

Centers, Institutes, and Collaborative Units: Summary Status and Recommendations

Executive Summary

Washington State University's current [policies and procedures](#) for Centers, Institutes, and Collaborative Units (CICUs) were developed by a joint task force from the Faculty Senate and the Office of Research, and approved by the Board of Regents in May 2019, with an update in February 2020. These policies established formal oversight and registration processes, but several challenges persist. Communication remains inconsistent, internal systems are outdated, budget accountability is unclear, and standardized performance metrics are lacking. Oversight structures differ significantly, creating gaps in compliance—especially in financial reporting and alignment with university policy (EP01).

To resolve these issues, the following **actions are recommended**:

1. Centralize CICU oversight under the Office of Research within the Office of the President.
2. Implement standardized benchmarks and review metrics.
3. Enforce clear budget accountability.
4. Establish a sunseting process for underperforming units.

To carry out these activities in Fall of 2025 a four-person committee with representation from the OR, Provost Office, Faculty Senate and the Budget Office should convene to **draft the following**:

- a) Standard benchmarks and review metrics that work across disciplines
- b) Updated policies for the creation and review of C/I
- c) Budgetary policies providing for clear oversight and alignment with EP01 and integration with Workday
- d) Sunseting and probationary policies
- e) A policy establishing a reporting structure for all C/Is within the OR and through a standing committee that includes representation from the Faculty Senate, Budget Office and the Provost's Office.

In Spring 2026, all current or new C/Is would reapply (as they did in 2020 when the last major policy shifts happened) under the new process and guidelines.

Terms and Definitions

Centers and Institutes (C/Is)

There is no formal distinction between a center and an institute under the current policies and procedures. From the current policies and procedures:

In either scope of mission or scope of faculty involvement, a center or institute accomplishes work that goes beyond the boundaries of existing academic units. Likewise, C/Is are devoted to focused and sustained scholarly and creative activity in an area of interest that is of broad interest to the university and may provide resources to the rest of the university.

University C/Is receive “ongoing, recurring central funding” while College C/Is do not. The oversight authority for University C/Is is a university-level administrator, though the policies and procedures allow that University C/Is may *also* report to deans or chancellors.

Collaborative Units

Collaborative units are recognized within the CICU policies and procedures but do not receive college- or university-level resources and do not have to follow the CICU policies and procedures.

CICU Status Summary

There are 33 active C/Is focused on research listed on the MyResearch website, including two pending approval. Of these, 25 report through a college or colleges, 9 report through the Office of Research, and 4 report through a campus (Table 1). In some cases, a C/I has multiple administrative units. Although some of these reporting lines are in question and have not been updated. There are 9 additional C/Is focused exclusively on teaching.

The average age of the 33 current C/Is is 22 years. The oldest is the Composite Materials & Engineering Center (CMEC), the predecessor of which was founded in 1949.

Table 1. Count of Research C/Is by Location of Oversight Authority

| Admin. Unit | C/Is | Admin. Unit | C/Is |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| CAHNRS | 5 | CVM | 1 |
| CAHNRS, VCEA | 1 | ESFCOM, WSU Spokane | 2 |
| CAS | 4 | Murrow | 1 |
| CAS, OR | 1 | VCEA, OR | 1 |
| CAS, VCEA | 2 | VCEA, WSU Tri-Cities | 1 |
| CCB | 4 | WSU Spokane | 1 |
| COE | 2 | Office of Research | 7 |

Budget Summary

Both the application materials and annual report for C/Is require a “budget overview” that provides enough detail to assess whether the benefits of the C/I justify the associated costs. This overview includes information on income, subsidies, and expenditures.

In the annual review form, center directors are asked to complete a budget section showing revenue sources (e.g., university subsidies, endowments, external funding, indirect cost recovery, service center income, tuition) and expenses (e.g., salaries, tuition, equipment, licenses, operations, outreach). If the C/I operates service centers, the report must also describe the services and include a revenue and expense analysis. There is no validation required.

