

Policy Title: University Centers and Institute (C/I) Governance

Policy #

For more information, contact:

Responsible Unit: Office of Research

Telephone / email

1.0 Overview and Purpose

Centers and institutes enhance WSU's academic strength by addressing complex challenges and pursuing interdisciplinary opportunities that exceed the scope of existing academic units.

2.0 Applicability

This policy governs the administrative oversight of centers and institutes (C/I). It does not apply to laboratories, core facilities, non-C/I service centers, or time-limited grant centers.

3.0 Definitions [optional]

Centers and Institutes (C/Is)

Centers and institutes extend beyond existing academic units to support sustained scholarly and creative activity of broad university interest and may include resources such as dedicated staff, space, and administrative support. No distinction is made between centers and institutes.

College C/I

A college-level center or institute may involve faculty from multiple colleges or campuses, receives resources from participating units, and is overseen by a designated college-level administrator.

University C/I

A university-level center or institute involves multiple colleges or campuses, receives central university resources, and is overseen by the Vice President for Research or a designee, either solely or jointly with a college or campus level administrator as appropriate.

Organized Research Units (ORUs)

A center or institute is an organized research unit when research or scholarship is its primary mission. The C/I may also support university education and outreach missions.

Teaching, Service, and/or Outreach Units (TSOUs)

A center or institute is a Teaching, Service, and/or Outreach Unit when teaching, service, or outreach is its primary mission. The C/I may also support the University research mission.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Academic Authority

The academic authority is the administrative leader of the unit supporting the C/I or that leader's designee and coordinates with the Office of Research (OR) on all phases of a C/I's lifecycle.

Research and Arts Committee (RAC)

For new proposals, after OR verification of application completeness, RAC initiates and oversees the stakeholder comment process. For existing C/Is, RAC solicits stakeholder comments regarding proposed substantial changes to the C/I's name and/or function. RAC then submits their input, if any, along with a synthesis and summary of stakeholder comments to the Center and Institutes Evaluation Committee.

Office of Research (OR)

OR administers the establishment, reporting, review, continuation, transition, and discontinuation of centers and institutes; convenes a standing University Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee—including members from the Office of Research, Faculty Senate, Budget Office, Academic Unit(s), and topical experts where necessary—and ad hoc review committees as needed; and provides communications to all stakeholders regarding decisions related to C/I establishment, review, renewal, and discontinuation. The Vice President for Research will make decisions informed by the recommendations of the Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee.

Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee

The Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the Vice President for Research or their designee regarding C/I applications and C/I annual reports and convenes third-year and fifth-year review committees.

Faculty Senate

The chair of RAC, or their designee, has a permanent seat on the Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee. After approval of C/I decisions by VPR, the RAC representative sends notification to Senate.

5.0 Requirements

Establishing a Center or Institute

Centers and institutes are initiated with approval of participating faculty supporting units, require provisional resource commitments from college or campus leadership, and are established through a standardized application process. These policies apply equally to joint C/Is with external partners.

Review and Approval Process

1. Application Verification and Distribution

OR staff verifies that the C/I application is complete, includes description of the applicants' consultation with stakeholders (including faculty in the relevant units), and includes all required approvals then distributes the application to the RAC.

2. Stakeholder Comment Period

For new C/Is or substantive changes to existing C/Is, RAC invites internal stakeholders (including, for example, academic deans, associate deans for research/graduate studies/academic affairs, and existing C/I directors) to submit comments for consideration. Stakeholders identifying potentially duplicative functions must provide supporting documentation. The RAC synthesizes and summarizes this input and provides it to the Center and Institutes Evaluation Committee.

3. Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee Review

The standing Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee conducts a substantive review of the application to determine whether the proposed C/I:

- Is non-duplicative of existing academic units or C/Is;

- Demonstrates financial sustainability, including a five-year funding plan compliant with [UPPM 30.01](#); and
- Advances WSU's research, educational, and/or outreach missions.

