

Guidelines for Establishing and Operating Institutes, Centers, Laboratories and Non-Departmental Organizational Units at UTHealth

I. Overview and General Statement

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston ("university") encourages collaborative efforts among faculty to enhance its mission and goals. To that end, the university enables programs, divisions, departments, schools, other organizational entities and the university itself to establish collaborative, non-departmental units for activities that complement and/or enhance its missions of education, research, patient care, and/or public service. Such units are most often formed to conduct activities that require or are enhanced by interdisciplinary collaborations but in some cases may be established to enable activities that require highly specialized equipment and/or expertise not available in individual schools, departments, or divisions. Such units are most commonly referred to as institutes, centers, or laboratories and may be established and operated by these guidelines.

[**Note:** These guidelines do *not* apply to Organized Research Units (ORUs) as defined by The University of Texas Board of Regents, Research Service Centers, and traditional "core laboratories". See following section III.E. *Exceptions* for information and links to guidelines for formation and operation of these units.]

II. Descriptions

Institutes, centers, and laboratories are commonly described as follows, but these are general descriptions rather than precise definitions. Flexibility is allowed in the naming conventions as appropriate to best convey the purpose, functions, and scope of a unit.

1. Institute

A major unit that performs, coordinates and/or promotes research, education, patient care, and/or public service activities on a continuing basis over a broad area that often extends across school, campus and/or institutional boundaries. The unit may involve partnerships with non-university entities such as hospital partners or government agencies. Because of their typical size and breath, institutes will most often be organized at the university level, and the President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight. A unit that conducts activities involving multiple departments or divisions of a single school may be designated an institute with the approval of the President.

2. Center

A unit that conducts research, education, patient care, and/or public service in a designated field that requires interdisciplinary participation or is established primarily to provide facilities, expertise and/or administrative support services for the work of programs, departments or other organizational units of the university. A university center involves more than one school or unit of the university and a school center involves multiple departments or operating units of a single school. The President or designee will

have responsibility for institutional oversight of a university center and the relevant Dean or designee will have responsibility for a school center.

These guidelines do not apply to a center in which substantially all participating faculty members are from the same academic department or division, although the naming of such department centers must be approved by the relevant Dean and the President.

3. Laboratory

A non-departmental unit that establishes and maintains facilities for research, education, patient care, and/or public service, often with the help of designated research staff appointed in accordance with university policies. The President or designee will generally have responsibility for a laboratory that supports the work of faculty from multiple schools and a Dean or designee will generally have responsibility for a laboratory that supports the work of faculty members primarily from a single school.

These guidelines do not apply to a laboratory in which substantially all participating faculty members are from the same academic department or division, although the naming of such department laboratories must be approved by the President and relevant Dean.

The Office of Academic and Research Affairs (OARA) has established guidelines for establishing research service centers and traditional "Core Laboratories" that provide specialized research services to the university community(<http://www.uthouston.edu/research/research-service-centers.htm>).

The primary functions of university and school institutes, centers, and laboratories are to conduct and/or support UTHealth's primary missions of research, education, and clinical care activities, especially those that are interdisciplinary or highly specialized in nature. Additional functions may be:

- disseminating information through conferences, meetings and other activities;
- providing intramural or extramural training opportunities and access to facilities for observers, visiting students, professional trainees and collaborators from other institutions and organizations as well as UTHealth faculty, students, and trainees;
- obtaining extramural funds; and
- providing public service related to UTHealth's mission and expertise.

The designation of an institute, center, laboratory or other organizational or administrative unit at UTHealth will refer only to an entity devoted primarily to a non-profit activity engaging faculty, students, trainees, staff and colleagues in activities related to the missions of the university.

In all cases, institutes, centers, laboratories and other organizational or administrative units at UTHealth are subject to all policies and procedures of the university and the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System and may be subject to reporting and auditing requirements.

Institutes, centers, and laboratories may not offer a degree or certificate program requiring Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) approval unless included on the THECB's Inventory of Institutional Administrative Structures. Faculty members of these units may

participate in teaching in THECB approved degree and/or certificate programs of UTHealth schools (see *Section III.C. Faculty Membership* below).

If an institute, center, or laboratory wishes to establish an advisory committee/council, the establishment must be in accordance with the Regent's *Rules and Regulations*, [Series 60302](#).

