

Establishing, Evaluating, and Changing Centers, Institutes, and Center-like Units in the School of Medicine and Public Health

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I. Introduction

The University encourages faculty to group together both across and within departments to promote shared teaching and research interests. Departments are the standard unit for organizing teaching, research and outreach in the University, as described in Faculty Policies and Procedures and other faculty legislation. Centers play a valuable function in organizing activities for groups of people who wish to work together in teaching and/or research and/or outreach on specialized topics. Some centers may be of enduring interest and could even be the basis of a new department in the future; others may exist for a more limited period.

The University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) is the governance body empowered to recognize centers as official units within the University. Approval is an advantage to the center because it assists with wide communication about the center's existence and activities and helps assure that other centers will not be established with a substantially overlapping mission or purpose. The approval process allows the University to better understand the nature and resource demands of academic activity that takes place outside the structure of departments.

Approved centers appear on a publicly available listing (<http://apir.wisc.edu/centers.htm>). This list of official centers provides a single point at which UW-Madison faculty, staff, and students may learn about the breadth and depth of center activity and consider opportunities to collaborate or coordinate efforts as appropriate. The list is also a reference to verify the formal legitimacy of a center and its connection to UW-Madison.

The approval process helps to ensure that all scholars who may be usefully involved in the work of a center are aware of its existence, may participate as appropriate, and may avoid redundancy of effort among centers. Since centers call upon a variety of university resources (space, faculty and staff time and effort, use of the university logo), it is important both to the center and the institution to understand how these resources are used, so they can be used wisely.

It is an institutional expectation that all active centers will be officially approved. To be formally recognized at UW-Madison, centers must be: (i) approved by the academic planning council of the sponsoring school(s)/college(s), (ii) approved by the University Academic Planning Council, and (iii) reported to UW System Administration and the Board of Regents.

In most cases, approvals should be initiated before publicity appears about new centers; however, with the consent of the school/college dean, groups may use the terms "center" and

“institute” provisionally for the purposes of seeking external funding. When funding is obtained, the group should seek and secure formal approval for the center in a timely manner. If an unapproved center comes to the attention of a dean or the provost, that office may, on behalf of the UAPC, request that the approval process be initiated promptly.

II. Defining Centers, Institutes and Center-like Units¹

Academic departments, as defined in Chapter 5 of Faculty Policies and Procedures, “consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests.” They are the fundamental academic unit of the university and are charged with delivering the teaching, research and public service missions of the university. Tenure-track faculty positions reside in academic departments, and every faculty member has a primary departmental tenure home. Departments are intended to be long-lived units that provide stability to the academic life of the university. The authority and governance structure of departments are specified and share uniform features across the campus.

In contrast, the provision for centers as recognized units within the university encourages the formation of faculty groups around the scholarly interests and expertise that are not accommodated by the department structure. Centers provide a mechanism for faculty and staff to collaborate to develop depth in a defined range of problems within a discipline, or apply a broader vision to issues that cross traditional departmental structures. A center may provide a useful structure to develop emerging or multidisciplinary approaches to research or teaching, provide a relevant focus for service to external or internal constituencies, promote sharing of resources (e.g. equipment or laboratories), or otherwise support the focused scholarship of groups of faculty and staff in their areas of specialty.

Centers exhibit a wide range of appointment and governance structures. As a result of their focused missions, centers often will have a finite lifetime as the defining scholarly questions are resolved or evolve into new disciplines.

Some centers will have department-like characteristics when they are established, or they may evolve into department-like units over time. Department-like units are governed by Chapter 5 of FPP and should follow guidelines that apply to departments. The provost and the University Committee will resolve questions concerning the interpretation of FPP in relation to structures that have both center-like and department-like characteristics.

UW-Madison has more than 250 centers. Every five years, the provost and the office of Academic Planning and Analysis will work with the deans to review the list of centers to assure that it is complete and current and that appropriate approvals are sought for establishing, restructuring, renaming, or discontinuing centers.

These guidelines do not apply to UW Health centers of clinical excellence, which typically provide focus for clinical activities but may have collaborative relationships with SMPH research or educational centers and institutes. The nature of such relationships will be established through discussions between the dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health, the CEO of UW Health, and the president of the UW Medical Foundation or their designees.

¹ Throughout this document the term "center" will be used to designate centers, institutes, and other center-like units.