4. OR Decision

Informed by recommendations from the Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee, the Vice President for Research or designee recommends the application to move forward for Presidential decision or denies and directs the applicant to reapply after addressing criticisms of the application.

5. Presidential Approval

Following VPR approval the Office of Research forwards a recommendation to the President, who holds delegated authority from the Board of Regents to approve the establishment of centers and institutes.

6. Final Notification and Reporting Requirements

After final approval, OR issues a formal approval letter to the applicant, with copy to the RAC, including standardized annual reporting requirements and timelines.

Required Steps Following Approval

1. Upon approval, the Office of Research adds the center or institute to the public C/I Registry and notifies the C/I director.
2. Within three months of approval, the C/I director establishes a public facing website and provides the URL to OR for inclusion in the Registry. The website must adhere to [WSU brand standards](#) and meet accessibility requirements (see [UPPM 10.45](#)).
3. Within three months of approval, the C/I director works with the oversight authority's fiscal team to establish a dedicated cost center.

Assessment and Renewal of Centers and Institutes

Ongoing Review Requirement

All active centers and institutes (C/Is) must undergo regular review to ensure alignment with university, college, and/or departmental missions, progress toward stated objectives, and sound fiscal management.

1. Annual Reporting

Each C/I submits a brief annual report to the academic authority using OR templates to document progress toward mission -aligned goals and report metrics related to impact, dissemination, and funding.

2. Academic Authority Annual Review

The academic authority reviews the annual report, provides substantive feedback as appropriate, assigns a performance rating (Excellent, Meets Expectations, or Needs Improvement), and submits the approved report to OR .

3. Noncompliance with Annual Reporting

If OR does not receive an approved annual report by deadline specified upon establishment, OR notifies the C/I and allows 30 days for compliance. A C/I director may request a 30-day extension. Failure to comply may result in removal from the ORU or TSOU Registry unless a reasonable extension is granted.

4. Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee Secondary Review and Notification

The Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee (with an additional topical expert as needed) conducts a secondary review of approved annual reports and notifies the RAC of receipt and final approval.

5. Third-Year Comprehensive Review

Following the third year of operation, each C/I undergoes a comprehensive review that includes prior annual reports, a summative assessment, updated goals for the next two years, and detailed, goal -aligned metrics.

6. Third-Year Review Panel

The Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee convenes a third-year- review panel consisting of representatives from OR, the academic authority, the Budget Office, and topical experts as needed.

7. Third-Year Review Outcomes

The panel evaluates progress and recommends continuation, scope modification, or preparation for sunseting, with recommended changes to be implemented prior to the five-year- review.

8. Third-Year Review Approval

Final acceptance of the third-year- review and associated recommendations rests jointly with the Vice President for Research (or designee) and the academic authority.

9. Five-Year Review and Determination

At five years, each C/I undergoes a review to determine whether it will renew with revised goals, revise and reapply, transition, or discontinue.

10. Five-Year Review Criteria

Performance is assessed against benchmarks and metrics established in the original approval and refined through the third-year- review.

11. Five-Year Review Panels

The Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee convenes review panels for five-year review consistent with third-year review-.

12. Improvement Period

If a review panel recommends improvements, the C/I has one year to implement changes and document the implementation or submit an approved action plan.

13. Final Renewal or Discontinuation Decision

Final decisions regarding renewal, transition, or discontinuation are made jointly by the Vice President for Research (or designee) and the academic authority.

Transition and Discontinuation of a C/I

When a center or institute (C/I) no longer meets WSU or member needs, it may transition to a different status or be discontinued. Upon a decision to transition or discontinue, the director, in consultation with the academic authority, develops a plan not to exceed one year following the end of the academic year in which the decision is made. Requests for discontinuation or transition must be submitted through the designated online form. OR must approve discontinuation, after which the OR notifies relevant stakeholders and the RAC.

Name Changes for a C/I

Requests to change a center or institute name must be submitted through the designated online form and approved by the Centers and Institutes Evaluation Committee. If approved formal notice will come from the Office of Research to the C/I lead identified in the request.