



## Centers and Institutes: Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight

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**Policy Owner:**  
Dan Sui

**Policy Author:**  
(Contact Person)  
Laurel Miner

**Affected Parties:**  
Undergraduate  
Graduate  
Faculty  
Staff  
Other

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### 1.0 Purpose

The university has found establishment of dedicated organizational entities (Centers, Institutes, etc.) to be a proven, effective means of supporting complex academic activities, particularly interdisciplinary research, instruction, and outreach. Over the years, these focused *centers*<sup>1</sup> have served the faculty and the university well. They allow faculty and their associates from varied backgrounds and expertise to come together to solve common problems that cannot otherwise be addressed, be formally recognized as an operational entity within the university, and they provide substantial growth in support for faculty, students, and facilities across the university.

Beginning in the late 1990s the university began to establish University Institutes for the purpose of providing a more coordinated and structured means of supporting large, complex interdisciplinary research endeavors across certain strategic focus areas. These University Institutes have enhanced certain recognized research and discovery strengths of the university while also allowing for growth and development into key strategic areas such as the life and health sciences. Substantial funding has been allocated by the university to these University Institutes as an important investment towards our collective future.

This policy document provides guidance regarding the establishment, governance and programmatic functions and responsibilities related to research, instruction and outreach performed in these *centers*.

### 2.0 Policy

The university encourages the formation of *centers* for the purpose of enhancing the achievement of its instructional, research, and outreach missions. This document sets forth the rules by which these entities are established, governed, and overseen from a programmatic standpoint.

All matters relating to research, instruction and outreach at Virginia Tech, including the entities described herein, fall under the jurisdiction and purview of the Executive Vice President and Provost (“Provost”) as Chief Academic Officer of the university. The Provost may in turn engage other university leadership in an oversight role for these entities that align with their respective domain areas. A related policy, [Policy 3020](#) (Centers and University Institutes Financial and Administrative Policies and Procedures), outlines the policies and procedures necessary for the effective operation of centers in regard to their financial and administrative affairs, including necessary controls that are in place through the establishment and governance of these organizations.

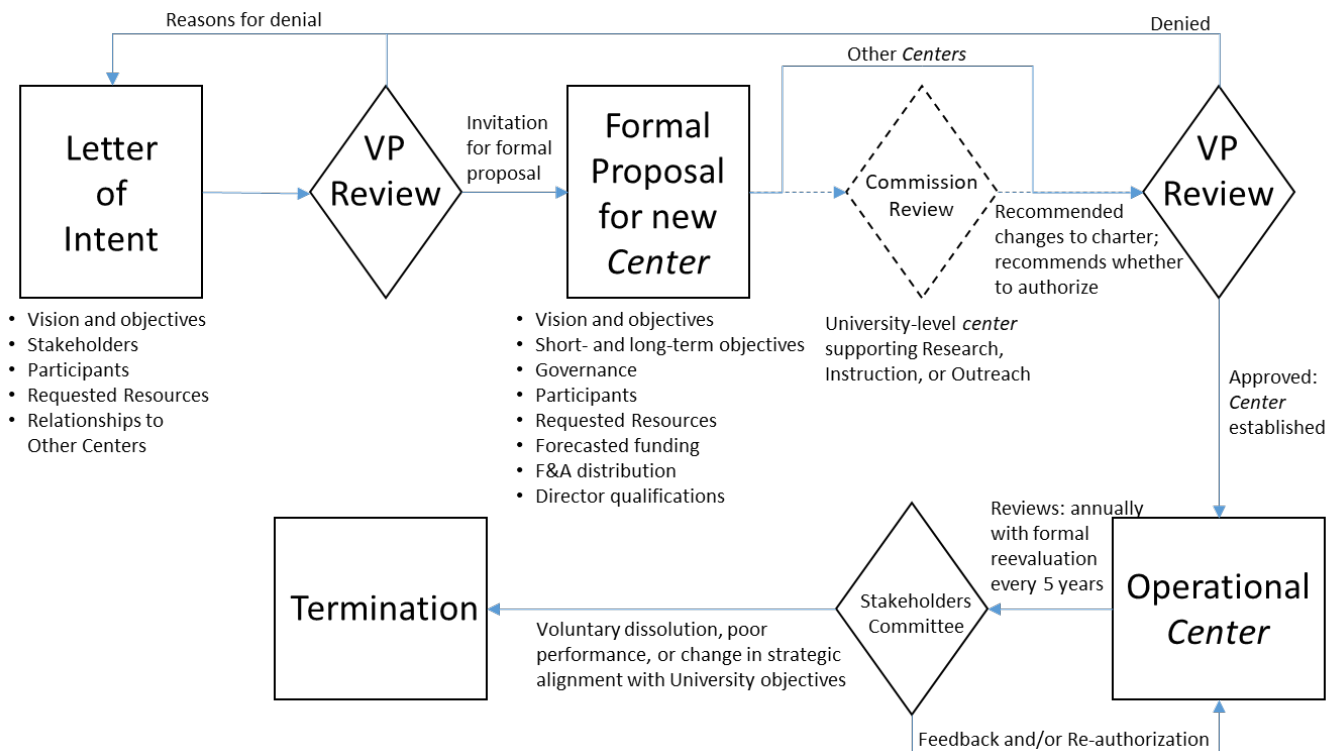
This policy does not apply to Cultural or Community Centers.

