

Division of Research

Guidelines for the Creation, Management, Evaluation, Modification and Dissolution of Texas A&M University Centers and Institutes

The vice president for research serves as the institutional official with oversight and monitoring responsibilities for university-wide administration of centers and institutes. The following provides general guidelines for the effective creation, management, evaluation, modification and dissolution of university centers and institutes.

I. CREATION OF CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

- A. The creation of centers and institutes as defined in [System Policy 11.02](#) and [TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01](#) requires prior approval by the board of regents (BORs). Please note the need for centers and institutes to be broader in scope than departments and colleges, respectively, according to the system [definition](#). Thus, centers and institutes must be interdisciplinary with a scope which goes beyond departmental and college boundaries. They, thus, add value beyond what a departmental or college unit may provide. Besides being interdisciplinary, other ways centers and institutes may provide value is if they have unique facilities, they are already externally highly visible (for existing ones) or provide additional non-faculty expertise through their staff. Before deciding to create a new center or institute, please make sure among other factors they would also abide by the above principles.
- B. Proposals for the creation of TAMU centers or institutes normally originate at the department or college level in a format prescribed by the chancellor. Information on the format as well as sample proposals can be found at the System URL: <https://www.tamus.edu/academic/academic-planning-and-policy/changes-that-require-board-approval/centers-and-institutes/>. Prospective center or institute proposal writers are strongly encouraged to visit this website, follow the proposal format described there, and inform the VPR designee responsible for centers and institutes on their prospective submission. All proposal submissions must adhere to published deadlines for each targeted BORs meeting. Proposals must be submitted to the DOR according to the deadlines published [here](#). Note that the deadline for submission to the DOR is approximately 4 months prior to the targeted BORs meeting.
- C. Soon after a center or institute creation proposal is submitted to the DOR, it should be added to the agenda of one of the Council of Deans (CODs) meetings by the dean(s) of the originating college(s) for discussion. This is not intended to result in an up or down vote on the creation of the center or institute, but rather it is meant to inform and help avoid gross oversights. The convener of the CODs should then inform via email the VPR designee responsible for centers and institutes of the deans' concurrence to go forward with the proposal. Concurrence by the CODs must be received prior to the deadline for submission by the DOR to the Division of Operations for further processing and submission to the Texas A&M System office.

II. MANAGEMENT OF CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

- A. Accountability for each center or institute rests with the official (dean, vice president, etc...) or designee of the unit to whom the center or institute reports. It is important for

auditing and other purposes that responsible officials assure centers and institutes adhere to the stipulations made in the proposal to the BORs which created them. Pay particular attention to follow the governance, reporting and advisory structure and to the periodic review part of the proposal.

- B. The center or institute director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the center or institute as outlined in the board-approved proposal for the creation or modification of the center or institute.
- C. The director of the center or institute shall be appointed by and report to the responsible official or designee to whom the center or institute reports.
- D. Department heads/chairs may request and should receive reports from directors on center or institute affiliated faculty members' contributions to a center or institute.

III. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

- A. The DOR will maintain a database of centers and institutes which will include among other information the dates for upcoming reviews. Working with the DOR, the deans or other responsible university officials to which a center or institute reports has primary responsibility for keeping information in the database current. Information to be kept current, besides periodic review dates, includes director appointments and related appointment memos, changes in reporting structure and related memos, and any other changes to the management or funding structure of the center or institute which deviate from what was stipulated in the original proposal to the BORs. Note that if the proposal to the BORs which created the center or institute included the creation of an external advisory board, its members must be approved by the Texas A&M System through submission of a memo prior to their appointment. Sample memos for such appointments can be obtained from the DOR.
- B. The dean(s) or other responsible university official(s) shall assure that periodic reviews of centers or institutes are conducted and completed in accordance with an approved schedule of required reviews. System policy 11.02 mandates a review of centers or institutes at least once every 5 years, but reviews must adhere to the schedule as described in the proposal which created them which may include a different review schedule. It is a good practice to perform summary reviews of each center or institute yearly with a more thorough review at the normal review period. Reviews of centers or institutes are initiated by the responsible official or designee by asking the center or institute director for a report. A committee, which may include both internal and external members, conducts a review of the material provided and provides a written assessment to the responsible official or designee on the center's or institute's performance. The responsible official or designee considers the committee's evaluation and submits a memo to the VPR or designee attaching the director's report, the committee's evaluation, and a summary of actions to be taken with a specific statement on whether the center or institute will continue to function or be dissolved. Deans or other responsible university officials should give serious consideration to closing centers or institutes which are deemed to no longer serve their creation purpose or provide value beyond what a departmental entity does. This does not mean that the function of the center or institute goes away. Once the center or institute designation is removed through a dissolution memo, the department or college may continue its service as a program,

initiative, laboratory, or any other name designation other than academy, institute, or center.

- C. The DOR's single most important guideline in the evaluation of centers or institutes is whether they serve as productive incubators of interdisciplinary research, education and other scholarly activities, engaging faculty broadly across departments and colleges. Deans or other responsible officials shall establish review criteria that adhere to the above guideline to assure centers and institutes are performing effectively. Periodic review and evaluation should be conducted to determine if the center or institute under its leadership, organizational structure and funding level is making sufficient progress toward the center or institute's goals and objectives and if activities remain aligned with the university's goals and priorities.

With the large diversity of centers and institutes, it is not possible to have a single set of evaluation criteria. However, some best practices are discussed in the Appendix below under "Center and Institute Evaluation Criteria Best Practices".

- D. Reviews of centers and institutes will be conducted at least once every 5 years. Postponements of scheduled reviews must be approved by the DOR.
- E. The VPR or designee shall review the reports and may provide comments and/or recommendations as to improvements or other further actions that may be indicated, including personnel actions, modifications of the center's or institute's mission or programs, or dissolution of the center or institute.
- F. The deans or other responsible university official(s) shall provide copies of comments and/or recommendations to the center or institute director and provide any other guidance or direction to the center or institute director resulting from the review.
- G. Deans or responsible university officials may conduct additional and/or special reviews or require additional reports as deemed necessary and/or beneficial.

IV. MODIFICATIONS TO BOARD-APPROVED CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

- A. Major changes in function, focus or funding sources for a board-approved center or institute must receive prior approval from the president and the chancellor and subsequent approval by the board.
- B. All requests to the chancellor for modification of board-approved centers or institutes require the approval and recommendation of the president. Requests shall be forwarded by the dean or other responsible university official through the vice president for research, the provost and executive vice president to the president of the university.

V. DISSOLUTION OF CENTERS OR INSTITUTES

- A. When the responsible administrative dean or other university administrative official proposes to dissolve a center or institute, a request should be submitted from the dean or responsible university official through the vice president for research, the provost and executive vice president, to the president of the university. Samples of dissolution memos can be provided by contacting the DOR.
- B. If approved by the president, the president shall then submit the request to dissolve a center or institute to the chancellor.

VI. **JOINT CENTERS OR INSTITUTES**

- A. When a university center or institute is proposed as being a joint center or institute with one or more other system member(s), the same university procedures described in Section I, Creation of Centers and Institutes, shall be required as those required for university centers or institutes only.
- B. Joint university centers or institutes will require the approval of the president as well as the chief executive officers of the other system members responsible for the center or institute. One agenda item will be submitted to the board of regents, jointly by all system members.
- C. While respecting each system member's authority and responsibility in the oversight of the center or institute, efforts will be made to streamline approval and review processes to maximize the productivity of the director in the effective management of the center or institute.
- D. Review and evaluation processes of joint centers and institutes will normally be addressed in the full proposal as submitted through each system member's approval and recommendation processes to the board of regents.

APPENDICES

1. **Center and Institute Reporting and Evaluation Criteria Best Practices**

- a. Each responsible official should work with the center or institute director to identify goals and expectations specific to the center or institute. These goals and expectations should be stated at the start of each report by the center or institute director, followed by evidence which demonstrates they are met.
- b. Each college/unit administrating centers and institutes should produce its own document and template for center/institute reports. The items to be addressed in a report by the center or institute director should reflect what the administering unit considers as important impacts in assessing the performance of the center or institute.
- c. The DOR will use the appended reporting template below entitled "DOR Center/Institute (C/I) Report Template" in assessing centers and institutes reporting to it. Other units can use it as is or modify it to better suit their needs as they see fit.

2. **Management of Centers and Institutes Best Practices**

- a. Perform summary reviews of centers and institutes yearly.
- b. Meet with center and institute directors monthly.
- c. Meet with all center/institute directors together periodically to discuss budget, staffing and other issues, and research activities. In other words, make centers and institutes an integral and active part of your research enterprise.
- d. Consider supporting your centers and institutes at some level. If they are worth having and you have expectations of them, then they should be worth supporting. Level of support is something each college must decide on, but it can include some baseline support (an admin for each center/institute, director release time or salary support, etc...).

DOR Center/Institute (C/I) Report Template

Date:

Center or Institute Name:

Center/Institute Est. Year:

Director Name:

Director Email:

Center/Institute URL:

- I. **Briefly state the focus and goal(s) of the C/I, consistent with its BORs creation proposal:**

- II. **Describe the administrative/personnel structure of the C/I:**

- III. **Describe any facilities or laboratories managed by the C/I:**

- IV. **Provide a summary of the C/I budget (sources of support, salaries, operational costs, etc...; attach a spreadsheet as needed):**

- V. **Provide an executive summary of how the C/I achieved its stated goals:**

- VI. **Evidence of Scholarly Impact and External Recognition (summary is in V. above):**
 1. Describe any research activities of the C/I and its affiliated researchers, including but not limited to publications, grant proposals submitted/funded and amounts, research symposia and seminars organized, etc...:

 2. Describe any educational or other creative activities pursued in support of stated C/I goals:

 3. Describe how the center/institute provided value to the university beyond what a department or college would (any interdisciplinary engagements, unique staff or facilities, etc...):

 4. Provide evidence the C/I is engaging broadly with faculty/researchers (faculty affiliates, event organization, etc...):

 5. Describe any other forms of impact not included above:

- VII. **Describe any recurring issues/needs which should be addressed and any suggestions for addressing them:**

- VIII. Describe any plans moving forward: What will change? What will remain the same? Should the C/I continue to function? Action items?**
- IX. Verify that the C/I abides by the conditions stipulated in the BORs proposal that created**