**Faculty Senate**

**M 2024.4.30 Motion to Establish Centers and Institutes Policy**

**Originator: Research Policies Committee**

Whereas,

The ability to create and maintain meaningful and impactful interdisciplinary Centers and Institutes at The University of Memphis is crucial to respond to the shifting landscape of higher education and to ensure continuous growth and maintenance of R1 status.

Whereas,

President Hardgrave and the University have highlighted “Purposeful and Impactful Research Centers and Institutes” as a key component of Goal 4 “Strengthen Research Enterprise” of the UofM Strategic Plan.

Whereas,

The University Research Council moved forward a draft policy for creation, governance, and sunsetting of Centers and Institutes on campus to the Faculty Senate for feedback and approval.

Whereas,

The Research Policies Committee of the Faculty Senate solicited feedback from faculty and stakeholders across the University and used this feedback to simplify and improve the draft policy.

Whereas,

The establishment of explicit Policy on Centers and Institutes will allow for entities such as the Division of Research and Innovation, Provost, and the Faculty Senate to establish working guidelines consistent with Policy, and facilitate creation, resource support, and oversight to strengthen UofM’s research enterprise in furtherance of faculty and university goals alike.

Be it resolved that,

The Research Policies Committee proposes the following be established as a University Policy on Centers and Institutes:  
{See Next Page}

**Policy on Centers and Institutes**

**Purpose/Rationale**

The increasing complexity and interdisciplinary nature of university programs necessitates collaborative efforts within Centers and Institutes to reach their full potential. Centers and Institutes bring together internal and external resources to address challenging problems and are valued for far-reaching benefits in education, research, innovation, and in community engagement.  Centers and Institutes should help expand and promote the University's mission to enhance intellectual merit, broaden impact, and expand extramural funding. This policy serves to provide guidance on the creation, maintenance, and sunsetting of Centers and Institutes, clarification of their purpose, and definitions of the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organizations associated with them.

**Definitions**

*UMRC* – The UMRC, or University of Memphis Research Council, is the primary liaison between faculty researchers and university leadership on all issues related to our research environment, research policies, research compliance, and strategic research directions. The UMRC serves in a consultative role to the Vice President of Innovation and Research or equivalent role.

*Center* – An organization involving more than one faculty member established to pursue a well-defined, narrower area of educational outreach, research, or community engagement, compared to an Institute. Typically, a Center resides in a single academic unit. Centers receiving funding from the university must comply with the guidelines in this policy.

*Institute* – An organization established via intramural or extramural funds to pursue transdisciplinary activities that engage multiple units. An Institute may consist of multiple Centers, can serve as the incubator for new Centers, and act as the public partner in Public-Private Partnerships. Compared to Centers, Institutes often manage more space, staff, and equipment. To continue receiving funding from the university, Institutes must comply with the guidelines in this policy. Institutes must also pursue external funding to support their work and to ensure continued sustainability of the Institute.

*Major Center or Institute* – At times, the Board of Trustees may designate a major Center or Institute that focuses on a topic relevant to their interests and that of the University, and whose funding structure may be supported through extramural as well as intramural funding.

*Externally Sponsored Centers and Institutes* – An organization that receives more than 50% of its budget from funding sources outside of the University of Memphis.

*Academic Unit*. For clarity, “Centers” and “Institutes” as described in this policy are considered separate entities than academic units (referred to as simply “units” herein). An academic unit is governed by extant policy and is not subject to this policy on Centers/Institutes, even if they have “center” or “institute” within their title, which they may maintain.

**Administrative Oversight**

*Director*: Each Center and Institute must have a director who is responsible for day-to-day administration and for defining the entity’s mission.  Directors may be part-time, receiving release time from other duties, or full-time.

*Advisory Board*: Each Center and Institute must have an Advisory Board with representatives from its academic disciplines and if engaged in the community, from regional stakeholders with an interest and expertise related to the Center or Institute’s mission. The composition of advisory board membership should follow University standards. The roles, responsibilities, expectations, and term conditions of Advisory Board members will be detailed in founding documents of the Center or Institute.

*Fiscal Organization*: A Center or Institute will be assigned an ORG that places it under a department, school, college, or a higher level of authority (e.g., dean, provost, Vice President of Innovation and Research (VPIR)). Indirect Cost Recovery (IDCR) distribution to the Center/Institute shall be determined at time of establishment as part of the proposal process. These distributions should be consistent with current University standards on IDCR.