<sup>1</sup> In order to consolidate discussion throughout this policy, the italicized term *center* shall be used to generically describe the collection of Centers, Institutes, and/or similar entities. Clarification shall be provided when relevant distinctions exist between these entities and additional details of these definitions are provided in Section 4.



### 3.0 Procedures

Inasmuch as a new *center* creates additional demands for resources, oversight, reporting and review, and represents a major commitment of duties for one or more faculty members, there shall be compelling, strategic reasons to establish a new Institute, Center, or other such organizational entity. Classification of the proposed *center* shall be in accordance with the stated definitions in Section 4.0 and recommended by the proposed Stakeholders Committee, subject to approval of the charter by the university governance structure in the case of university-level *centers*, and the appropriate Vice President (“VP”) in the case of *centers* that are administratively housed within a department, college, or Institute. A high-level summary of this establishment process (Section 3.1), governance and review processes (Sections 3.2-3.5) and termination (Section 3.6) is captured in the figure below.



### 3.1 Establishment of New Centers and University Institutes

The initial step in requesting to establish a new *Center* is to submit a “Letter of Intent to Establish a New [*Center*]<sup>2</sup>” to the appropriate VP for consideration:

- Vice President for Research and Innovation for proposed research *centers*;
- Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs for proposed outreach *centers*;
- Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education for proposed undergraduate education *centers*;
- Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education for proposed graduate education *centers*;
- and other senior administrative areas as deemed appropriate by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

<sup>2</sup> Use the appropriate organizational entity name as described in Section 4.



The letter should provide reasonable detail for the following items:

1. Vision and objectives;
2. General nature of the faculty and student groups that will, directly or indirectly, be involved, and the clientele served;
3. Proposed administrative category (see definitions in Section 4);
4. Anticipated resource needs and expected sources<sup>3</sup>;
5. Relationship to other entities at the university with apparent similar areas of mission-related focus.

The letter must include the responsible leader's endorsement for establishing the *center* (e.g., dean for a college-level *center*, department head for a department-level *center*, director for an Institute-level *center*). Upon receipt, the appropriate VP or their designee will have a 30-day period to review the Letter of Intent and provide a response. A decision to deny the request to formally submit a proposal for the new *center* will clearly articulate the reasons for that denial. If the VP conducting the review is supportive of the *center's* formation, that official will invite a formal proposal. Coincident with this invitation, the VP will inform the Chair of the University Commission in the corresponding mission area (e.g., Research, Outreach and International Affairs, or Undergraduate or Graduate Education) for planning purposes that a proposal for a new *center* will be forthcoming. Requests to establish a new university Institute are expected to occur infrequently and only after careful, deliberative consideration. After submission of an Institute letter of intent, the Provost will appoint a review team to study the concept for the proposed new university Institute. Membership on that review team will include the appropriate VP, the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer (or their designee), two or more college deans (from disciplinary areas aligned with the proposed Institute), one or more directors from existing university Institutes, and the chair of the appropriate Commission. This review team serves in an advisory role. The final decision of the Provost will be reached and transmitted within a 90-day period to those who filed the Letter of Intent. If favorable, a formal proposal for the new Institute will be requested and the Commission in the corresponding mission area will be notified for planning purposes.

The proposal for the establishment of a new *center* shall be in the form of a Charter that addresses all pertinent policy and procedure requirements as stated in this document, to include, but not be limited to:

1. Vision;
2. Short- (five-year) and long-term objectives in one or more of the university's mission areas;
3. General nature of the faculty and student groups that will, directly or indirectly, be involved and the clientele served;
4. Governance, including proposed Administrator, members of the Stakeholders' Committee, and, if desired, Advisory Committee;
5. Anticipated resource needs (e.g., startup and continual funding, space, facilities, personnel) as well as prospective sources of these resources;
6. Forecast of external funding sources (e.g., sponsored research expenditures anticipated for research *centers*);
7. Anticipated distribution of returned facilities and administrative (F&A) costs between the *center* and its partners (consistent with university policy);

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<sup>3</sup> Note: a letter of intent that proposes to form a center that would require centralized, University resources would require review by the Provost as well as the University's Vice President for Finance.



8. Qualifications of the proposed Director who will provide leadership and administrative oversight to the day-to-day affairs.

In addition to the Charter, a formal request to establish the *center* must include a letter of endorsement from all university units (e.g., departments, colleges, University Institutes, etc.) who will have a significant role.