Five-year reviews do not include a dedicated budget section, though they reference annual budget summaries from prior years.

Because the budget guidelines are vague and not integrated with Workday, submitted budgets tend to be overly general. Reporting is inconsistent, and without a standardized process, it's difficult to determine whether a C/I is operating at a deficit.

Workflows

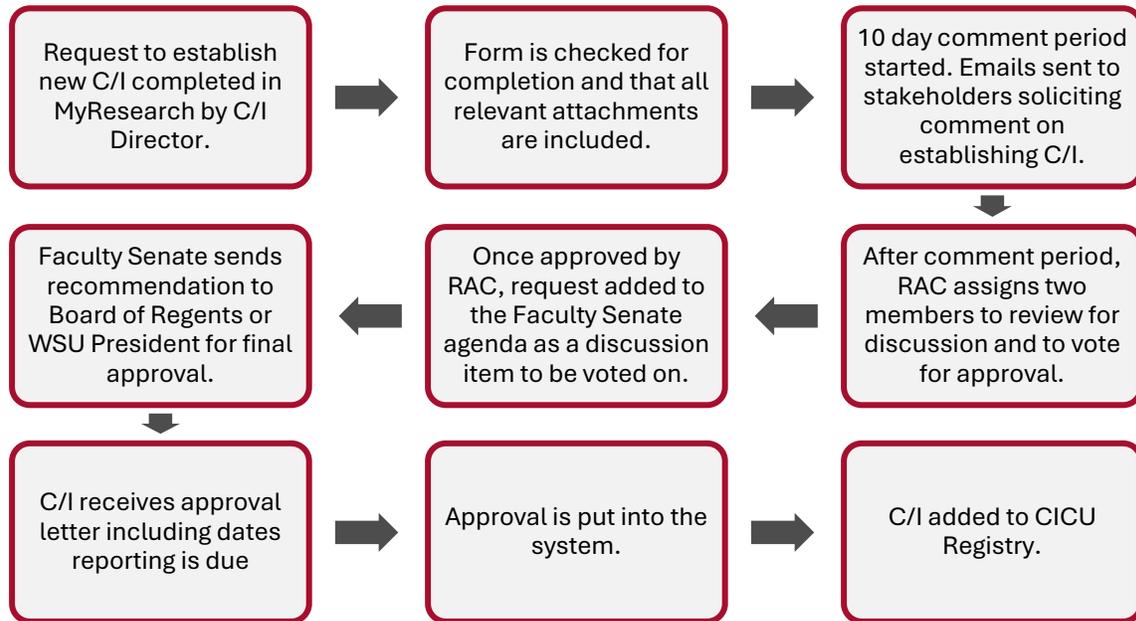
New Registrations

Requests to establish a new C/I are made through a standardized form on MyResearch. Submissions are checked for completeness by Office of Research staff. If complete, the submission is forwarded to the Faculty Senate’s Research and Arts Committee (RAC) and a ten-day period for stakeholder comment begins.

The RAC initiates requests for comment from the appropriate stakeholders, as defined in the policies and procedures. After the comment period, the RAC considers and, if they approve, forwards the request to the Faculty Senate for consideration.