III. Establishing New Centers

Official approval of centers is required because centers represent UW-Madison to the external community. The approval process involves peer review to assure that the center activity meets a defined academic need unmet by other structures, that faculty with an interest in the center activity have an opportunity to comment, and that the resource needs of and resource contributions to the center from various campus units are evaluated and vetted by appropriate governance bodies.

To begin the approval process, the group seeking approval should develop a short proposal of no more than ten pages. Proposals should address the following topics, and should include, but not be limited to, the questions raised below:

Purpose and Mission. What is the proposed purpose and mission for the new center? Explain why this activity could not be as successfully carried out in an existing department or center. Describe how the center's purpose is different than what currently exists and how the activities are innovative. Describe the potential of this center to facilitate new and innovative research at the SMPH and the university. Explain how the center will generate new knowledge.

Name. The center's name² should convey the center's focus clearly, even to those outside the field. If the proposed name is similar to that of another unit (an existing school, college, department, academic program, or center), a letter of endorsement from the existing unit with the similar name should be appended to the proposal.

Organizational Structure and Governance of Centers in the School of Medicine and Public Health. How will the center be organized? Will it operate within *the SMPH* or across multiple schools and colleges? If it is interdisciplinary *and/or interprofessional*, how will interactions among departments and schools/colleges be managed? For centers that will be active in more than one school or college, the proposal must specify how the deans will coordinate responsibility for center oversight and review. Ideally, a lead school/college will be specified. If the center will operate such that there is no single lead dean, then the proposal should make the organizational structure and lines of responsibility very clear.

The following points describe the governance, administrative structure, and operating principles for SMPH centers.

1. ***Director:*** *The center director is appointed by the dean or the dean's designee. The dean will determine the term of service and may consult the center's executive committee in the course of appointing the director or in evaluating and reappointing a continuing director.*
2. ***Executive Committee:*** *The executive committee of a center is comprised of five or more individuals who meet regularly, provide direction to the director with respect to the mission and annual activities of the center, review and approve an annual report to the SMPH, make recommendations to the director or dean at her/his request, and advise the director with respect to implementation or change in policies.*
3. ***Center Membership:*** *Centers appoint members who have academic interests that are consonant with the missions of the center and who are prepared to contribute effort which may consist of teaching, research, research training, administrative service, or other center activities. The executive committee appoints new members for a defined term and reviews the membership to discontinue inactive members and seek new members. The proposal should delineate the types of faculty and staff who are likely to serve as members and the identities of initial members, if known.*

²The term "center" is preferred. Although "center" and "institute" were used interchangeably in the past, today the

term "institute" is used for units that have an overarching academic or administrative role and wider academic interests than is characteristic of a focused research center. Furthermore, if "Wisconsin" is to be part of the name, it is appropriate to use "University of Wisconsin-Madison" to avoid confusion with other state entities.

4. Evaluation: See section IV, *Evaluating Centers*.
5. Relationship with other entities: Centers are encouraged to collaborate with departments and other centers in matters such as shared space, effort of faculty members, and sharing of indirect cost returns. These should be written agreements.
6. Distribution of capital exercise funds: Centers and departments should discuss and agree in advance on terms for disposition of the indirect cost return (capital exercise) generated by the grants held by center members, based on such considerations as the assignment of and investment in the space in which the research is conducted, the investigator's salary support and the party administering the grant. The SMPH guideline is that centers receive one-half of the available return on indirect costs generated by grants supporting research conducted in space that is currently assigned by the dean's office to the center, and a negotiated additional return on indirect costs generated by such grants when the center also provides administrative support to the grants.

Financial Support. What kind of funding is needed for the center and what will be its source? If the identified support is lost, what are the prospects for continuation of the center? Please note in particular whether state funds, particularly new state funds, will support the center.

Administration of Grants. When faculty members who participate in a center succeed in grant-getting associated with the center's mission and activities, will the grants be administered by the center or the faculty member's home department? Will it be possible to share administration and in what cases could that be appropriate?

Staffing. It is important to identify faculty and staff who plan to participate in the center's activities. By what mechanism is the participation of new members solicited? Where the interests of centers and departments intersect, it may be important to clarify how activities of participants (faculty and staff) are allocated or credited among participants' various units, or to have procedures for engaging interested parties in discussion of this topic. How will administrative support be provided? Is it adequate to support the mission of the center? If an existing campus unit or an academic department will provide such support, include this information in the letters of endorsement appended.

Space. Where will the center's staff and activities be housed? Is the space adequate? If there is a need for more space, what plans exist to accommodate this need? Have the departmental/sponsoring unit and school/college facilities staff been consulted? If an existing campus unit or an academic department will provide such space, include this information in the letters of endorsement appended. Has the Office of Space Management been consulted and informed of the space to be used by the Center?