- Requests to establish a university-level *center* in the mission areas of Research, Instruction, or Outreach must be forwarded to the appropriate Commission for consideration through the formal governance system. The Commission will review the drafted Charter and make recommendations for revision to ensure clear specification of objectives, sources of support, and criteria for future performance assessment. After consideration of the draft Charter, the Commission will vote on recommending whether the cognizant VP should authorize of the *center* under the terms specified. This VP will review this input in reaching a decision regarding the proposed *center*; requests for new university Institutes also require approval by the Provost.
- Requests to establish a department-, college-, or Institute-level *center* will be forwarded along with a Charter and letters of endorsement to the appropriate VP for consideration and a decision regarding authorization.
- Requests to establish a university Institute will be reviewed by a team chaired by the Executive Vice President and Provost and should be composed of the members who reviewed the original letter of intent, and others if deemed appropriate. The review team will develop a formal recommendation regarding the proposed university institute and forward it to the appropriate commission for review in the same manner as is prescribed for university level centers.

The final decision regarding approval or denial of a proposed new *center* will be transmitted to the proposers. This documentation will include a copy of the original proposal along with governance documentation as noted in Section 3.2. A decision by a VP to approve a new *center* will be forwarded to the Provost. If a proposal to establish a new *center* is denied by the appropriate VP, the faculty members who brought forward the proposal may appeal that decision to the Provost. The decision reached by the Provost regarding the appeal is the final outcome.

Approved proposals also will be reviewed by the Office of the University's Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer or their designee. Upon review of the proposal, training and/or management consulting for financial and administrative operations may be recommended for the proposed Director and other administrative personnel within the *center*.

### 3.2 Governance

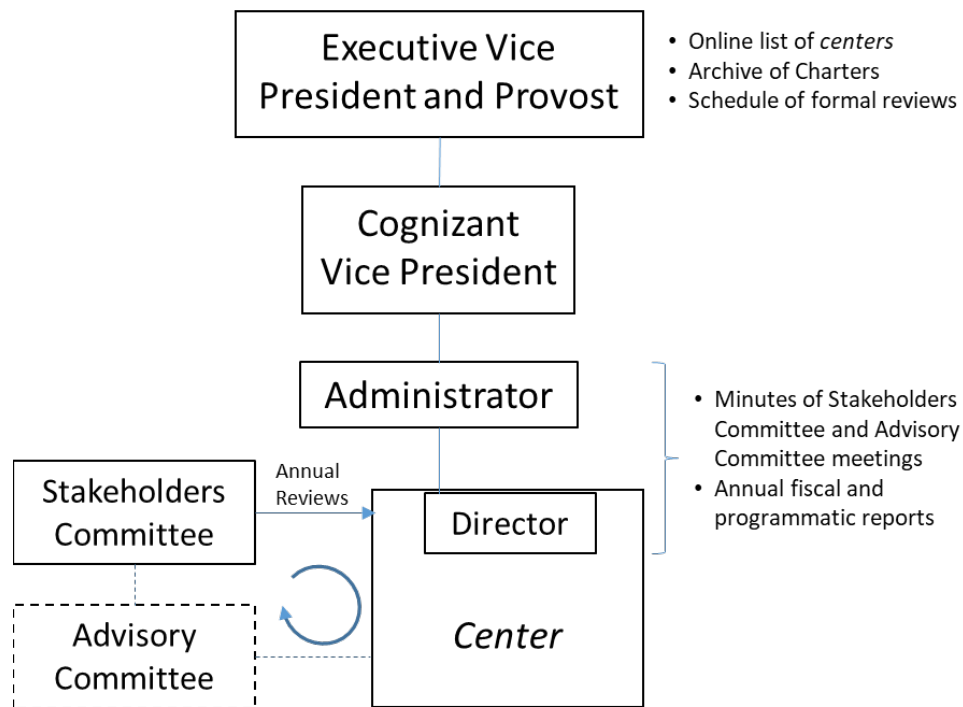
The request to establish a *center*, in the form of an approved Charter, shall detail the governance as required in Section 3.1. The Stakeholders Committee is responsible for governance of the *center*, reviews the financial and administrative functions of the unit, and receives annual reports from the Director as well as internal audit reports of the unit. The authority to appoint and dismiss the Director ultimately resides with the Administrator to whom the *center* reports. The Administrator will seek the advice of the Stakeholders Committee in matters related to the appointment or dismissal of the Director. The Director shall have the responsibility to recruit, hire, evaluate and dismiss staff consistent with university policy and procedures, and contingent on Board of Visitors approval.

Maintenance of a central archive of records related to *centers* will be integral to the successful governance and oversight of these units. The Office of the Provost will maintain a comprehensive archive of records that document the authorization of *centers*, including the communication approving the *center*, a copy of the current Charter,



timetables for periodic review of the *center* and its Director, and the reports generated by those reviews. The Director and Administrator are responsible for maintaining the official records, including minutes of Stakeholder Committee and Advisory Committee meetings. Likewise, copies of all annual fiscal and programmatic reports as well as periodic audit reports as specified in Policy 3020 shall be maintained by the Director and Administrator. The Office of the Provost will maintain an online list of all approved *centers*, their Directors, and administrative affiliations.