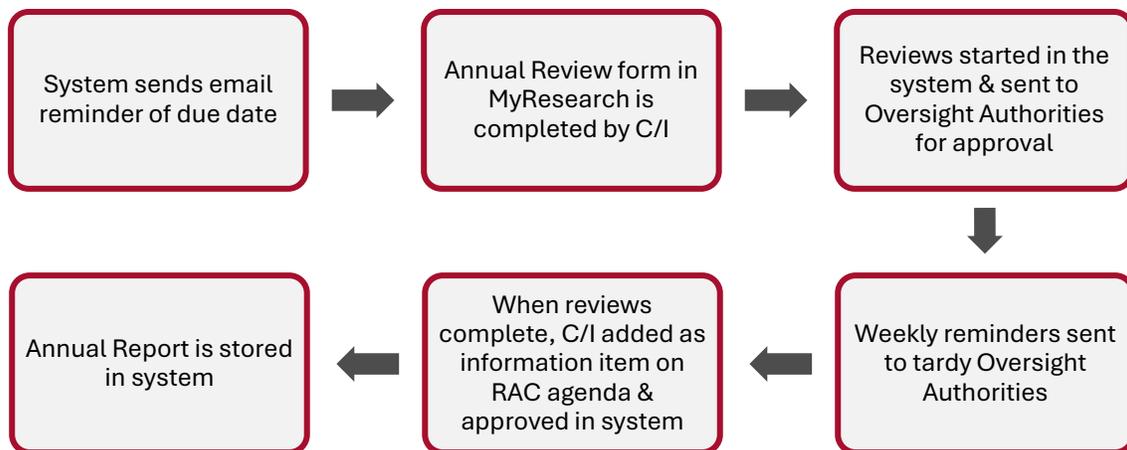
The Faculty Senate discusses the request and, if it votes to recommend approval, the request is sent to the Board or Regents for final approval or WSU President if the Board has

delegated approval authority.¹ Once final approval is received, the C/I is added to the public registry on MyResearch and the standard reporting schedule begins.



Annual Report

A report is prepared annually for each C/I by their director and approved by the C/I’s oversight authority. The system sends a reminder to the C/I director, who then completes the Annual Review form in MyResearch. The completed review form is sent to the C/I’s oversight authority and once approved, is forwarded to the RAC as an information item.

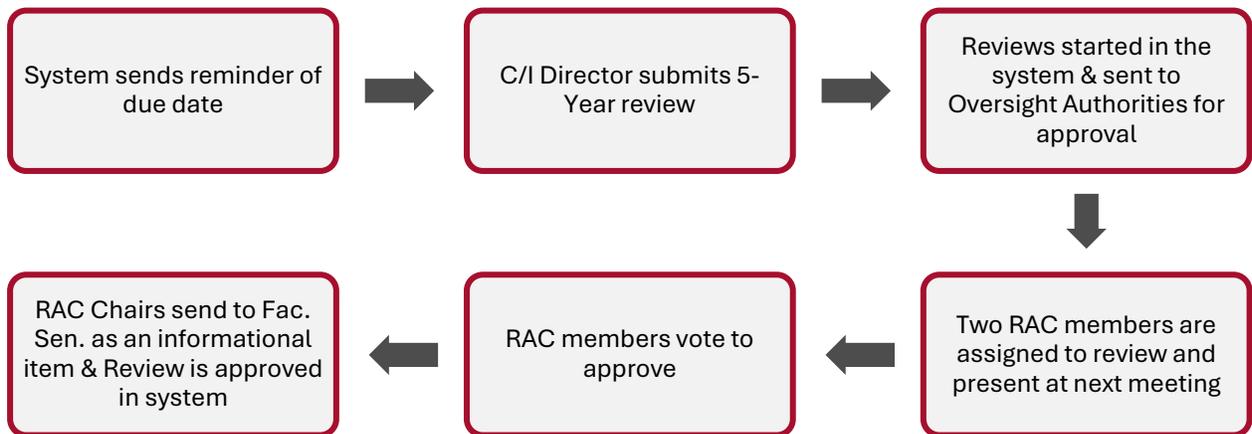


¹ Rejections can be appealed to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee within 30 days.

Five-Year Review

The five-year review is prepared by the center director and consists of a self-study, including the previous annual reports, assessing the accomplishments over the past five year and the future directions for the C/I. An external review is required for University C/Is, although this policy has not been enforced.

The process for 5-year reviews is initiated by an automated reminder of the due date sent by the system. The C/I submits the 5-year through MyResearch and, as with the annual review, are sent to the oversight authority or authorities for review. Following the approval of the oversight authority or authorities, two members of the RAC are assigned to review the materials and present them at the next RAC meeting, after which the RAC will determine whether to approve the renewal of the C/I.



