

## **GUIDANCE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CENTER OR INSTITUTE**

*Updated 28 October 2023*

At the University of Arizona, centers and institutes (CIs) are established to:

- convene large scale, forward- and outward-looking interdisciplinary collaborations that complement activities of other academic units
- leverage collaborative strengths to address grand challenges and secure new forms of extramural support to grow research, solve problems, and enhance competitiveness
- disseminate scholarship, impact, and public benefit of UArizona research to local, regional, national, and international communities.

Because the vast majority of CIs focus on facilitating research and scholarly inquiry, the responsibility for administering the process for their establishment, including the request for establishment to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), is handled by the office of the Senior Vice President (SVP), Research, Innovation & Impact (RII). In the special case where the primary goal is to establish a CI related to an instructional or student affairs purpose put forth by another sponsoring (S)VP, RII is still responsible for coordinating the creation, modification, and disestablishment process, and request to ABOR. RII will adapt the vetting process and utilize relevant professionals for the review as warranted.

The [Arizona Board of Regents \(ABOR\) Policy](#) Number 2-222 defines a Center or Institute as an Academic Unit that:

1. Emphasizes research and/or public service;
2. Includes faculty or staff from several disciplines to coordinate research or public service;
3. Disseminates new knowledge or provides technical assistance;
4. Has separate identification in university operating budget;
5. Has assigned faculty and staff;
6. Is recognized by federal agencies providing budgetary support on a temporary basis;
7. May offer course work and continuing education.

ABOR Policy Number 2-223 also requires that any new Academic Organizational Unit, including CIs, be approved by ABOR in a public meeting prior to publicly announcing its establishment, based on consideration of information included in the approval request laid out here by RII.

### **I. Types of Centers and Institutes**

**University-Wide Research CIs:** University Research CIs (URCIs) are expected to drive excellence in research, scholarship and innovation activity through building inter- and trans-disciplinary research capacity. To enhance the visibility, impact and public benefit of UA research, URCIs are expected to create linkages among researchers within the University and with extramural government, industry, and community partners. A URCI must demonstrate its unique ability to meet a strategic need that complements and transcends what can be accomplished in a single academic unit and as such, include identified members from the faculty of multiple academic units.

URCIs are expected to accomplish the following:

1. Lead efforts and design activities that bring together researchers from across campus in large scale, interdisciplinary collaborations that result in new forms of research and shared scholarship.

2. Enhance competitiveness for new forms of extramural support (sponsored and philanthropic) to grow research and engagement to provide substantive public benefit.
3. Enhance competitiveness for the hiring of new faculty that leverages existing strengths in new areas of research and stakeholder engagement, and mentor young faculty by expanding their access to new research areas and faculty colleagues.
4. Enhance the public impact and visibility of UA research by connecting interdisciplinary scholarship to local, regional, national, and international communities.

To grow and succeed, URClS typically require specialized infrastructure (e.g., space, facilities, equipment or professional expertise) distinct from or beyond what can be typically expected from a department or college, and thus have a budget that is fiscally independent. They are expected to generate substantial external funding from either extramural sponsors or philanthropic resources to sustainably support its success. URClS report to the SVP of RII, and RII is responsible for administering periodic reviews.

**Academic Unit Cls:** Academic Unit Cls (AUCIs) are expected to support excellence in interdisciplinary inquiry and collaboration, at a scale primarily within the scope of a department or college. For these definitional purposes, University of Arizona Health Sciences is a single academic unit.

AUCIs may have some specialized infrastructure (e.g., space, facilities, equipment or professional expertise) that typically are contained within the department/college. AUCIs have a separate budget that is fiscally independent and are managed under the purview of the Cognizant Academic Unit Administrator (CAUA) (College Dean, Department Head, or other supervisory official). AUCIs are expected to generate sustainable external funding from either extramural sponsors or philanthropic resources in support of its operation. The Cognizant Academic Unit Administrator (CAUA), is responsible for periodic review process, but reports of reviews must be transmitted to RII along with requests for reauthorization, modification, or disestablishment of the AUCI.

Generally, activities that can be accomplished by personnel with appointments in a single department or office are considered “programs”, “laboratories”, “bureaus”, or “committees”, are not defined as Cls under ABOR policy (see Policy Number 2-222), and do not need to engage in the implementation process described below, as they are a part of the department’s or office’s usual scope of authority, budget, oversight, and review.

**The Title of Institute:** In general, the name institute should be reserved for ABOR-2-222.C academic units that involve a substantial funding or revenue stream, significant number of affiliated faculty from multiple departments or colleges, multi-faceted research or engagement missions, and comprise (or are structured or aspire to comprise) multiple centers with distinct but related missions.

## **II. Process for the Establishment of All Cls**

RII oversees the process for the creation, modification, review and reauthorization of all Cls, including requests to ABOR for establishment, disestablishment, renaming, and transfers of Cls. As such, RII staff are available for ongoing consultation and assistance, and those interested in establishing a CI are recommended to consult with RII before initiating the process.

In general, development of Cls begins with groups of university faculty and staff who develop the concept for the interdisciplinary focus and activities that will constitute the proposed academic unit CI. The group seeks input from relevant and affected CAUA(s). The CAUA(s), singly or collectively, make initial judgement about the necessity of the AUCI or URCl. Informal consultation with RII is recommended at this stage to

gauge the likelihood of successful approval. Proponents of the CI then formally request institutional review for approval by RII.

Approval Requests for new RII CIs should follow the guidance and instructions for necessary documents found [here](#). Documents submitted for the approval request include the completed versions of the following:

- [Approval Request Form](#) (see pdf preview [here](#))
- Organizational chart for the proposed CI
- Budget using [Budget Template](#)
- Letter of support from CAUA
- At least two letters of support
- [ABOR Request to Establish a New Academic Organizational Unit](#)

Upon receipt of these documents, RII performs the initial review for completion, sufficiency, and potential overlap with other extant units, and may collaborate with the proponents and CAUA to further hone the request, as warranted. Following initial review, the approval request is reviewed in detail by RII, who may also seek review from other personnel and offices such as Associate Deans or the Office of General Counsel. The proponents and/or CAUA may be asked for additional information or responses to concerns raised by RII or other personnel/offices, which will be considered in the last stage of RII's review by the SVP of RII. Provisional approval or disapproval by RII will be conveyed to the CAUA by the SVP. Note that no public announcement about the establishment of the CI can occur until after ABOR action, as described below.

Following ABOR policy 2-223, for provisionally approved CIs, RII will lodge a request for approval with ABOR, who will place the request on the next regularly scheduled University Governance and Operations Committee Agenda. That committee will make a recommendation to ABOR to approve, reject, or modify the request for a new organizational unit. Upon receiving the committee's recommendation, ABOR will vote on the request for the CI at a regularly scheduled board meeting. ABOR approval to establish a new CI requires a majority vote of the board.

Written approval by ABOR will be conveyed to the CAUA by the SVP of RII, and upon approval, the CI will be listed or linked on the University of Arizona [website for CIs](#). The Institute/Center may be authorized for an initial term of up to five years, and renewals are reauthorized for a period of up to seven years.

### **III. Externally Funded CIs**

In compliance with ABOR policies, externally funded centers or institutes (e.g., NSF STCs, EFRCs, IUCRCs, etc.) are also required to follow the approval request process described above. Once approved, the CI will enter into the normal initial 5-year review for new CIs, and subsequent 7-year renewal cycles. If an externally funded CI's initial award expires, but it generates a sufficient mix of resources to sustain itself, it can continue to exist subject to the SVP RII CI approval and reauthorization processes. Should an externally funded CI not be self-sustaining from either its original or alternate mix of resources at the time of its review, the default position is that the center will be disestablished, absent a justification and plan signed by the CI director and CAUA outlining the plan to restore it to fiscal sustainability within the current Fiscal Year.

#### **IV. Modification of Existing CI**

The CAUA, singly or collectively, may request to modify or disestablish an AUCI or URCI by submitting a written request to the RII CI Coordinator that describes the desired change and rationale for the modification. These requests will be reviewed by the SVP of RII, and an appropriate action, including a review process, will be taken tailored to the nature of the request.

#### **V. Annual Reporting by All CIs**

Annually, all CIs are expected to develop an *Annual Report* of 1) list of members/affiliates and process used to define membership/affiliation, 2) its activities, outcomes, and impacts of the prior year to internally assess progress and critically evaluate achievement against its goals, and 3) describe its goals and action plan for the upcoming year to continue to advance objectives. URIs are encouraged to utilize input from their external advisory boards in this process when warranted and feasible.

**AUCIs.** The AUCI Director provides this Annual Report to the CAUA, as well as an updated business plan for the upcoming period. The CAUA reviews and discusses this Annual Report and business plan with the Director, finalizes the evaluation, and then approves the action and business plans. The CAUA then submits the Annual Report and updated business plan to RII for recording.

**URIs.** The URI Director provides this Annual Report to the SVP of RII, as well as an updated business plan for the upcoming period. The SVP of RII, or designee, reviews and discusses this Annual Report and business plan with the Director, finalizes the evaluation, and then approves the action and business plans. The Annual Report and updated business plan are recorded by the RII CI Coordinator.

#### **VI. Periodic Review and Reauthorization of All Institutes/Centers**

All Institutes/Centers seeking reauthorization are required to undergo periodic reviews. See "*Guidance for Periodic Review and Reauthorization of Institute/Center*" on the [RII Research Institute/Center website](#) for specific information on the processes. Without such explicit review and reauthorization and timely completion of the attendant processes, a CI will be suspended and/or disestablished after the term of approval has been completed, the CI will no longer be considered a campus unit and is not permitted to continue to act as an academic unit at that time.

If you have any questions, please contact RII Institute/Center Coordinator, Jennifer Chamblee, [jchamblee@arizona.edu](mailto:jchamblee@arizona.edu).