The Office of the Provost will notify the Administrator of each *center* when a periodic review of the unit or its Director is scheduled for that fiscal year. For university Centers or Institutes, the Chair of the appropriate university Commission will also be notified regarding reviews each fiscal year. Reviews will be conducted according to procedures specified under Section 3.4 of this policy. A high-level summary of these structural relationships and the archiving responsibilities is captured on the next page.



### 3.3 Financial and Administrative Procedures and Responsibilities

Rules related to the fiscal and administrative policies and procedures that govern *centers* are defined in a more comprehensive form in Policy No. 3020. The following text is a consolidated presentation of several key issues that relate to financial and administrative matters.

Each established *center* is responsible for administrative oversight and fiscal control of the assigned university funds. Center activities have primary accounting at the department, college, institute or university level. Administrative oversight and fiscal control of *center* activities are the responsibility of the administrative entity to which the funds are assigned.



All Centers and University Institutes must be separately identified and assigned a unique organization code within the university's accounting system. The Director, in conjunction with the responsible Administrator, Associate VP for Human Resources, and the University Controller, is responsible for establishing the signature authority for both personnel and accounting transactions of the *center*, and for keeping authorization up to date as personnel and responsibilities change. Signature authority approval lies with the Administrator and may be delegated as appropriate, within university rules and regulations.

The Directors of all *centers* shall provide an annual report (to be submitted by September 30 following the June 30 fiscal year-end) to the University Controller's Office and to the appropriate VP or Dean. The report will (1) include an accounting of the income and expenditures for the prior fiscal year and (2) highlight the activities of the *center* together with planned activities and proposed budget for the coming year. Annual reports will be endorsed by the Administrator and copies will be sent to all Stakeholders.

### 3.4 Administrative Oversight and Periodic Review

To help ensure that established *centers* are making progress towards the objectives defined in their Charters and maintain their strategic alignment with the university's mission, all *centers* shall be subject to annual reviews by their assigned Administrator and Stakeholders Committee. While the scope and timeline of these annual reviews shall be established by the appropriate Administrator and Stakeholders Committee (with optional support by an external Advisory Committee) and primarily be considered informal evaluations of programmatic progress and leadership, formal evaluations shall be performed at least every 5 years, with formal re-evaluations of the Charter, programmatic objectives for the next 5 years, alignment with university objectives, and Director. Records of these formal reviews shall be maintained by the Administrator of the *center* and forwarded to the appropriate VP cognizant for the *center* and the Provost. The procedures for these formal reviews are described below.

#### 3.4.1 Administrative Oversight and Annual Performance Evaluation of Directors

The annual reviews of *Center* directors will be informal evaluations of programmatic progress and the director of the center and are assumed to rely on information readily available such as the director's faculty activity report for the evaluation period or other related reports for the centers that are prepared annually.

Each Director of a *Center* shall report to a single Administrator for the purposes of the conduct of their work with the *Center* they are directing.

A University Center or University Institute Director is expected to spend the vast majority of his or her time in work conducted for the benefit of the Center or Institute. Therefore, the University Center/Institute Director's annual performance evaluation shall be conducted by the Administrator of the University Center/Institute, and salary adjustments will be recommended by the Administrator to the Executive Vice President and Provost. Other administrative functions such as leave and travel approval will also be performed by the Administrator.

A Department/College/Institute Center Director who holds a tenured or tenure-track faculty position is expected to spend a large portion of their time on research and teaching that is not uniquely for the benefit of the Center. Therefore, while they report to the Center Administrator for all matters associated with the operation and administration of the Center, their annual performance evaluation will be conducted by their home department head, and salary adjustments will be recommended by the home department head to the dean. The Administrator of the Center will be consulted within the evaluation process. This evaluation and salary adjustment process will be conducted by a senior university administrator if the Director holds an alumni distinguished professorship or



university distinguished professorship. Other administrative functions such as leave and travel approval will be performed by the home department head.

A Department/College/Institute Center Director who does not have a tenure home and whose work is primarily for the benefit of the Center shall have their annual performance evaluation, salary recommendations, and other administrative functions handled by the Administrator of the Center.

### **3.4.2 Procedures for the Formal Review of Center Directors**

A more formal performance review of each *Center* Director should occur at least once every five years. The Director's performance review and the programmatic review should not coincide in the same year. Based upon a review of ongoing circumstances and input received from individuals involved with the *center*, the Administrator to whom the Director reports may decide that a more frequent performance review may be warranted.

