



Policy for the Establishment, Evaluation and Discontinuation of University Centers and Institutes

This document provides guidance concerning the rationale and procedures for establishing specialized campus institutes and centers. Such academic auxiliary units may be formed as organizational entities within the University if the teaching, research, or public service activities of the faculty members who participate will be improved or if the activities cannot be supported by a single department.

This document governs those academic auxiliary units, institutes and centers, that are directed towards the enhancement of selected disciplinary areas of research, teaching and service. It does not concern itself with the establishment or running of central administrative or service units such as the Women's Center, the Multi-Cultural Center, the Advising Center, or the Center for Teaching and Learning, which serve campus-wide functions and which also use the term "Center."

Rationale

The main reason for establishing an institute or center is to bring into sharp focus the communication, planning, research, or other efforts of faculty and students interested in an area of study. Institutes and centers are often proposed when *ad hoc* or regular departmental structures no longer adequately serve the ends desired.

A center or an institute can enhance professional development opportunities for faculty, build links with industry and the community, provide identifiable campus entities for practitioners, foster interdisciplinary work, aid in obtaining external support, and complement the instructional program. An institute is a unit that has more than one interest and/or function. A center is a unit with one interest and/or function. An institute may encompass a number of units or centers. An academic auxiliary unit will typically develop from a trend of interest and professional activity already pursued by the proposed membership with some degree of success and will usually involve an important matter currently neglected or an area expected to grow in importance.

Functions

The functions of an institute or center may be any, all of, or more than the following:

- to provide opportunities for the professional development of faculty through basic and applied research and development activities, through challenging consultancies either sponsored or unsponsored, and through faculty exchanges

- to foster and facilitate interdisciplinary efforts and cooperation among departments and across colleges
- to provide a clearinghouse for information of interest to practitioners and to conduct workshops and conferences for the continuing education of professionals
- to enhance the curriculum by facilitating and supplementing academic learning
- to develop opportunities for students to practice their academic disciplines
- to provide supplementary educational support by acquiring gifts, general purpose grants, and equipment donations.

Procedures for establishing a unit

The procedure to establish an auxiliary academic unit has two stages, a preliminary stage and a formal stage. To begin the process, a prospectus or preliminary draft of the proposal is submitted via the appropriate college dean or deans to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for presentation to the Academic Deans' Council. The proposal will (1) outline the scope of the proposed unit, (2) describe its relationship to the mission of the institution, (3) provide justification that the proposed unit better serves the needs outlined than the existing departmental, college, or University organization, and (4) provide evidence of fiscal sustainability.

If conceptual approval to proceed is given by the Academic Dean's Council and Provost, the initiators will prepare a formal proposal. This version will consider and answer, among other questions, the following:

- What will the proposed unit do? (research, public service, etc.)
- Why is it needed? Why is the present organizational structure not adequate?
- What is its relationship to the instructional program?
- Who are the unit's founding members, and how does their expertise relate to its purpose?
- What effect will the unit have on the department(s)? (e.g. will it generate released time for faculty or support for student research or internships?)
- What is the organizational structure of the unit? What are its bylaws?
- What support is required for the unit?
- What facilities will be needed? (space, equipment, etc.)
- How will the unit be financed in the short term and in the long term?

- What will happen if outside sources of funding are no longer available after the unit is formed?
- What constitutes membership in the unit?
- What is its advisory board? How is the board selected?
- How will the unit ensure that participating faculty receive credit for their contributions in the review for retention, tenure, and promotion?

This formal proposal will be sent to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, who will appoint an *ad hoc* administrative review committee, chaired by the Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, to aid in developing the full proposal. Simultaneously, the proposal will be sent to the Academic Senate for review and recommendations.

After review by the Academic Senate, the full proposal (including the Academic Senate recommendation and the report of the *ad hoc* review committee) will be referred to the Academic Deans' Council. The deans will make a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs concerning establishment of the unit and will recommend a maximum for University resource support.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will make a determination concerning the technical merits of the proposal and the proposed unit's financial viability, including the identification of any University resources essential to its operation. If the proposed unit is judged viable, the proposal will be forwarded to the President for action.

General considerations

Each unit shall be administered by a director reporting to a member of the academic administration (e.g. Department Chair, Dean, Provost).

Each unit shall have an external advisory board that meets at least annually to provide professional advice and guidance to the director. The academic administrator to whom the director reports shall approve the Board members.

Organized units may not offer courses on their own for credit nor confer degrees, but will do so only through regular academic units. Members of a unit will not have academic titles unless they have them by virtue of an appointment in a department.

Administration of finances of the unit, except for that portion from the State budget, will normally be handled by the Cal Poly Foundation. The director shall be responsible for the unit's budget and for ensuring fiscal solvency.

Units are not authorized to engage in activities (e.g. conferences, grants and contracts, consulting agreements, etc.) outside the usual approval and administrative process of the University.

The director shall submit an annual report following each academic year to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, appropriate college dean(s), and the Dean of Research and Graduate Programs. The report shall include a summary of the year's activities and a financial

report, as well as information on scholarly publications and technical reports, students supported by the center/institute, theses and senior projects completed under the auspices of the center/institute, honors and awards to faculty and students, and any other noteworthy achievements.

Review procedures

Centers and Institutes will undergo review every five years as part of the University's academic program review process. The general guidelines and procedures for review of academic programs also apply to the review of these units. There is sufficient flexibility in the process to allow centers and institutes to develop relevant performance measures and to form review teams appropriate to the purpose and goals of the particular unit.

Discontinuation of Centers and Institutes

It is not uncommon for specialized centers and institutes to decline in activity after many years of productivity. Centers and institutes, whose activities have declined to the point where these designations are no longer appropriate, may be discontinued at any time by majority vote of the current membership. Alternatively, the Provost may recommend to the President that a unit be discontinued, based on the results of the regular (five-year) academic review.