

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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**To:** Deans, Directors, and Department Heads  
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**Subject:** Policies Governing the Establishment of Externally Funded Research Centers  
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## Introduction

This document describes UW's operating policy for the establishment and regulation of externally funded research centers. Such centers provide a mechanism for departments and colleges to respond to externally fundable research opportunities in a timely fashion, without changing the administrative structure of the university. The desire to foster greater interdisciplinarity, coupled with the overall increase in UW's research endeavors, suggests a reexamination of the administrative procedures and constraints that apply when faculty researchers propose the establishment of such centers. The institution's goal should be to allow for the formation and dissolution of research centers with a minimum of bureaucracy, subject to the need for appropriate levels of administrative and budgetary oversight.

Any center that (1) requires permanent institutional funding, (2) will play a formal role in the hiring of faculty or extended-term-track academic professionals, (3) will play a formal role in the reappointment, tenure, promotion, or extended-term appointments of these employees, or (4) will have responsibility for changing or delivering credit-bearing curricula requires a more complicated set of steps, leading to final approval by the President and Board of Trustees.

## Issues

**Institutional recognition.** It is often important to demonstrate to funding agencies and foundations that clusters of research expertise have official recognition by the institution.

**Avoiding bureaucratic disincentives.** Cumbersome approval processes can serve to discourage faculty initiative and to diminish institutional nimbleness in responding to funding opportunities, even in areas where organized, collaborative research is timely in light of state-of-the-art advances.

**Uncontrolled proliferation and organizational confusion.** The possible proliferation of centers raises three concerns. First, the university has a clear interest in regulating activities that suggest an institutional imprimatur. Second, although most research centers have life spans shorter than those of departments and colleges, the need to staff and equip a research center can lead to unproductive conflicts of commitment and budgetary complexities. Third, the absence of clear bounds on hiring, personnel management, and budgetary practices can lead to confusion or inequities among employees.

The following procedures help resolve these issues.

## **Administrative procedures**

1. The first step in the creation of a research center is the submission of a proposal to the affected department head(s) and college dean(s). The proposal need not be long, but it must define (a) the name and purposes of the center; (b) the director; (c) where the center will be housed, along with any other facility and space issues; (d) to whom the director will report; and (e) an initial list of participating faculty, their departments, and their roles. The proposal should also explain why the creation of a center is important to the accomplishment of the purposes cited.
2. The proposal should carry a set of signatures, similar to those appearing on a greensheet. The purpose of these signatures is to verify that the director and the affected department head(s) and dean(s) are aware of the proposal and agree to its terms.
3. The proposal must receive the approval of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Research.
4. Upon approval, a center shall have authorization to operate for up to five years. At the end of the operating period, the center will cease to exist. Exceptions may occur in cases where, following a review of the type specified below, the approving authorities authorize an extension.
5. The normal greensheet process will govern the distribution of indirect cost returns from externally funded projects. For each project involving a center, this process requires agreement among the director of the center, the affected department head(s), and the affected dean(s), in addition to other administrators.
6. Each center must undergo a review at least once every five years, to assess its research effectiveness, its fiscal viability, and its continuing consistency with the mission of the university. The final action of each review will be one of the following: continuation of the center, change in its current operations, or dissolution. The director of the center is responsible for initiating the review, in consultation with the Vice President for Research.