#### **3.4.2.1 University Center or University Institute Director Review**

The following procedural steps should be followed in the conduct of such performance reviews:

1. A Review Committee composed of three or more members will be appointed by the Administrator to whom the University Center or University Institute Director reports to conduct this performance review.
2. The applicable University Center or University Institute Director will be asked to provide:
  - a. Faculty Activity Reports from the prior five years;
  - b. A list of names of individuals or groups that they would like included in the performance review process, both internal and external to Virginia Tech; and,
  - c. A report on actions taken in response to the most recent Director's performance review, as appropriate.
3. The Committee will develop a proposed performance review survey and review it with the Administrator and the chair of the University Center or University Institute's Stakeholders Committee. The list of individuals proposed by the Director will also be reviewed with the Administrator and Stakeholders Committee chair and names added as appropriate.
4. The Committee will review the results of the performance review survey and provide a list of strengths and weaknesses to the Administrator to whom the Director reports as defined by the University Center or University Institute Charter. These will be accompanied by the Director's Faculty Activity Reports. The Review Committee will not make a recommendation regarding the Director's continued service.
5. The Administrator will review the results with the chair of the Stakeholders Committee and ultimately make a decision regarding reappointment of the Director.
6. The Director will be notified of the Administrator's decision within 15 days of the Administrator's meeting with the chair of the Stakeholders Committee at which the performance review results were discussed.
7. The Administrator will notify the relevant entities (e.g., Commission as appropriate, Stakeholders Committee and Advisory Board of University Center or University Institute, Director's home department head for tenured or tenure-track faculty, etc.) regarding the outcome of the review. These notifications will occur within 15 days of notifying the Director of the outcome of the performance review process.



### 3.4.2.2 College, Departmental, and Institute Center Director Review

It is recognized that the overall time commitment and administrative responsibility for a Director leading one of these *centers* would typically be significantly less than that related to leadership of a University Center or University Institute. As such, it is reasonable to presume that the overall performance review procedure may be streamlined and not as rigorous as that described in 3.4.2.1. In the specific case of College, Departmental, and Institute *centers* that do not receive University funds to support their operations, the review may be achieved via a review of faculty activity reports, or similar documentation, as requested by the Administrator. In this case, no formal summaries of the review are required to be generated unless there is an intention to terminate the center, in which case the Administrator shall report findings to the appropriate Vice President and Provost to initiate a more comprehensive review.

For Centers receiving University funds to support their operations, the Administrator to whom the Center Director reports is ultimately responsible for defining the performance review process that will be utilized. The size, scope, and complexity of the *center* should be used to inform the process. Suggested elements to consider include the following:

- Appointment of an appropriately sized Review Committee,
- Collection and review of relevant performance information such as faculty activity reports from the Director,
- Collection and review of relevant information from individuals or groups who have substantial interaction with the Center (including the stakeholders committee and advisory committee members if applicable), and
- Preparation of a final report by the Review Committee to the Administrator.

The Administrator has the final decision regarding reappointment of the Director and is responsible for communicating the results of the review to the Director.

## 3.5 Programmatic Oversight and Evaluation Aspects of Centers

For all *Centers*, programmatic issues (as distinct from fiscal and administrative matters) will be addressed on an ongoing basis by the Director, Principal Investigators, the Administrator and, where relevant, the Stakeholders Committee and, ultimately, the Executive Vice President and Provost. Advisory Boards for *Centers* will provide further reviews of programmatic progress. All *Centers* must be formally evaluated regarding programmatic activities at least once every five years. The following subsections provide procedural guidance regarding the systematic programmatic reviews.

### 3.5.1 Overall Criteria for the Programmatic Review of a University Center or University Institute

The overall task of the Review Committee is to evaluate the accomplishments and performance of the University Center/Institute; measure these against the mission of the approved Charter; review the financial status; and recommend re-authorization or termination of the Center. Specific components of the Review Committee evaluation are to:

1. Develop procedures that best fit the specific *Center* under review.
2. Identify individuals and groups from whom to solicit information. It is anticipated that these will include the Director, affiliated faculty and staff, other relevant faculty, relevant department, college, and university administrators, client groups, members of the Center Advisory Committee or Stakeholders' Committee, a member of the appropriate University Commission, and appropriate persons outside the University if the Center has a state-wide or national mission.





## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

3. Identify the methods it will use to collect information. It is anticipated that the methodology will include surveys and interviews with many key personnel from within the Center as well as those outside the unit with substantial interaction.
4. Consider and report on any prior Center review recommendations and actions taken by the Center Director and/or the Center Administrator, as appropriate.
5. Write a draft report of its findings that may include organizational/personnel matters, measures of research activity or education and outreach efforts, interdisciplinary interactions, leadership, financial data, and other relevant activities. The Director will be asked to review the report at this stage and respond with corrections to factual data in the draft report. Recommendations of the Review Committee should not be shared with the Director at this stage.
6. Prepare a final written report, which will make recommendations on the reauthorization of the Center as well as any suggested changes to the programmatic focus of the unit, its organization or administrative structure, or other relevant matters. In the case of University Centers and University Institutes, this report will be presented to the University Commission responsible for this relevant mission area. The Commission will be asked to vote on the question of approving the recommendations of the Review Committee. The report, along with the outcome of the Commission's vote, will then be submitted to the University Center or University Institute.
7. The Administrator will then have 45 days to act on the recommendation of the Review Committee. A copy of the final written report as well as a written statement from the Administrator regarding final actions made following the review process will be sent to the Executive Vice President and Provost, and to the Vice President and the Commission in the relevant mission area.