Endorsements. Here, it is important to address two issues: shared, similar or overlapping interests, and shared resources. Letters of endorsement may be appended to the proposal.

1. Does the center's function or organization overlap the efforts of departments, schools, colleges, or other centers at the university? Does the center have the support of those who may be affected by it? The proposal should provide evidence that all interested units are aware of plans for establishing the center and were afforded an opportunity to comment on the plan to establish the new entity. Early communication may help in discovering individuals with similar interests and in fostering their participation.

2. Will the center draw on another unit's resources?³ If so, those units should be asked to provide a memo of support for the endeavor, and in it, to articulate a shared understanding of their contribution to the center.

Proposals should include written comments on the proposal, and endorsements from department chairs, deans, directors, and/or key faculty who will provide essential support for and who have an interest in the new center. This process assumes that units have received drafts of the proposal and that concerns are addressed or accounted for in the final version submitted for approval.

Evaluation. What is the proposed evaluation process for the center? The process should reflect the size and breadth of the center's activities. Evaluation plans must comply with section IV and include both an annual report to the responsible dean and a periodic review process that includes evaluators external to the center. Annual reports should be shared with units involved in the center's activities, and should be submitted to the dean. Central questions should include whether or not the center is fulfilling its mission, if improvements are needed, and if the center should persist.

Life Cycle: Growth or Discontinuation. Centers should have sharply defined missions that address specific goals. The issues that stimulate creation of these units will evolve, and it's important to consider the ongoing need for the center. The proposal should address the expected life cycle for the center: Under what circumstances might the unit evolve into a department? Under what circumstances should it cease to exist? For example, centers should be closed when faculty cease to participate or when new leaders cannot be identified or when external resources that support the center are no longer available. The proposal must include specific "sunset" provisions appropriate to the center being proposed.

Process for Proposal Review and Approval

Proposals to establish new centers should first be reviewed and approved by the proposing group and then by any units with which they are nearly connected (e.g. academic department or program). *For SMPH centers that will be active in other schools or colleges, the proposal must be approved by the Academic Planning Councils of those schools or colleges.*

The next step is to seek approval by the *SMPH Academic Planning Council, which will make a recommendation to the dean for approval, denial or modification of the proposal. The dean is responsible for assuring that centers fulfill their missions over time and must approve the creation of a new center.* The dean will send a request to the provost, with a cover memo that clearly signals the need for the center, the center's contribution to the mission of the school, and the fiscal or other resources (if any) that the school will provide.

The provost will then forward the proposal to the UAPC for review and approval. Upon approval by the UAPC, a center will be formally reported to the UW System and Board of Regents, and added to the official list.

³ "Resources" should be understood to include staff, courses, and space as well as faculty time and energy.

IV. Evaluating Centers

Centers must undergo periodic evaluation. These processes should be informed by good practice for similar units, and involve annual tracking of information related to mission-focused activities (e.g., events hosted, number of participants served in outreach efforts, grants administered). If the center was established in a structure other than under a single dean or lead dean, then the evaluation process must follow the process described in the originating proposal.

After approval by the center's executive committee, a brief report should be submitted annually to the SMPH senior associate dean for basic research, biotechnology and graduate education or designee (hereafter, "dean"), and to other units involved in the center's activities (e.g., to the department homes of participating faculty). The report should be submitted within sixty (60) days of the end of the academic year. The dean may simply receive the report or actively engage the director and executive committee in discussions of any aspect of the operation of the center.

The report should include, at a minimum:

- Mission and purpose.
- *A narrative describing center activities in view of the mission/purpose. Examples of activities could include outreach accomplishments, published and in-press manuscripts, presentations, grants awarded and applied for, contracts, projects, and/or trend data. Each center may choose to include the metrics that best convey the center's activities.*
- An evaluation of challenges and opportunities.
- Proposed changes.

Every five years, the provost will initiate a request to deans for a summary report on center activity since the prior review. *SMPH centers will follow the review guidelines outlined below.* Deans will review the list of centers and use the annual reports on file or any other appropriate mechanism established by the school/college to determine if the centers are all still active. Any centers that have ceased operation or that have been formally discontinued will be reported as such. Any center that has had a change in structure that wasn't already reported will be reported at this time. Any center that was created but not approved and comes to the attention of the dean through this process, will be considered for approval at this time. All active, approved centers will appear on the official list of centers, which signifies that they may represent themselves as recognized UW-Madison entities.