Challenges with Current Processes and Workflows

Documented challenges and areas for improvement in the CICU registration, reporting, and review processes include:

- **Communication**
 - Mechanisms for managed communication with directors and oversight authorities is often difficult, requests for reports etc. and reminder messages often go unanswered.
 - Consequences for non-compliance with reporting and insufficient budgetary input would support improvement
- **Internal CICU tracking system and support**
 - After 5 years of use system updates are necessary
 - Software updates on the user and admin side to make the workflow smoother and to allow for more control and communication mechanisms.
- **Insufficient Review Rigor**
 - Compliance with EP01 and clear lines of budgetary responsibility should be mandated and hard coded into the system, and

- Regulations and consequences need to be in place and processes for suspension, probation and revocation of status
- **No standardized KPIs**
 - Performance based reviews don't have a common set of key indicators
 - Process for revocation and/or sunseting C/Is should be updated with clear term limits and benchmarks.

Overall Recommendations

1. **Standardize Review Metrics:**
Develop KPI-style benchmarks for performance and impact.
2. **Strengthen Oversight:**
Reevaluate current oversight models to ensure accountability.
3. **Enhance Budget Accountability:**
Enforce EP01 compliance and establish clear consequences for violations. Require budgetary reporting and oversight to integrate Workday accounts data.
4. **Implement Sunsetting Mechanisms:**
Introduce a 3-year sunset rule for underperforming C/Is.
5. **Centralize Oversight:**
Move CICU registration and review under the **Office of Research within the Office of the President** to improve alignment with WSU's mission and budgeting practices.

This summary highlights the need for modernization, accountability, and alignment across all CICU structures and processes at WSU.

Active Centers and Institutes in the MyResearch Registry

| Center/Institute Name | Director | Oversight Authority | College/University Level | Primary Mission | Location of Oversight Authority | Year Established |
|--|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Alexandra Navrotsky Institute for Experimental Thermodynamics | Wu, Di | Partha Pande | College | Research | VCEA CAS | 2017 |
| Center for Arts and Humanities | Bond, Trevor | Patrick Carter Courtney Meehan | University | Research and Teaching | CAS Office of Research | 2019 |
| Center for Behavioral Business Research | Munaganti, Pavankumar | Deborah Compeau | College | Research | CCB | 2007 |
| Center for Cannabis Policy, Research and Outreach (CCPRO) | Gang, David | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | 2021 |
| Center for Environmental Research, Education, and Outreach (CEREO) | Padowski, Julie | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | 2006 |
| Center for Institutional Research Computing | Love, H | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | Pending |
| Center for Interdisciplinary Statistical Education and Research | Johnson, Harry | Courtney Meehan | University | Research and Teaching | CAS | 2015 |
| Center for Precision and Automated Agricultural Systems | Karkee, Manoj | Scot Hulbert | College | Research and Teaching | CAHNRS | 1999 |
| Center for Reproductive Biology | Oatley, Jon | Dori Borjesson | College | Research | CVM | 2010 |
| Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources | Kruger, Chad | Scot Hulbert Vivki McCracken Wendy Powers-Schilling | College | Research and Teaching | CAHNRS | 1991 |
| Composite Materials & Engineering Center | Yadama, Vikram | Partha Pande Wendy Powers-Schilling | College | Research | VCEA CAHNRS | 1949 |

