

Texas Tech University
WHITACRE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Operating Policy and Procedures

[Approved by Executive: 9/17/2025]

WCOE OP 20.01 Centers and Institutes Guidelines

Date: September 17 2025

Purpose: The purpose of this Operating Policy is to define procedures and guidelines for establishing and maintaining Centers and Institutes in the Whitacre College of Engineering.

Review: This OP will be reviewed in summers of every odd-numbered year by the Dean's Office, with recommendations for revision presented to the departmental chairs .

1. Background

The Whitacre College of Engineering supports Centers or Institutes with substantial research activities that receive national recognition. Centers “in name only” without a strong base of activities undermine the credibility of all Centers and the integrity of the research and education enterprise in the college.

TTU OP 74.14 has guidelines related to university-recognized centers and institutes

2. Definitions

- a. A center is a group of faculty and staff that collaborate to achieve a shared vision and a common set of research and/or education goals. Participants should demonstrate teamwork and cooperation that results in productivity and recognition greater than the sum of the individual participants. A Center should be sustainable beyond the tenure of individual participants, while recognizing that its success may still be closely tied to the strength of its leadership.
- b. An institute is broader and more complex than a Center and may be a group of Centers.

3. Policies and Procedures

A center supports operations that contribute to the purpose of the center. These include, at a minimum, obtaining external funding that is channeled through the center; developing a strategic plan; focusing activities and fostering collaborative research efforts among center participants; nurturing faculty and staff capabilities; and maintaining a website that clearly documents the purpose, funding record and key accomplishments of the center. Other examples of shared

operations include supporting staff, sharing equipment or other research infrastructure, providing travel grants, hosting seminar speakers, and strategically investing returned indirect funds to support the research enterprise of the center. A center can focus on research, community/professional outreach and/or continuing education.

In addition, a common user facility in the college can be a center. While TTU educational programming can be supported by a center, it cannot be the primary mission of a center since the academic departments, and the college are the only units responsible and accountable for WCOE academic offerings.

A center with a primary research focus is expected to bring in substantial external funds. The minimum expected external funding levels would be between \$500K - \$1M annually, depending on the scope and nature of the research area. A center is expected to have a national reputation based on the significance of the center's mission and the quality of its efforts as reflected by scholarly publications, conference presentations, workshops and other means of communication and peer assessment.

Educational or research Centers should have participation of at least 2 departments and/or a minimum of 3 faculty members.

a) Establishment

Faculty groups within or across departments may find it appropriate to organize themselves in a common research focus to establish an identifiable unit within the college. Applications for establishing a Center with relevance to research goals of the college are made to the Dean. Supporting evidence are track records of previous scholarship and funding of the members of the proposed Center.

b) Review

All centers report directly to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, who is a delegate of the Dean. The centers will be evaluated biennially.

University wide Centers or Institutes report to the Dean and/or Vice President for Research & Innovation (VPRI).

In addition, all engineering Centers undergo a five-year review by an external review committee, appointed by the Dean. The review committee recommends continuation or termination of the center to the Dean.

c) Termination

A Center may be terminated by the Dean based on the outcomes of biannual or five-year reviews. Appeals to Dean's termination decision may be made to the VPRI.