Review Guidelines for SMPH Centers

Overview

Each center within the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) should be reviewed every five years. The purpose of the review is twofold: (1) To provide feedback to the center's leadership to help ensure the center's future success; (2) To provide a formal mechanism for feedback to the SMPH on the administrative and research needs of the center.

The review should examine the center's success in meeting its established objectives, planned changes in program objectives, planned steps to achieve new objectives, adequacy of space and other resources made available to the center, and the adequacy of the budget to support the mission. The review committee is invited to make specific recommendations to the SMPH, if appropriate, for improvements in the mission, budget, administration, research focus, space and other resource requirements, and programs and activities of the center.

There is wide variety in the mission, organization and funding structure of the various SMPH centers. A single, uniform review process is therefore impractical and the enclosed guidelines are meant to be flexible to provide useful feedback to the center and the SMPH. For those centers with an extramurally funded core or base grant, the review may occur 6-12 months prior to the submission of a competing renewal application or 6 months after the receipt of the summary statement of a competing renewal application depending on the specific needs of the center.

Review process

An outline for the review process follows.

- 1. The review is usually initiated by a charge memo from the senior associate dean for basic research, biotechnology and graduate education or designee (hereafter, “dean”) to the center director. The dean’s charge memo typically includes the following elements: a request that a self-study be written; a description of specific issues to be addressed; and a due date for completion and submission of the self-study. Ideally, the dean’s summary memo from the previous review is attached as a reference for a starting point.*
- 2. The center leadership will prepare a self-study with the information described below. The length of the self-study will vary depending on the scope of the center’s activities. Although the length of the main text will vary depending on the specific mix of center activities, it should be about 20 pages (excluding appendices).*
- 3. A review committee will be appointed by the senior associate dean. The committee will consist of three or four faculty and academic staff who are not center members but have expertise appropriate to the center’s mission. The dean will issue a charge memo and may request to meet with the committee.*
- 4. After reviewing the self-study, the committee will schedule a site visit and meet with the center director, other center leadership, and groups of center faculty, academic staff, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and university staff.*
- 5. The committee will provide a report to the dean on the center’s strengths and opportunities, and the value of its contributions to the campus and scholarly community. The report should be submitted within one month of the review meeting.*
- 6. The dean will provide a copy of the report to the center director, who will have an opportunity to respond to the report within one month.*
- 7. The center’s self-study, the review committee’s report, the center director’s response, and any additional relevant documents will be forwarded to the SMPH Academic Planning Council for review. The APC will discuss the center’s review and the committee’s recommendations. If the review was requested by the provost, the documents and a memo summarizing the APC discussion will be forwarded to the provost, with possible review by the University Academic Planning Council.*
- 8. The dean will provide an assessment of the contributions and quality of the center to the center director.*

Self-study document

The self-study document should contain the following information. For those centers with a core or base grant, many of these elements can be extracted from the renewal application. In that case, the summary statement from the most recent review should be provided as an appendix.

Mission and history

- *Provide a brief description of the center, its mission and main focus of activity, and history. Describe any changes in mission or focus that have occurred in the past five years. If appropriate, describe how the center's mission and activities contribute to the Wisconsin Idea.*

Campus-wide impact

- *Provide a discussion of the impact of the center on the campus. In other words, what is the center's "added value" to the campus? Describe how the center contributes to the mission of the university.*
- *How does the center interact with departments and programs on campus and with other centers on campus? How does the center foster campus collaborations?*
- *How does the center bring researchers and graduate students together?*
- *How does the center contribute to the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty and to the training of graduate students?*

Leadership, administration, governance, and staff climate

- *What are the responsibilities and authorities of the center director?*
- *Describe the administrative structure of the center, including the roles of key personnel.*
- *Is there an executive committee for the center, and, if so, how often does it meet? Are there regular public (or staff/investigator) meetings to discuss issues related to center activities? How do center investigators and academic staff participate in the governance of the center?*
- *Does the center have an external advisory committee? If so, describe the process for obtaining their advice. If applicable, provide a copy of the most recent advisory committee report as an appendix.*
- *Describe efforts to increase the diversity of center faculty, staff and students and to promote a sense of inclusiveness.*
- *Describe center activities related to the professional development of the staff and describe the processes in place for evaluating academic staff and for review for promotion.*
- *Has a staff climate survey has been carried out in the past five years? If yes, discuss the findings.*