Typical questions to be addressed within the review will include but not be limited to the following considerations, which are consistent with the criteria applied at the entity's founding:

- Is current funding of the Center or University Institute sufficient to allow it to be successful in attaining the goals and objectives stated in its approved Charter?
- Is faculty participation sufficient to continue the Center or University Institute operations?
- Is the quality of scholarly activity by faculty professional staff, and students reflected in its output (e.g., publications, patents, presentations, copyrights, etc.)?
- Do current operations reflect the most recent Charter, goals and objectives of the Center or University Institute?
- Does the unit unnecessarily duplicate the efforts of other Centers and/or University Institutes?
- Does the financial audit and overall professional evaluation demonstrate that the Center or University institute is being managed properly? Did the review process reveal any serious issues that warrant special attention and remediation?
- Do the financial resources of the Center or University Institute appear sustainable and able to appropriately support the unit over the next five-year period? Are Center participants able to secure external grants and contracts to support the mission areas of the unit?
- Are the facilities required for continued operation of the unit adequate?
- Are clients being well served? The clients may include students, faculty, university administration, practicing professionals, the general public, funding agencies, etc.



The expected membership on a Review Committee will be a function of the specific *Center* under review, as described below:

1. **University Institute** – The Review Committee will be appointed by the senior administrative official (e.g., Executive Vice President and Provost, appropriate Vice President based upon the primary mission area of the University Center/Institute). The committee will include at least five members, with representation from all colleges that have a substantial level of involvement in the workings of the University Center/Institute, as well as a liaison from the relevant University Commission. At least one member of the panel will be a Director of another University Institute. Further, it is recommended that extensive input to the review process be sought from experts from outside the university who work in one or more of the disciplinary focus areas of the University Institute under review. This input may come from the appointment of one or more external experts to the review panel, and/or it may involve the appointment of the external experts to a subcommittee of the Review Committee who will prepare a report to the Review Committee based upon their own review of the University Center/Institute. The Administrator of the University Institute will appoint the chair of the Review Committee.
2. **University Center** – The review committee for a University Center will be appointed by the appropriate Vice President based upon the primary mission area of the *center*. The committee will include at least 5 members, with representation from all colleges that have a substantial level of involvement with the Center, as well as a liaison from the relevant University Commission. The Administrator of the Center will appoint the chair of the review committee.

### 3.5.2 Overall Criteria for the Programmatic Review of a Department, College or Institute Center

It is recognized that the overall time commitment and administrative responsibility for a department/college/institute center would typically be significantly less than that related to a University Center or University Institute. As such it is reasonable to presume that the overall performance review procedure may be streamlined and not as rigorous as that described in 3.5.1.

The Administrator to whom the *center* reports is ultimately responsible for defining the performance review process that will be utilized. The size, scope, and complexity of the *center* should be used to inform the process. Suggested elements to consider include the following:

- Appointment of an appropriately sized Review Committee, with representation from all units, departments, or colleges who have substantial interactions with the *center*
- Collection and review of relevant *center* performance indicators,
- Collection and review of relevant information from individuals or groups who have substantial interaction with the *center*, and
- Preparation of a final report by the Review Committee to the Administrator.

The Administrator has the final decision regarding the continuation of the *center*.

### 3.6 Termination or Realignment

It is recognized that, with the passage of time, changes in available university faculty and staff, and the evolution of institutional, collegiate, departmental or individual strengths and priorities, instances will arise in which the rationale that led to the creation of a *center* no longer exists. In such instances, it is possible that the most recent performance review of the *center* reflects a mismatch of accomplishments compared to stated goals. In any event,



it is desirable that procedures be defined for the orderly and elective termination of the Center or University Institute at the request of the Director and Stakeholders.

### 3.6.1 Voluntary Termination or Realignment

The process of voluntary termination of a Center or University Institute will be initiated by written notification from the Director and endorsed by the unit's Administrator and associated Stakeholder Committee, outlining the reasoning behind the request and detailing a plan to transfer to appropriate entities the oversight of resources, both human and material, that have been under *center* jurisdiction. Prevailing policies regarding re-assignment of FTEs and the custody/ownership of any capital equipment within the *center* will apply.

The process for review and approval of the termination plan will be the reverse of that followed in the establishment of the *center* and will be conducted by those with the requisite administrative authority. The termination plan will be reviewed by the Provost (or designee) in consultation with the Administrator of the *center*. Once approved, the appropriate University Commission will be notified as to the impending changes, and the plan will be implemented with all deliberate speed by the Director working in conjunction with the Administrator.

