OP 74.14: University-Recognized Centers and Institutes

DATE: July 1, 2008

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to ensure compliance with the university policy concerning centers and institutes. Centers and institutes provide stimulating and organized opportunities to enhance research, particularly of an interdisciplinary nature, as well as instruction and outreach beyond what is possible from the traditional academic units. Over the years, centers and institutes at TTU have served the university well. It is the desire of the university that these innovative activities succeed, grow, and achieve excellence. This OP is designed to enhance the future success of centers and institutes at TTU.

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed in April of even-numbered years by the vice president for research (VPR) with recommended revisions presented via the provost/senior vice president for academic affairs (PSVPAA) to the president by May 15.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1. Definitions
   a. Center: a university-recognized center is composed of faculty and, potentially, staff and students who declare a shared technical interest and pursue shared research, instruction, and/or outreach as an enterprise that involves common activities; these may include cooperative research and scholarship, shared resources, operations, facilities, and personnel.
   b. Institute: a university-recognized institute is broader and more complex than a center and may be a collection of centers or an amalgamation of entities.
   c. University Official: the person to whom the center or institute director reports (e.g., a dean, a vice president, or the PSVPAA) may be referred to as the “university official.”

2. Policies and Procedures

The intent of a university-recognized center or institute as an approved organizational unit of the university is to help the faculty, staff, and students to succeed in the pursuit of excellence and achievement in research, instruction, and outreach. In the pursuit of that goal, recognition, registration, and review of centers and institutes confirm a general commitment by the university to the success of the enterprise. A center or institute may not offer formal courses for degree credit or award degrees unless specifically authorized by the PSVPAA.

Accountability and performance-based management is the responsibility of the university official to whom the proposed center or institute director reports as identified in Attachment A.

An up-to-date database of university-recognized centers and institutes will be maintained in the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR).
a. Establishment

Faculty groups with common interests may find it appropriate to organize themselves in a common focus to establish an identifiable unit within the university. Major criteria for the formation of such units are:

(1) Relevance to the university's academic, research, and/or service mission;

(2) Potential benefits to be gained by the formation of such a unit; and

(3) Direct contributions to achieving the goals in the university's strategic plan.

In this context, the university is authorized to establish centers and institutes as they pertain to the academic, research, and service mission of the institution. Each university-recognized center and institute must conform to university policies as well as to state regulations and statutes and requires appropriate oversight, reporting, and review.

Each center or institute must be established by completing Attachment A. Any university financial commitment to the proposed center or institute must be documented (Attachment A, section 5.). Approval shall be obtained from the university official (for example, a dean, vice president, the PSVPAA, and so forth). Final approval shall then be obtained from the VPR. If the center or institute is approved, all documents will be filed with the OVPR.

b. Strategic Planning

Each center or institute is required to participate in the strategic planning process (refer to OP 10.13 on strategic planning and assessment). Progress toward accomplishing the center or institute’s goals and objectives must be reported annually as part of the strategic planning assessment report.

c. Modification

Proposed changes in name, mission, direction, director, or university official shall be submitted through the university official to the OVPR by completing Attachment B.

d. Dissolution

A university-recognized center or institute may be proposed for dissolution by the director at any time through the university official by submitting Attachment B to the VPR.

Alternatively, if at any time the university official believes that it is in the university’s better interests to dissolve a center or institute contrary to the director’s wishes, the university official may request in writing with cause that the VPR initiate a review. The VPR will request in writing a response from the center or institute director in a timely manner not to exceed one year. If disagreement between the director and the university official persists, the VPR shall charge the University Research Committee to conduct a review. The committee will report its findings to the VPR, who will implement the committee’s recommendations.

If dissolved, the center or institute will develop a written plan providing for the timely disposition of any property or assets, to be approved by the university official. When disposition is completed, the university official and VPR shall be notified in writing.
e. Review

Centers and institutes will be evaluated periodically to ascertain if their continued existence is in the best interest of the university and its total program.

New centers and institutes will be reviewed six years after establishment to determine progress towards achieving established goals. All existing centers and institutes will receive a performance review on a six-year basis. Following the review, centers or institutes will be assigned active or probationary status.

1. Active Status: centers or institutes assigned active status will be reviewed again after six years of activity (in the seventh year).

2. Probationary Status: centers or institutes assigned probationary status will be reviewed again after a period specified by the responsible university official, but not exceeding three years. The time line for subsequent review will begin on the first day of the next fiscal year.

The review will be initiated by the VPR by notifying the director and the university official to whom he/she reports. A review team will be appointed by the VPR after nominations are solicited from the center or institute director and the university official. The VPR has the option to appoint one or two members who are external to the university, but they should not represent a majority.

Attachment C provides guidelines for preparation of the review report. Centers and institutes will also be evaluated based upon information submitted in annual strategic assessment reports regarding:

1. Achievement of their missions;

2. Performance of objectives specified in their strategic plans; and

3. Other appropriate criteria that can be evaluated from annual strategic assessment reports (fulfilling the true role of a major, productive center or institute); any tangible benefit to the university (the center or institute should be able to show why it exists and how it connects to the mission of the institution).

Attachment A: Request to Establish a University-Recognized Center or Institute
Attachment B: Request to Modify or Dissolve a University-Recognized Center or Institute
Attachment C: Guidelines for Preparing Review Reports for University-Recognized Centers and Institutes