

## **Guidelines for Research Centers in the College of Health and Human Development**

### **The Mission of College Research Centers**

College of Health and Human Development (HHD) Research Centers exist to foster collaboration across existing college organizational boundaries and accelerate pace of research progress on socially relevant problems aligned with the college's mission that require and benefit from multiple perspectives and approaches. The mission should be substantially more focused than the collective research mission of any college department. (In the remainder of this document the word "center" will refer exclusively to college research centers in HHD.)

While interdisciplinary research collaborations can and do exist within the boundaries of departments, centers are expected to facilitate such activities on a scope that is beyond what can typically be achieved within a single department.

Centers should form the focus for targeted areas of excellence that can promote collaborations across departments, across colleges, across campuses, and across institutions.

Centers can also often establish valuable research resources such as specialized laboratories and shared infrastructure and facilities, and they can attract a critical mass of faculty to a specialized area. Such a combination of resources can provide high visibility for the college and the University, and can enable a relatively rapid response to new areas of opportunity.

While centers' primary goals and objectives should relate to advancement of research knowledge, they are also encouraged to strategically engage in teaching and/or outreach.

### **Center Leadership**

A center director will be an HHD faculty member appointed by the dean and will report directly to the associate dean for research. The center director will have a 30% appointment in the center and a 70% appointment in their home department. It is reasonable for directors consider a proportion of the center appointment as reserved for non-research-project-related general administrative oversight (and thus non-releasable). That proportion can vary depending on the amount and nature of funded research. The appointment provides the director with a 2-course (6-credit) release from departmental teaching and the director may also buyout of one additional course in accordance with, and following the processes outlined in, college guidelines.

Centers will receive funds as part of their administrative allocation to allow them, if they chose, to cover a 10% administrative salary supplement for the director on their academic year base salary and 3.6 weeks of summer supplemental salary to support ongoing administrative activities. The decision to allocate this funding to these supplements is at the discretion of the director (note: directors cannot be paid administrative supplements during sabbatical years).

Associate directors and assistant directors may be appointed at the center director's discretion.

These appointments should be principally motivated by need related to the scope and size of a center. Associate directors are expected to be broadly engaged in center activities and are viewed as an important part of succession planning for mature, large centers. Assistant directors will tend to have more tightly scoped responsibilities related to administration or a focused programmatic area and can be either faculty or staff. Faculty from colleges other than HHD may hold associate or assistant director appointments in a center; however, HHD-affiliated associate directors are viewed as particularly important in succession planning. The terms of these appointments are to be negotiated by the director with the faculty member and the other academic unit leaders these faculty report to as appropriate and approved by the associate dean for research. Any funding support associated with such appointments will come from available center resources (i.e., it will not be directly subsidized by the college through the administrative allocation from the college). If such support arrangements result in any portion of an associate or assistant director's salary being moved to the center, the unit from which salary is moved must be aware that they are still obligated to cover the faculty members salary should the center no longer be able to support it. For HHD faculty who have salary moved to the center, the resulting salary split will then be applied to the local unit portion of any salary release return just as it is for the director.

### **Extramurally Funded Research Projects Administered by College Research Centers**

College research centers are expected to be the submitting and administering organization for research projects consistent with their focused mission. The ability to provide local unit research administration support around projects flowing from funders with similar priorities and rules is a key advantage offered by college research centers.

Grants and contracts, including subcontracts, that can run through a center must meet the following criteria:

- The subject matter is aligned with the focused mission of the center.
- The PI or PD is a PSU faculty member formally affiliated with the center.

Extramural grants and contracts, including subcontracts, that run through the center will be referred to throughout the rest of the document as "center projects" and the expenditures associated with these as "center project expenditures."

Any dispute on whether a project should be submitted through a center will be resolved by the associate dean for research.

### **Center-affiliated Faculty**

All center-affiliated faculty must have a research interest and demonstrated scholarly activity aligned with the mission of the center. Centers will be discouraged from affiliating large numbers of faculty in name only.

In addition to the director and any associate or assistant directors, center-affiliated faculty fall into two categories: (1) Affiliates (2) Investigators. Note that all Investigators are Affiliates but not vice-versa. In publicly-facing materials, centers are free to only label all faculty as Affiliates or to distinguish the two categories.

Affiliates comprise:

- Tenure line or non-tenure-line PSU faculty, from within HHD or any other PSU college, or non-PSU faculty who have gone through a standard process developed by the center to vet for research interest aligned with the center's focused mission and demonstrated research activity in that area. The expectation is that the center will have an internal process to regularly review affiliate status.

Investigators comprise:

- Tenure line or non-tenure-line PSU faculty, from within HHD or any other PSU college, who have gone through a standard process developed by the center to vet for research interest aligned with the center's focused mission and demonstrated research activity in that area *as well as* who are funded investigators (PI or co-investigator) on awarded extramurally funded center projects. Faculty may retain their Investigator affiliation for one fiscal year when they are not an investigator on awarded center extramural funding.

### **Financial Resources Available to College Research Centers**

In order to further their mission, the college will provide the following financial resources annually:

#### Administrative Allocation from the College

This allocation is calculated annually as the sum of the following:

- 30% salary share (plus fringe) for the director
- An amount equal to 10% (plus fringe) of base academic year salary of the director (calculated based on the entire academic year base salary) that can be used for an administrative supplement
- An amount equal to 3.6 weeks (plus fringe) of base academic year salary that can be used summer salary support for the director
- An amount equal to the college average salary and fringe for an Administrative Support Coordinator 4 position

#### Research Support Allocation from the College

- The base research support allocation will be a fixed proportion of the average of the previous

three fiscal years' of center project total expenditures. The fixed proportion will be recalibrated every five years.

- An adjustment factor will be applied to the base research support allocation in order to derive the total research support allocation. The adjustment factor will be dependent on a qualitative assessment of a center's impact that are not well-captured via research funding related metrics as well as the center's level of engagement in educational and outreach activities consistent with the college mission. Additional research impact could be supported by impactful publications evidence of translation of findings to practice or policy as well as catalyzation and support of collaborations with units outside HHD that promote research related to the center's mission. Centers will be characterized as high, medium or low based on a review of their previous year's annual report. The categorization will result in +20%, +10% and 0% adjustments to the base research support allocation.

### Supplemental Launch Allocations

Absent extenuating circumstances, newly formed centers are expected to be launched in research areas where there is already considerable research momentum (including extramural funding that will move to the center). However, the sum of the administrative and research support allocations as described above may not yet be viewed as sufficient to promote growth during an initial launch phase. In these instances, augmentation of the research support allocation may be provided over a fixed period of years.

### Additional Financial Resources

- Salary release return: This can be generated only by HHD tenure-line faculty with academic year salary paid by the center (i.e., the director, where this is paid via the administrative allocation or other faculty whose salary was moved to the center and funded through the research support allocation). In these instances, the 55% local unit portion will be split according to the salary distribution (e.g., for the center director with 30% academic year effort charged to the center, 16.5% goes to the center and 38.5% goes to the director's home department).
- Research incentive funds (RIF): Half of the distributed RIF (based on assigned credit share in IAF) on center projects with a center investigator credited will be returned to the Center with half retained by the college.
- Endowments/gifts: Centers may receive return on program endowments or direct gifts and can spend these in a manner consistent with the donor agreement terms and other University policies.
- Other: It is possible that centers may have other revenue generating activities. For example, they may directly organize conferences, workshops, and/or training programs. Such activities are expected to capitalize on existing mechanisms (i.e., [PSU Conferences and Institutes](#)) when appropriate. When existing mechanisms are not available, the center should consult with the Financial Officer before launching the activity. Any other revenue generating activities will

be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting cycle.

- Carryforward: College fund allocations (either administrative or research support) unspent in a current fiscal year will not be automatically reclaimed. As part of the annual budget setting cycle, directors will provide a rationale for the accumulation of any carryforward and will describe a plan for expending the funds over a period not extending beyond five subsequent years. Approved carryforward will move to the next fiscal year. Carryforward from other sources will need to be accounted for by rules governing those sources (i.e., grant carryforward, endowment carryforward, etc.).

## Facilities Resources

With center designation comes a commitment to provide space as needed. As the college develops more systematic processes for assigning and monitoring space across all its units, more specific guidelines for college research centers may be developed.

## Guidelines for the Evaluation of an Existing Centers

### Annual Review

The associate dean for research is responsible for the annual evaluation of college research centers. Evaluation will be based on multiple factors.

One key indicator of interest is the extent to which the center's impact drives its allocation from the college. The ratio of the research support to administrative allocation captures this. However, because the research support allocation is based on a three-year average (to provide some stability to this funding component), to create an indicator sensitive to yearly performance, we will recalculate this ratio substituting only the latest year's annual expenditure for the three-year average. We will refer to this ratio as the annual impact-to-administration ratio.

The center annual report will also qualitatively capture information on current year's research impact beyond that captured by research expenditures. This will be taken into consideration independently (note that the previous year's qualitative information will have informed the research support allocation adjustment factor for the current year that has a direct impact on the annual impact-to-administration ratio as described above). The associate dean for research will also consider other aspects of performance and major exigencies when assessing center performance.

Annual reports will be submitted following a standard template. More information about annual reporting is available in a separate document shared with center directors. The associate dean for research will meet with each center director annually to review their report. This meeting will be predominantly formative, with the associate dean providing advice for the director and center as a whole as needed. However, after this meeting and any follow-up discussion, the

associate dean will then also submit a summary to the department head and dean for use in the faculty evaluation process.