Other circumstances may arise where the administrative leaders or Stakeholders Committee of an existing *center* desire either to change their particular departmental, college, or university affiliation or to alter their administrative category (e.g., from department to college-level Center or vice-versa). In such cases, the request and review process will mirror that described in Section 3.1 for the establishment of a new *center*, including the submission of a Letter of Intent and an accounting of the expected benefits of the proposed altered status. Endorsements of the proposed changes by both administrative authorities involved (those relinquishing existing oversight and those newly accepting oversight) will be included. It is expected that entities requesting changes in affiliation or administrative category are in good standing with respect to periodic performance reviews.

### 3.6.2 Involuntary Termination or Realignment of Centers or University Institutes

Apart from circumstances in which the leadership of an existing *center* desires to either terminate or redefine an existing collective entity, it is possible that other external or internal conditions may erode the effectiveness of a *center* or weaken the rationale for its continuation. These conditions may include changes in available university faculty and staff; the evolution of institutional, collegiate, departmental or individual strengths and priorities; shifts in resource allocation external to the university; lack of significant financial expenditures within the unit; or a poor performance review. As is true with voluntary changes to *center* status, it is desirable to define procedures for termination or realignment when the *center* Director and their Administrator and/or Stakeholders Committee are not in accord regarding the necessity for changes.

Involuntary termination or realignment of an existing *center* may be considered when either:

1. A periodic (scheduled) review results in the recommendation from the Stakeholders Committee that the *center* not be reauthorized as currently configured for an additional period, and this recommendation is accepted by the Administrator (and appropriate University Commission as necessary); or
2. A mid-cycle (unscheduled) review has been requested by either a) the Administrator, b) the Stakeholder's Committee, or c) the Provost, and this mid-cycle review produces, as above, a recommendation of non-reauthorization that is accepted by the Administrator (and appropriate University Commission as necessary).

In these instances where non-reauthorization of an existing Center or University Institute is recommended, the final document prepared by the review committee should include specific suggestions for ameliorating the deficiencies



noted in the review. As noted in Section 3.4, such steps could include changes to the programmatic focus of the unit, its organizational structure, or administrative affiliation. In instances where no options other than termination appear viable, the review committee will so recommend.

As is the case for the initial establishment and periodic reauthorization, final authority for the involuntary termination or realignment of a *center* will reside with the responsible Administrator. Similar to the process of voluntary termination or realignment, a plan for the reassignment of human and material resources will be prepared by the Director in consultation with the Administrator, reviewed and approved by the unit's Stakeholders Committee, and implemented by the Director in a timely fashion.

## 4.0 Definitions

A *CENTER* is a group of faculty in long-term affiliation and their associates formally recognized as part of the structure of the university, joined together to pursue research, instruction, and/or outreach goals that require the competence and capabilities of more than one faculty member. Goals that may be accomplished by establishing a *center* include: (1) facilitating research collaborations seeking external research funding; (2) disseminating research results through conferences, meetings, and other activities; (3) strengthening graduate and/or undergraduate education by providing students with specialized learning opportunities; (4) providing services and facilities that enable research by other university entities; and/or (5) providing outreach programs related to the unit's technical areas of expertise.

Centers may be categorized along two dimensions: (1) primary scholarly objective; and (2) administrative home. The primary scholarly objectives can be either instruction, research, or outreach. The administrative home may be in a department, a college, a University Institute (defined below), or housed in a senior administrative office (e.g., VP for Outreach, Provost, etc.). *Centers* may adopt names that reflect the preferences of the faculty or the norms of the academic discipline.

Centers may have advisory boards, committees, and/or review boards as determined by the Stakeholders Committee.

- A UNIVERSITY CENTER has objectives that require the substantial input of two or more disciplines and involvement across a broad spectrum of the university. As a defining element, University Centers are typically funded by appropriations, grants or contracts, for which administrative and fiscal control is assigned to the Provost's or VP's office, rather than to a College or Department.
- A COLLEGE CENTER has objectives that require the substantial input of two or more related disciplines. As a defining element, College Centers are typically funded by appropriations, grants or contracts, for which administrative and fiscal control is assigned to a Dean's office, rather than to a Department.
- A DEPARTMENTAL CENTER has objectives that require the competence and capabilities of more than one faculty member, but primarily within the province of a single department or cooperating departments.
- AN INSTITUTE CENTER receives funding and other support from the University Institute to which it reports. Its administrative activities are rolled under those of the Institute and it shares the same Stakeholders Committee, which has purview for all Institute Centers.

A UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE furthers a major strategic objective of the university and receives a substantial annual investment of university funds for the conduct of its mission. Otherwise, a University Institute has many of the same goals as previously defined for a University Center. The Administrative Home for a University Institute is



either the Provost or an appropriate VP based upon the Primary Scholarly Objective of the University Institute. A University Institute must have a Stakeholders Committee and may have advisory boards, committees, and review boards as determined by the Stakeholders Committee.

The ADMINISTRATOR is the person holding the position of authority in the administrative home of the *center* (e.g., VP, Institute Director, Dean, Department Head). The Administrator has responsibility for fiscal oversight and accountability at the operational level. The Director reports to the Administrator for all fiscal and administrative matters.