*Annual Report*: Centers and Institutes should produce a brief annual report at the end of each fiscal year summarizing their membership, their activities, and their plans. The report should be provided to the VPIR, Provost, and heads of the organizations and units involved. The Advisory Board shall be provided with the report and may provide feedback to the Center/Institute on their progress. During the annual report phase a Center or Institute may request changes to its strategic plan and goals. Changes to the strategic plan and goals require approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers and Institutes).

**Formation of a New Center or Institute**

New Centers or Institutes should be based on: (A) a well-defined purpose, (B) advancement of the strategic plan of the University, (C) alignment with existing infrastructure and organizations, and (D) a potential and/or plans to sustain the unit.

• Faculty members should develop a proposal that outlines their five-year strategic plan, the resource requirements, sources of funds, and target outcomes. Review criteria and IDCR distribution for the unit should be included.

• Proposals must be approved by personnel who manage university resources/assets committed to the Center/Institute via a signed letter; this commonly includes the heads of the organizations and units involved.

• For proposed Centers and Institutes that are considered research focused, the UMRC will review the proposal and provide its recommendation to the VPIR and Provost for acceptance, denial, or reconsideration of the Center or Institute’s purpose or design. Proposed Centers and Institutes without a major research focus will be reviewed by the appropriate administrative leadership. This will generally be the Provost (or their council).

• For Centers, the approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers) will establish new Centers. For Institutes, the recommendation of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Institutes) will be advanced to the President for BOT (Board of Trustees) final approval.

A new Center or Institute at the UofM can be created by an extramural center grant that is headquartered at the UofM. In such cases, resource commitments from the UofM should be secured at the time of proposal submission.

**Periodic Review of Centers and Institutes**

All Centers and Institutes will be reviewed every four years, or at any time requested by the Provost (or VPIR for research Centers and Institutes). The Center or Institute should have at least six months to respond to such a request.

Research Centers and Institute will be reviewed in accordance with their strategic plan, goals, and any other review criteria set forth in the founding documents. The Director will prepare a report that describes the achievements of the Research Center or Research Institute in accordance with its strategic plan and goals. This report will be provided to the Advisory Board who will prepare a covering letter that describes the Advisory Board’s suggestions for possible revisions to the strategic plan and goals and situating the performance of the Center or Institute within the broader community of such centers or institutes. The Director’s report and the associated covering letter will be sent to the VPIR and the Provost.

Approval by the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers) concludes successful review for Centers. For Institutes, the recommendation of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Institutes) will be advanced to the President for BOT final review approval. Centers or Institutes not in compliance with expectations in the review process are subject to Sunsetting.

**Sunsetting**

Sunsetting is defined as the planned dissolution of a Center or Institute. Centers or Institutes may sunset voluntarily with the approval of the Provost (and the VPIR, jointly, for research Centers and Institutes). Any Center or Institute not in compliance with the review process, missing requirements, or found during Periodic Review to not meet their objectives will have a one-year probation in which to address gaps in performance and resubmit their review materials. If after one year the organization has not met the metrics required to maintain the Center or Institute status, it will be considered sunset.

**Externally Sponsored Centers and Institutes**

Administration and reporting requirements in this policy will be superseded by sponsor requirements. Where sponsor requirements are silent, the provisions provided here remain in force. All reports for sponsored centers should be submitted to the Vice President of Innovation and Research’s (VPIR’s) office along with any remaining university required reports as evidence of governance and oversight.

**Existing Centers and Institutes at Time of Policy Development**

Any organization calling itself a Center or Institute on the University of Memphis campus will submit to the review process established here within three years of adoption of this policy. Organizations that have “center” or “institute” in their title that pre-exist this policy and conform to the definitions above, will be treated under this policy as either a Center or Institute according to the definitions given above, but may maintain their current nomenclature.

**Recipients:**  
Bill Hardgrave, President   
David Russomanno, Provost and EVP   
Jasbir Dhaliwal, EVP Res. & Innov.  
University Research Council  
University Policy Review Board  
University General Counsel

Motion ### 4/30/2024  
Vote: 37 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain