

Guidelines for the Establishment, Operation and Evaluation of Research Institutes and Centers

Policy Statement and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to faculty and administrators on the process for creating a new research institute or center (RIC) and how new and existing RICs will be evaluated. The framework for expanded guidelines is grounded in institutional strategic planning. The [ODU 2014-2019 Strategic Plan](#) mandated a reexamination of policies and procedures governing institutional support for, and viability of, all existing RICs including how they are established and systematically evaluated.

Typically, an RIC is multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary and thus engages in activities that span more than a single academic department or college. The actual operation of an RIC shall enhance the level of externally funded research activity, reputation or prestige in some area of importance to the University (see the current [ODU Strategic Plan](#) as well as the [Research Strategic Plan](#)). RICs may also form to take advantage of emerging opportunities unforeseen by the last strategic planning process. Generally, RICs should strive to become self-sustaining through grants and contracts. A new RIC should be evaluated within three years to determine whether these criteria are being satisfied. It is expected that RICs will usually also benefit graduate programs, public service, teaching indirectly, and visibility of the University; however, these advantages are secondary to the main role as a research center.

Exception: Academic centers and institutes are not subject to this policy and therefore are not officially created or operated under these guidelines.

Definitions

RESEARCH INSTITUTE or CENTER

A University organizational unit that has research as a primary component of its mission and activities. An RIC shall be recognized on a central University website, initially receive some form of department and/or college subsidy and have priority access to ODU's Equipment Trust Fund (ETF) monies from the state.

ENTERPRISE RESEARCH INSTITUTE or CENTER

A University RIC with Enterprise status receives the department, college and Office of Research return of indirect costs on sponsored research projects and reports directly to the Vice President for Research, who will have budget oversight, including the authority to review and approve expenditures. RICs seeking Enterprise status must be reviewed by all interdisciplinary stakeholders, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Office of Research, have detailed sustainability and business plans, and do research in some area of importance to the University.

FACULTY RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A University committee convened by the Office of Research with two faculty appointees per college and one appointee each from the libraries and the Enterprise centers. One faculty appointee will be nominated by the college and the second faculty appointee will be nominated by the Vice President for Research. The Faculty Research Advisory Committee will help establish RIC evaluation rubrics based on mission, goals, and objectives as well as advise on the internal evaluation process. This committee will be chaired by the Vice President for Research or designee.

Establishing a Research Institute or Center

Faculty, departments, and colleges who want to propose the establishment of a new RIC should prepare a formal plan and submit it through the required academic and administrative channels. For actual establishment, approval of the plan is needed and commitment is required in writing from the dean of the college if the RIC is college-based and by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Research if the RIC is interdisciplinary and/or involves multiple colleges. New RICs should add strategic value to the University and have a record of external funding and/or potential funding opportunities.

In the business plan, the capital and developmental costs must be identified for each of the first three years of operation, indicating the sources of funds from the department, college, University, gifts, and outside funding agencies (as estimated). The proposing PI and/or department and college are required to invest in the RIC plan from extramural grants, gifts or internal funds. Within the schedule given in the plan, a new RIC is to become self-sustaining, i.e., its revenues (external grants and contracts and gifts) are equal to or exceed total expenditures (direct costs and facilities and administration costs). Identification of resources is the responsibility of the proposing faculty member, department, or college(s) in collaboration with the Office of Research and the Office of Academic Affairs. A formal plan to establish a new RIC should include an evaluation plan indicating the mission, goals and objectives of the new entity and how each objective can be measured after the initial three-year implementation phase.

All operations of the RIC will be supervised by a director who will report to either: the chair of a department in the case of centers whose members are mostly from a single department; the dean of a college in the case of centers whose members are mostly from more than one department in the same college; or the Vice President for Research or the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in cases where there will be a significant number of the members from two or more colleges. Center directors will be evaluated on an annual basis and are appointed by either the dean of the college, the Vice President for Research or the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs when the RIC faculty and activities span more than one college.

All tenure-track faculty members will have their tenure in an academic department not the center, although funding lines will not be restricted. Existing centers will either retain their current reporting line or have that line redefined on a case-by-case basis after

review by the President, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Research and appropriate dean(s). The President's decision will be final on the reporting line.

Elevating an RIC to Enterprise status requires an application to the Office of Research outlining 1) the interdisciplinary and cross-college complement, 2) resource model and sustainability plan, 3) strategic importance to the University and 4) documented recommendation from all stakeholders (e.g., departments, colleges) to assign their indirect cost share from RIC sponsored research to the new entity. Given their strategic importance to the University and cross-college collaboration, Enterprise RICs report directly to the Vice President for Research.

Evaluation of Research Institutes & Centers

New Institutes and Centers

Evaluation of new RICs shall occur after three years and be led by the Office of Research in collaboration with the Faculty Research Advisory Committee. Criteria for evaluation include a viable business plan, strategic value to the University, documented institutional commitment, and an external funding record and/or continued funding opportunities.

Periodic evaluations of research centers or institutes that have instructional, outreach, and other missions in addition to research will be conducted in concert with the relevant departments, colleges, and Academic Affairs so that the evaluation is holistic rather than just focused on the research mission. Criteria for evaluations of those "hybrid" centers or institutes will be agreed upon among the units directing the evaluation process.

Existing Institutes and Centers

An initial triage shall be done by the Office of Research in collaboration with the department and/or college to identify currently active and inactive RICs. Active RICs shall be assigned to an ongoing five-year evaluation schedule once the initial evaluation is complete. Criteria for evaluation will be identical to the three-year review for new RICs. External evaluations may be solicited in conjunction with internal review by the Faculty Research Advisory Committee and the Vice President for Research.

The Faculty Research Advisory Committee will establish an evaluation schedule and framework that will be communicated to all center directors and stakeholders. Authority for sunsetting RICs that are inactive rests with the Vice President for Research and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the department(s), college, and Faculty Research Advisory Committee.

- Approved by the vice president
for academic affairs
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