The DIRECTOR is the individual who has the day-to-day authority for the fiscal, administrative, fiduciary, and programmatic/scholarly functions of a *center*.

A STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE is a group of representatives from academic or administrative units of the university providing substantial fiscal or programmatic support for the *center*. The Stakeholders Committee shall have oversight of all financial, administrative, and fiduciary affairs. Membership requirements for the Stakeholders Committee and more detailed information regarding the administrative workings of the Stakeholders Committee are found in Policy 3020. Membership typically includes:

Type of Center	Department Head(s)	Dean(s)	Vice President	University Administrators
Department-level Centers	Yes			
Institute-level Centers	Yes			
College-level Centers	Yes	Yes		
University-level Centers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University Institutes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

An ADVISORY COMMITTEE is a group of representatives from units and organizations that are served by the *center*, or experts who provide guidance and external advocacy for its scholarly and programmatic affairs. This Committee typically consists of clients, industrial representatives, faculty and agents of organizations concerned with the technical direction and development of the *center*. Advisory Committees shall be formed only after approval of the Administrator and Stakeholders Committee. An Advisory Committee may also be referred to as an “advisory board.”

## 5.0 References

Policy on Commemorative Tributes, No. 12005

<https://policies.vt.edu/assets/12005.pdf>

Policy on Commemorative Tributes provides guidance on commemorative naming, under the purview of the Commemorative Tributes Committee. Because the life of a university center or institute is not expected to continue indefinitely, gift funding for an institute or a center may be accomplished by endowment or current gifts. If accomplished by a current gift, the name of the institute or center shall generally be limited to the term during which the expendable gift provides funding. The policies and procedures for naming the center or institute shall be the same as for naming other major academic units of the university.



## 6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved December 12, 1990, by Commission on Research Approved November 5, 1991, by University Council  
Revised and approved October 23, 1996

- Revision 1
  - Section 2.2. Changed title from Associate Provost for Research to Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Programs.
  - Section 2.5 eliminated "small operating budget" as possible center funding from the Research Division.
  - Section 2.9. Revised process for reauthorization of a center.

Approved August 1, 1999, by Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Programs, Kenneth L. Reifsnider.

Annual review October 30, 2001 by Vice Provost for Research, Leonard K. Peters. No revisions.

- Revision 2

Entire policy reviewed and revised to reflect evolution of research, outreach, and instructional centers at Virginia Tech and to establish guidelines for consistent treatment and accountability.

  - Policy retitled from Interdisciplinary Centers to Centers and University Institutes: Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight to reflect applicability to all types of centers at the university.
  - Expectation that all centers across the mission areas of research, outreach and instruction would be subject to guidelines, such as establishment of charter and periodic review, not just university-level research centers.
  - Differentiation of key University Institutes with requirements for their establishment and review from other types of centers.

Approved April 6, 2011 by the Commission on Research

Approved May 2, 2011 by University Council

Approved May 2, 2011 by the President

- Revision 3

Clarification to Sections 3.4.2 and 3.5.1 was made with respect to the need to consider the recommendations of prior reviews and subsequent actions taken in response to those reviews when review committees conduct programmatic reviews of centers and University-level institutes as well as when conducting performance reviews of center/institute directors, per recommendation by Internal Audit.

Approved May 14, 2014, by Commission on Research

Approved May 14, 2014, by Robert Walters, Vice President for Research

Approved May 14, 2014, by President Charles W. Steger

Revision 4

Updates to titles reflecting organizational structure.

Approved November 21 2019 by Vice President for Policy and Governance, Kim O'Rourke.



## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Revision 5

Entire policy reviewed and revised to reflect evolution of research, outreach, and instructional centers at Virginia Tech, stakeholder titles, and to consolidate discussion.

- Correction of titles of key stakeholders (Executive Vice President and Provost and of the Vice President for Research and Innovation) made throughout.
- Consolidation of discussion was performed (with graphics) to better clarify common expectations and key distinctions between operational entities addressed under this policy.
- Addition of statement of potential benefits of forming a center (section 2).
- Added the requirement that university level *centers* should have an advisory committee with external members (section 3.1).
- Added requirement that *centers* be uniquely identified in the universities financial management system. (section 3.3).
- Clarified the responsibility of reviews to that defined by the Charter and Stakeholders Committee, enabling streamlined evaluation of Departmental, College, and Institute *centers*, particularly those that do not receive institutional investment (section 3.4.2.2).
- Updated the definition of a Center to reflect the long-term nature of the faculty affiliations (section 4).
- Added language to permit center to adopt alternative names (section 4).

Approved April 20, 2020, by Commission on Research

Approved April 20, 2020, by Don Taylor, Vice President for Research and Innovation

Approved April 20, 2020, by President Tim Sands

- Revision 6

Technical update to titles and addition of section 5.0 referencing the Policy on Commemorative Tributes, No. 12005.

Approved August 27, 2020 by Vice President for Policy and Governance, Kim O'Rourke.