### Comprehensive review

In accordance with guidelines established by the Senior Vice President for Research, a comprehensive review will take place after three years for a new center and every five years thereafter. Responsibility for initiating and implementing the periodic review of research centers and center directors rests with the associate dean for research. Review components will be comprised of the previous five years of the center's Annual Reports, a 5-year strategic plan, and a budget report. It will also include an assessment by internal and external reviewers.

### **Launch of New Centers**

Typically, for an area to be considered as one that might support a new college research center, the area must (1) be in a focused research domain of considerable societal and scientific import relevant to the college's mission; (2) have substantive current extramural research support from multiple funders in that area; (3) have extramurally funded projects deeply engaging more than one HHD faculty member; (4) be able to demonstrate the potential to deliver on all aspects of a center-level mission especially those related to cross-departmental collaboration (see above) and (5) have a faculty member willing to assume leadership of the center.

Any faculty member interested in advancing a center idea should consult with the associate dean for research and their academic unit head prior to beginning serious planning work. The associate dean for research may request pre-proposal documentation. Should the associate dean for research and the dean support the advancement of a center proposal, a formal proposal following all guidelines within [RAG05: Establishing Research Institutes, Consortia, and Centers](#) will be prepared. The proposal will be reviewed by the associate dean for research and dean prior to advancement to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research (OSVPR). An ad hoc evaluation group may also be convened to consider the appropriateness and feasibility of a new center. The dean will make the final decision on advancement to the OSVPR and, if approved at the University level, the center launch timeline. At this time, a decision will be made about the amount and duration of any incubation allocation and any launch plan performance metrics. For example, new centers may have a fixed amount of time to achieve a metric (like exceeding the 1:1 research to administrative allocation in a certain number of years). If launch metrics are not achieved, the new center could move to the sunset phase.

The establishment of a center may divert resources from an academic unit in the near term. This can occur because of movement of existing grants to the center, which could reduce academic unit RIF share, or reduction of salary release return associated with the effort split of a director previously fully in the academic unit. The college may agree to a temporary infusion of funds (typically no longer than three years) to ease the transition. However, in the long run the growth of research related to the center theme is expected to financially benefit academic units

adversely financially affected in the short term through wholesale growth of extramural funding in thematic areas related to the center, which should increase salary release for multiple department faculty and grow the total research in and out of the center in related areas.

### **Sunsetting a Center**

Sunsetting a center refers to elimination of the college allocation for their support and the eventual removal of their listing as a college-level research center. It does not mean that the college is not supportive of the research based in the center continuing - as long as it can do so without the additional college allocation and center branding.

#### Phased Sunsetting

Centers will generally be sunset in phased fashion. In the first sunset year the center receives their research and administrative allocation (as they would were they not sunseting). In the second year they would receive just the administrative component plus 50% of the research support allocation. The center would be dissolved in the third year.

#### Cause for Sunsetting

There are three general reasons for sunseting a center:

- Changing HHD priorities

Reasons here pertain to revised ideas regarding research topics about which it is timely or appropriate to devote college resources to and/or the emergence of new research opportunities for which resources must be diverted. Such decisions are expected to be rare.

- Leadership transition without adequate succession planning

Succession planning will be part of a centers' annual performance assessment. These plans can include internal candidates for director and/or a case for external recruitment of a new director. If a center director steps out of that role (including because they leave the University) and the plan is found to be inadequate, the center may move to a sunset phase.

- Underperformance

*Established Centers:* Typically, centers being sunset for under-performance will have had a series of discussions with the associate dean for research via the annual and comprehensive review processes. The associate dean for research and center director can work together to identify strategies to counteract underperformance. However, given the expectation that a successful center's performance will drive the majority of its allocation, successive years of operation with an impact-to-administrative ratio (as described above) below 1:1, despite course correction strategies, will be a strong signal of potential transition to the sunseting phase.

*Newly Launched Centers:* New centers will be given a fixed amount of time to achieve a metric (for example, an expectation to exceed the 1:1 impact-to-administration ratio in a certain number of years). If such launch metrics are not achieved, the college will consider a range of actions, that might include leadership changes or a transition to a three-year phased sunset as described above.

### **Use of the 'Center' Designation**

This document outlines criteria and guidelines (including for a uniform financial operating model) for College Research Centers. There may, however, be other entities in the college that can utilize the 'center' name without being a College Research Center operating under this model. These include:

- Centers that exist primarily for non-research purposes.
- Research activity supported by funder-designated "center" grants. These may be part of a College Research Center but their award does not guarantee College Research Center designation. Permission to use the research center label must be approved by the associate dean for research.
- Entities supporting research that have been given a center name prior to the enactment of these guidelines and have received permission from the associate dean for research to continue to use the designation.