Investigators

- *Describe the process by which new investigators are chosen or recruited to the center. What are the criteria for center membership?*
- *Are there multiple categories of center investigators? If so, does the center provide distinct services for each group?*
- *Is there a review process for maintaining status as a center investigator? If so, how is the review accomplished?*
- *Provide a table listing all center investigators that includes the name, position, home department and school, and the year they joined the center. If the center has assignable space, the table should indicate whether the investigator has office and/or laboratory space within the center.*

Research

- *Provide a narrative of the most significant research accomplishments in the center over the last five years.*
- *Describe the policies related to submission of grants through the center. If applicable, describe the center policy for sharing credit with the home schools of the investigators for those grants that it administers.*
- *List all grants administered by the center over the past five years, using the NIH format.*
- *List technology transfer information such as patents, licensing, and/or IP disclosures.*
- *Provide a complete bibliography that includes all peer-reviewed papers published by the center directors and a representative group of center members over the last five years.*
- *Provide the NIH bio sketches of center members as an appendix.*

Education and training activities

- *Describe any educational or training programs administered by the center for graduate students or postdoctoral fellows.*
- *List the total number of graduate and postdoctoral students directly contributing to and/or benefiting from the center.*

Service and Outreach

If part of the mission of the center is to provide public service and outreach, provide evidence of these contributions at the local, state, and federal levels including:

- *List presentations or activities involving community-based organizations.*
- *List publications developed and distributed to non-technical audiences.*
- *List collaborations or connections that were initiated between individuals and institutions as a result of center activities.*
- *If appropriate, provide evidence of center activities that exemplify the Wisconsin Idea.*

Resources, funding and sustainability

- *Provide a summary of present internal and external funding for center activities.*
- *If the center has assignable space, provide details on the space and any policies related to assignment of space to center investigators.*
- *Provide a list of major equipment, equipment needs, and planned major equipment purchases.*
- *For revenue-generating centers, discuss the extent to which the revenues from services or products are meeting the center's costs.*
- *For revenue-generating centers, does the center have a business model? Is there a process in place for evaluating the success of the business model?*
- *Describe any resource challenges that the center has faced over the past five years.*

Center core services

If the center provides core or shared services, for each describe:

- *The services provided by the core, along with any plans for introduction of new services over the coming years.*
- *The approach used for establishing the pricing structure within the core, and the frequency of review of the pricing structure.*

- *Information on utilization of the service by center investigators, other campus faculty, and off campus entities.*
- *The method for prioritizing activities of the core.*
- *The process for reviewing the center services and determining whether existing services should be continued or new services introduced.*

Assessing outcomes

- *Identify the key indicators used to assess whether the center is meeting its objectives.*
- *What performance metrics are used by the center to determine success?*

Plans for the coming years

- *Discuss the major goals for the center over the next five years, including any new directions for research or other center activities that are contemplated.*
- *Indicate any strategic issues or potential problems that are likely to require attention in the coming years.*

V. Changing Existing Centers

The responsible school/college APC, the dean, and the UAPC must approve changes to existing centers. (Centers that are cross-college or cross-departmental should make use of the approval sequence that was approved as part of the original proposal.) All of the changes enumerated below are reported to the UW System, as required by UW System policy.

1. Renaming Centers

Proposals to rename centers should be approved by the school/college APC and by the school/college dean, and then forwarded to the provost. Center names should not overlap with those of existing departments, schools, colleges, centers, or other units. Appropriate endorsements should accompany the request. Proposals to rename centers will be considered by the UAPC, typically as part of an automatic consent agenda.

2. Reorganizing or Restructuring Centers

Proposals to reorganize or restructure centers should be approved by the school/college APC and by the school/college dean, and then forwarded to the provost. Reorganizations may include combining two or more centers into one, creating umbrella structures, splitting a center into two or more separate centers, or other significant restructuring. Appropriate endorsements should accompany the request. Reorganization requests will be considered by the UAPC, typically as part of an automatic consent agenda. However, if restructuring appears to result in the creation of a new center, then it must be approved by the UAPC according to the guidelines outlined in Section III.

3. Discontinuing Centers

When faculty support for a center no longer exists, if there is no interest among the faculty in participating in or leading the center, or when a center is no longer financially viable, the center should be formally discontinued. Requests for discontinuation may be initiated by the center faculty and submitted to the school/college APC. If, at the time of the five-year review, the dean cannot verify that a center is viable, the dean may recommend discontinuation to the school/college APC. Approved requests will be forwarded to the provost for approval by the UAPC, typically as part of an automatic consent agenda.