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University Research Centers

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I. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

The purpose of these guidelines is to define criteria and process for creation of new research centers, evaluation of existing research centers, and the discontinuation of centers at The University of South Dakota (USD).

While academic, discipline-based departments continue to be the primary units for achieving USD’s research mission, research centers are an important means to advance the University’s objective of excellence as a research institution. Research centers achieve this objective by fostering research focused upon a topic or need, typically requiring multi-disciplinary efforts. They frequently arise in response to campus interest or external funding opportunities, or the strategic objectives of a school or college. However, a research center is not intended to have an indefinite institutional life, and may cease to exist when original objectives are met or when the center is no longer making progress towards its original objectives.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Criteria for Charter and Continuation of a Research Center

Research centers must demonstrate fulfillment of the following minimal criteria:

1. **Mission, Objective and By-laws.** A research center must have a mission statement consistent with that of the university, combined with objectives that

are well aligned with the goals of the USD Strategic Plan, building upon the center's unique expertise or technical strengths. The need for the center must be demonstrated within the context of a core interest of faculty across several departments, or within the context of a unique opportunity for obtaining external funding from the State of South Dakota, a federal agency or other entity. Each center should maintain up-to-date by-laws including but not limited to such issues as how strategic decisions are made, how funds are allocated, the role of the external advisory committee, and financial management procedures.

2. **Unifying Theme.** The center must have a core group of researchers who have created a focused niche with purpose and significant merit. The center will undertake research that otherwise would not exist, creating opportunities for faculty and students to achieve excellence in research. Within its specialized niche, the center must facilitate and encourage collaborations across academic departmental boundaries.
3. **Visibility.** Each center must be highly visible on campus, in the state, and nationally; demonstrating applicable contributions to regional economic growth and societal benefit. Visibility is expected to attract high-quality graduate students, and aid in faculty recruitment and retention. The center will demonstrate dedicated efforts to achieve visibility, such as public events, outreach programs, press releases, scholarly publications and presentations.
4. **Infrastructure.** The center must have a foundation of resources upon which to build, such as secretarial support, space and physical plant facilities, graduate students available as research assistants, and adequate equipment to meet objectives. The fiscal management of the center will include accounting procedures and identification of the individual responsible for fiscal management. The center must have strong leadership with a designated director with proven record of excellence in research and administrative skills, and dedicated administrative effort within his/her normal workload. The center director will negotiate the workload of researchers assigned to or paid through the center, as well as evaluation of these individuals, considering departmental assignment of effort and in coordination with department leadership. Each center will have an advisory group that includes both internal and external members and meets in person or via video or teleconference at least semi-annually. Information Technology Resources will be identified and conform to the centralized reporting structure through Information Technology Services.
5. **Funding for Self-support and Sustainability.** Research centers are expected to support themselves financially from external grants and contracts, obtaining more research funding than could be achieved by individual researchers. Centers must have a clear plan for achieving sustainability with an annual budget and

plan for future funding that clearly places time limits on any institutional support.

6. **Excellence in Performance.** Each center will demonstrate excellence in performance, with measurable milestones developed with input from their advisory group, dean(s), and vice president for research. Excellence in performance may be measured by a number of criteria, including but not limited to (a) grants received, (b) peer-reviewed publications, (c) presentations at professional conferences, (d) graduate and undergraduate students participating in center research and achievements of these students, (e) financial contributions, and (f) disclosure and commercialization of intellectual property. Such defined measures will serve as annual benchmarks to be achieved, demonstrating excellence in performance.

III. DEFINITIONS

Definition of a Research Center

A research center is a multi-disciplinary unit organized to conduct research activities in a specified technical or specialized area of interest or need. A center is not an autonomous unit within the organizational structure of the institution, replacing a department or college; the center director may report to one or more deans or directly to the vice president for research. Centers do not offer credit courses or degree programs but focus upon research, education, and engagement opportunities for faculty and students. Tenured or tenure-track faculty who are members of centers have their primary appointments in academic departments.

Under the category of research center, an entity may be titles center, institute, laboratory, bureau, and so on. Entities with combined research, service and training missions qualify as research centers.

IV. PROCEDURES

Center Review Process

Establishing a new center: Before submitting a proposal for a new research center, the proposed center director or core faculty members should confer with relevant department chairs/heads and dean(s) to obtain internal support for the proposed

center. A proposal for a new research center should be forwarded electronically to the vice president for research, with copies to department chairs/heads and dean(s).

At minimum, the proposal should provide the following information:

1. An executive summary
2. The mission and objectives of the proposed center, as well as a draft of proposed center by-laws for governance.
3. The need (or opportunity) as well as the significance or technical merit of the center in advancing the USD research mission.
4. The breadth and depth of participating faculty, demonstrating an inter- or multi-disciplinary research approach and a critical mass of fully participating individuals who create a competitive collective.
5. Leadership, identifying a director as well as recommendations for the center advisory committee.
6. The funding sources for the center as well as assurance that infrastructure needs (support staff, physical facilities, ect.) are in place, and a proposed budget and justification for years 1 through 3.
7. Opportunities to involve students as participants in the center.
8. Contributions of the center to the visibility of USD in the State, region and nationally, to attract high-quality faculty and students as well as research funding.

The vice president for research will consider the proposal in collaboration with relevant department chairs/heads, dean(s) and other advisors, and make a recommendation to the president for chartering the proposed center. The recommendation of the vice president may be appealed to the president, and the decision of the president is final.

Annual review of existing centers: Unless otherwise determined, a review of research centers is conducted annually by the vice president for research, in consultation with the relevant department chairs/heads; dean(s); internal and external advisory bodies; vice president for academic affairs, finance, and administration; and center directors. No later than March 1 of each year, each center director will forward an annual report of accomplishments as well as plans for the coming fiscal year. The report should follow the outline of the Criteria “1” through “6” set forth above under Criteria for Charter and Continuation of a Research Center. In addition, the annual report should include budget performance for the current year, as well as the budget planned for the next fiscal year. Finally, the report should also demonstrate actual benchmark performance measures against the projected measures.

The annual report is submitted electronically to the vice president for research, with copies to the relevant department chairs/heads, dean(s), and vice president for finance

and administration. The vice president for research shall meet with these administrators and advisory bodies to assess the centers' progress and relevance. No later than March 15, the vice president for research will meet with each center director to provide feedback, as well as to communicate the recommendation to continue, modify, or terminate the work of the center for the next fiscal year. By April 1, the vice president for research shall make a recommendation to the president as to which centers should be continued for the next fiscal year. The recommendation of the vice president may be appealed to the president, and the decision of the president is final. Deadlines may be modified by mutual agreement of the center director and vice president for research.

Special provisions for major centers chartered outside USD: Major research centers that have been chartered by the South Dakota Board of Regents under the State's 2010 Initiative for Economic Development, by federal EPSCoR and IDeA programs, or by other comparable program-project grant programs may submit their most recent annual reports for the sponsor in lieu of the report described above. A copy of the annual progress report with budget should be submitted to the vice president for research by March 1. These centers will undergo campus-level review as described above.

Benefits to Research Centers

The primary benefit to faculty participating in research centers is the opportunity to develop research programs not possible in typical department units. Centers provide direct access to a broader range of expertise as well as priority use of facilities. Successful centers will have access to resources and recognition specified for centers, such as matching funds for faculty development programs, opportunities for Financial & Administration revenue investments for center growth, recognition as an institutional priority in appropriation requests (when applicable), special opportunities for space negotiations and research workload assignments, and designated consultation for marketing and media relations.

V. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

Not Applicable