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|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Energy Systems Innovation Center | Venkatasubramanian, Vaithianath | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | VCEA Office of Research | 2012 |
| Franceschi Microscopy and Imaging Center | Knoblauch, Michael | Courtney Meehan, Patrick Carter | University | Research | CAS | 2006 |
| Freight Policy Transportation Institute | Jessup, Eric | Wendy Powers-Schilling | University | Research | CAHNRS | 2009 |
| Granger Cobb Institute for Senior Living | Swanger, Nancy | Deborah Compeau | College | Research and Teaching | CCB | 2017 |
| Health Equity Research Center | Whitney, Paul | Courtney Meehan | University | Research | CAS | 2015 |
| Hoops Institute of Taxation Research and Policy | Gramlich, Jeffrey | Deborah Compeau | University | Research and Teaching | CCB | 2014 |
| IMPACT Center | Fortenbery, T | Wendy Powers-Schilling, Scot Hulbert | College | Research | CAHNRS | 1985 |
| Institute for Northwest Energy Futures | Haynes, Sandra | Kimberly Christen | University | Research and Teaching | WSU Tri-Cities VCEA | 2021 |
| Institute for Research and Education to Advance Community Health | Dillard, Denise | Daryll DeWald | University | Research | WSU Spokane ESFCOM | 2015 |
| Institute for Shock Physics | Jensen, Brian | Courtney Meehan | College | Research | CAS | 1997 |
| Institute of Materials Research | Field, David | Partha Pande Courtney Meehan | College | Research | VCEA CAS | 1993 |
| International Business Institute | Joireman, Jeffrey | Deborah Compeau, Jeffrey Joireman | College | Research and Teaching | Carson College of Business | 1996 |

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|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <u>Learning and Performance Research Center</u> | French, Brian | Karen Thomas Brown | College | Research | College of Education | 2009 |
| <u>Metropolitan Center for Applied Research and Extension</u> | Gaolach, Bradley | Vicki McCracken | College | Research and Teaching | WSU Extension | 2015 |
| <u>Nuclear Science Center</u> | Hines, Christopher | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | 1961 |
| <u>Sleep and Performance Research Center</u> | James, Lois | Daryll DeWald, James Record | University | Research | WSU Spokane ESFCOM | 2004 |
| <u>Social and Economic Sciences Research Center</u> | Le, Yen | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | 1970 |
| <u>State of Washington Water Research Center</u> | Yoder, Jonathan | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | 1964 |
| <u>Steve Gleason Institute for Neuroscience</u> | Isaacs, Kenneth | Daryll DeWald | University | Research and Teaching | WSU Spokane | 2019 |
| <u>The Edward R. Murrow Center for Media & Health Promotion Research</u> | Austin, Erica | Bruce Pinkleton | College | Research | Murrow | 2010 |
| <u>Washington Center for Muscle Biology</u> | Lin, David | Kimberly Christen | University | Research | Office of Research | Unknown |
| <u>WSU Center for Research and Innovation in Special Education</u> | Poppen, Marcus | Michael Trevisan | College | Research | COE | Pending |

Teaching-Focused Centers and Institutes

| Center/Institute Name | Director | Oversight Authority | College/University Level | Primary Mission | Location of Oversight Authority | Year Established |
|--|------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation | Merrill, Alex | Todd Butler Trevor Bond | University | Teaching | CAS Libraries | 2014 |
| Center for Entrepreneurship | Warner, Paul | Deborah Compeau | College | Teaching | CCB | 1995 |
| Center for Professional Sales | Chase, Kevin | Deborah Compeau | College | Teaching | CCB | 2006 |
| Center for Transformational Learning and Leadership | Hewa, Joseph | Wendy Powers-Schilling Deborah Handy | College | Teaching | CAHNRS | 2014 |
| Center for Trauma Education and Community Health (C-TEaCH) | Turner, Natalie | Vicki McCracken Craig Parks | College | Teaching | CAHNRS | 2025 |
| Marriott Foundation Hospitality and Culinary Innovation Center | Morgan, Mathew | Deborah Compeau | College | Teaching | CCB | Unknown |
| Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service | Clayton, Cornell | Courtney Meehan | College | Teaching | CAS | 1995 |
| Western Center for Risk Management Education | Neibergs, Joseph | Vicki McCracken | College | Teaching | CAHNRS | 2001 |
| William D. Ruckelshaus Center | Carboni, Julia | Wendy Powers-Schilling Laura Hill | College | Teaching | CAHNRS | 2004 |