Institutional Effectiveness in the Office of Decision Support Guidelines for the Formation, Operation, and Termination of University Institutes and Centers

I. Overview

Florida Board of Governors (BOG) regulation 10.015 and USF Policy 10-063 govern the establishment and operation of institutes and centers within USF.

The BOG regulation establishes two types of institutes and centers.

1. University institutes or centers – Generally established by a single university to coordinate research, service, and/or educational/training activities that supplement and extend existing instruction, research, and service. These units are established in accordance with university policy and approved by the USF President. They are the most commonly established institutes or centers.

2. State of Florida institute or center – An entity with statewide mission that may include two or more state universities, established to coordinate inter-institutional research, service, and teaching across the Florida State University System (SUS). State of Florida centers or institutes generally receive special legislative funding and must be approved by the BOG.

[NOTE: Since State of Florida institutes and centers are unusual and require special procedures, these guidelines address only the establishment and operation of University institutes or centers.]

USF Policy 10-063 further defines centers and institutes and their administrative location within the institution.

An institute is an organized research unit (ORU) established on a continuing basis primarily for the coordination and promotion of faculty research interests organized around a broad subject area. Normally, the breadth of research projects and programs transcends department, school, college, or even campus boundaries. The creation of an institute requires clear and strong evidence of service to long-range university goals.

A center is (1) analogous to an institute but is more limited in scope, or (2) an organized research unit that serves a specific purpose within an institute, or (3) a unit that provides specialized capabilities to further research, enhance instruction, or deliver services.
The phrase "organized research unit" refers to collective research enterprises that typically contain in their title the word "institute" or "center" and are defined as follows:

- **University-level organized research units** report directly to a vice president. These units are large scale, often multi-college, interdisciplinary organizations whose missions are directed toward the strategic strengths and initiatives of the University. University-level organized research units may receive some financial support from the USF Vice President for Research and Innovation. The USF Vice President for Research and Innovation must approve proposals for institutes and centers that constitute or are part of a University-level organized research unit, and the Office of Research and Innovation will participate in reviews and evaluations of institutes and centers that fall into this category.

- **College-level organized research units** report to a dean or designee. The mission statements of these units often have an interdisciplinary focus, but they are primarily sponsored by a given college. College-level organized research units may receive some financial support from the college or university.

- **Department-level organized research units** report to and are primarily sponsored and supported by an individual department. A department-level unit reports on a daily basis directly to the department chair.

- **Sponsored-program based organized research units** are established by the signatory authorization recorded on the initial proposal to a funding agency, and receive their designation from a grant competition or block funding offered by a federal or state governmental agency or private foundation. These units dissolve at the conclusion of the funding period unless they submit a successful renewal proposal or request status as a university, college, or department-level organized research unit.

II. **Formation and Operation of University Institutes and Centers**

The USF President grants authorization for the development and implementation of University institutes and centers.

It is important to distinguish between formally established institutes and centers and other units of a less formal nature. In order to request approval and formal designation as an institute or center, a unit must have two or more members, one of whom must be a USF faculty member who is specifically assigned to and compensated for work in the institute or center.

A unit that has not been approved to use the formal designation “institute” or “center” should not represent itself as such. Units in which faculty participation is informal and unassigned should adopt another designation such as Laboratory, Project, Initiative,
Collaborative, Coalition, or Group.

[NOTE: Institutes and centers are, by design, entrepreneurial. Although the University or one of its units may commit internal resources to help initiate and support these units, external funding is expected to provide the largest part of the support for operation and activities. Thus, any proposal to initiate a new institute or center must make a case for its establishment and its ability to attract external funding in a manner that the host unit could not otherwise achieve. It is also imperative that during the formation of an institute or center, a clear budget be developed to include a method of monitoring the auxiliary budget according to USF rules and regulations.]

Proposal to Establish New University Institutes and Centers

The completion of the Institute or Center Establishment Form is required to propose the establishment of a new University institute or center. This form is available on the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) webpage: https://www.usf.edu/ods/accreditation/institutes-centers.aspx

Complete proposals, including the above form and excluding required signatures, must be submitted to Dr. Christopher Combie (combie@usf.edu) in Institutional Effectiveness for review and forwarding to the Provost for further action. If approved by the USF President, the information will be sent to the BOG to be added to the list of USF approved institutes and centers.

III. Reporting Requirements for University Institutes and Centers

BOG Annual Reporting Requirements

Pursuant to Board of Governors’ Regulation 10.015, each university institute and center must submit an annual report to the Board of Governor’s Office of Academic and Student Affairs that includes budget and directory information. The report must be approved by the host university’s Board of Trustees (BOT), or its designee. The USF Provost serves as the BOT designee for the annual reports.

At USF, annual budget reports and directory updates are handled by Resource Management and Analysis (RMA). Due dates for annual reporting are assigned by RMA based on financial complexity with zero budget units having the earliest dates. Reporting takes place August-September.
Seven-Year Evaluation/Review

In addition to an annual report, BOG regulation 10.015 requires all centers and institutes to conduct a formal review at least once every seven years to determine if the institute or center should be continued, classified as inactive, discontinued, or should apply for classification as a State of Florida institute or center. At a minimum, all seven-year evaluations/reviews must include the following elements:

a. A determination of the institute or center’s progress against defined goals and objectives within the context of the institute or center’s mission, university mission, and the current Board of Governor’s Strategic Plan;
b. An assessment of the return on investment of state dollars, if applicable;
c. The need for continuation of the institute or center;
d. Possible changes in mission or organizational structure;
e. Budget reduction or expansion;
f. Date of director’s most recent annual evaluation by the college dean or designee;
g. Recommendations for a status change (active, inactive, or terminated) or change in classification if applicable;
h. Date of the last evaluation/review.

Institutional Effectiveness coordinates the seven-year review and maintains the review schedule. Requests for a change in the review date must be submitted to Institutional Effectiveness for approval by the Office of the Provost.

SACSCOC Reporting Requirements

Institutes or Centers that directly support student learning, student success, and/or student achievement are required by SACSCOC to establish student learning outcomes and to provide annual reports on the assessment of these outcomes. Assessment plans and reports are submitted to Institutional Effectiveness through the SAM reporting system. Details for these requirements are available from Dr. Rebecca Gibbons, revaclav@usf.edu.

IV. College Responsibilities Regarding Institutes and Centers

It is the responsibility of the college within which a given institute or center is organizationally located to provide oversight for activities including budgets. This is especially important in the case of multidisciplinary institutes and centers that involve faculty from multiple departments or colleges.

Deans ensure that institutes and centers, like all other academic and administrative units, are conducting their daily activities in accordance with University policies and procedures with respect to financial operations, personnel actions, agreements with outside entities, and faculty activity reporting including outside activity and conflict of interest.

Colleges provide oversight of institutes and centers with respect to marketing and publicity, ensuring that institutes and centers accurately represent their affiliation with the
University, appropriately use the University name, and comply with all applicable institutional requirements.

Deans are responsible for ensuring that annual reporting requirements are completed and that the required formal reviews of institutes and centers are conducted at least once every seven years (see Section III above).

V. Disbanding/Terminating a University Institute or Center

When a University institute or center is disbanded, the college or other unit within which the institute or center is located must notify IE and complete the appropriate Termination Form located on the IE webpage. The institute or center must also file a final fiscal and annual report. IE will provide notification of the termination to the BOG Office of Academic and Student Affairs, which maintains the State of Florida’s central database of approved institutes and centers. If a disbanded institute or center has been funded by the Legislature, the University must provide documentation to ensure that Legislative intent has been achieved and that the institute or center is no longer required.