the availability of those funds. Each staff member must receive an annual evaluation from the Center Director or other Center supervisor.

## **Governance**

The governance of a Center is the responsibility of the Director, acting in consultation with the department head/chair, college or school dean, or other university administrator to which the Center is responsible. The Center should report to the supervisor at the lowest organizational level who can make those decisions required for the ongoing activities of the Center. Operational direction should come from the Director. Where Center activities are conducted entirely within one department, the Center Director could report to a department head/chair. Where all Center activities exist within a single college, the Dean of that college will be the responsible individual. Where more than one college is involved, the responsibility for final decisions related to research activities is the administrator to which the unit reports

with the advice and counsel of the Deans of the involved colleges. The governance of each Center shall be described in the initial proposal.

Center Directors should work with their appropriate administrative supervisors to develop processes through which their annual budget requests are reviewed and determined.

### **Accountability**

To ensure that Centers as well as colleges and departments receive credit for activities, the following guidelines are defined.

- Teaching credits and associated student credit hours should be directly assigned and reported as belonging to the academic units of the faculty members who teach the classes. In the case of team-taught classes, the credit should be appropriately divided between the units of the collaborating faculty.
- Research awards should be reported through the departments of the PIs and Co-PIs while the centers should be able to report awards on projects that they have enabled in their reports with full disclosure that these expenditures have been reported elsewhere. Research projects will be credited as a Center project only if it is so designated on the proposal submission through RSSP.

### **RIF Distribution**

Research Incentive Funds (RIF) are distributed based on the Facilities & Administrative Rate (F&A) reimbursed on a sponsored project. A portion of the reimbursed F&A will be directed to the Center RIF account to assist the Center in becoming financially self-supporting.

For all sponsored projects submitted through a Center, the Center RIF account will receive 20% of the reimbursed F&A on those projects. All other RIF distributions will be reduced 20% to facilitate the Center distribution. For example, a college would receive 32% of the F&A instead of 40%.

The Center RIF may be spent on activities related to the common good of the Center or institute, including salaries of technicians, maintenance and upgrade of expensive equipment, travel, etc.

The following guidelines should be used in determining the fraction of the RIF to be directed to the Center budget.

- Only projects that return indirect costs (F&A) at the full rate allowed by the sponsor are eligible for this program.
- Projects that generate less than the full indirect cost rate (F&A) allowed by the sponsor should include costs associated with the use of Center equipment, infrastructure etc. as direct project costs to support the contributions of the Center in executing the project.
- Research proposals must identify the affiliated Center to ensure that proper credit, both financial and non-financial, is received.
- If a research proposal is based upon the use of equipment or facilities housed in a Center, the Center Director's approval should be obtained on the proposal routing sheet. This approval signifies the Director's consent for the availability and use of facilities and infrastructure for execution of the project.

### **Advisory Boards**

A Center is required to have an advisory board. The advisory board should include internal faculty and administrators and external representatives. The advisory board members shall be approved by the

appropriate Center governance representative (chair, dean, vice-president) listed in the Governance section.

In order to benefit from the expertise offered by an advisory board, such boards are encouraged to meet once or twice per year.

11/26/12