III. Process and Procedures

A. Establishment

1. University Units

Proposals for the establishment of a university institute, center, or laboratory (collectively referred to as "the unit") must be made by the President, the Executive Vice President for Academic and Research Affairs (EVPARA) or a Dean, and should include the following information:

- a. The proposed name of the unit;
- b. The purpose of the unit and how it will support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the university;
- c. The organizational and governance structure for the proposed unit, including a list of the head/director and others with significant administrative and management responsibilities;
- d. A description of the initial and any anticipated future activities, programs and functions of the unit;
- e. A description of space needs and the commitments for their provision;
- f. A proposed budget and source(s) of support for start-up funding, commitments and anticipated sources of support for ongoing support, and an assessment of the prospects for sustainable funding;
- g. Criteria and eligibility for faculty membership, the appointment process, expectations for participation and a statement specifying periodic review for continued appointment;
- h. A list of participating faculty members;
- i. Any potential overlap or duplication of purposes and functions of the proposed unit with other university or school departments, divisions, or operating units; and
- j. Any potential overlap or duplication of purposes and functions of the proposed unit with other University of Texas System institutions or units.

Proposals shall be distributed by the EVPARA to the Executive Council, the University Leadership Council and the Inter-Faculty Council for comments. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

After comments and any revisions by the sponsor, the EVPARA will submit the final proposal to the Executive Council for consideration and a recommendation to the President who will make the final decision. A list of all university institutes, centers, and laboratories shall be maintained on the OARA website.

2. School Units

Proposals for school institutes, centers or laboratories will be made by the Dean or Department Chairs and should include information comparable to that for university-based units in Section II.A.1 above including how the proposed unit would support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the school as well as those of the university if applicable. Proposals from Department Chairs shall receive an initial review by the Dean to determine if they should be considered further.

Proposals approved for consideration by the Dean should be distributed for comment to appropriate departments and units within the School as determined by the Dean and to the Deans of other UTHealth Schools. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

Following the internal school-based review, the Dean shall make a final decision whether to approve the proposal. If approved, the Dean will provide a copy of the proposal to the EVPARA who will distribute it to the Executive Council for comments which the Dean may consider for possible modifications of the proposal.

The Dean will submit the final proposal to the President who will make the final decision. A list of all school institutes, centers, and laboratories shall be maintained on the OARA's and school's websites.

B. Naming

Proposals to name an institute, center, or laboratory for an individual or non-university entity must comply with [HOOP Policy 65 Naming Policy](#).

C. Faculty Membership

Prior to receiving an appointment in a university or school institute, center, or laboratory, a faculty member must have an academic appointment in a department of a UTHealth school.

Recommendations for initial faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure (if applicable) must originate from the department(s) in which the faculty appointment is being proposed or in which the current faculty member holds an academic appointment. Requests for appointments, promotions, and tenure shall follow established department, school, and university processes.

The department chair(s) shall have overall responsibility for a faculty member's assignments and evaluations. Assignments for work within an institute, center or laboratory and any related salary support, space, or other resources must be mutually agreed upon by the department chair(s) and the head/director of the relevant unit.

D. Review of Unit

Institutes, centers, and laboratories should be reviewed at least every six years to determine whether the unit shall continue, undergo substantial modification, be phased out or be discontinued. Key considerations for the review include whether the goals of the unit remain relevant to the university, whether the unit is achieving its goals, and whether the unit is an efficient and effective use of university resources.

University institutes, centers, and laboratories will be required to submit these review reports to the President, who will determine the format and schedule for each unit. The EVPARA will distribute the report to the Executive Council for a recommendation to the President who will make the final decision.

School institutes, centers and laboratories will submit review reports on a schedule and format to be determined by the relevant Dean for each unit. After consideration of the report and obtaining any desired input, the Dean will recommend an action to the President, who will make the final decision.

E. Exceptions

These guidelines are not applicable to Organized Research Units or Research Service Centers and “core” laboratories at UTHealth as defined below.

1. Organized Research Units (ORUs)

Institutes, laboratories or centers that meet certain criteria specified by the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System are termed Organized Research Units (ORUs). These are defined as units that: (1) are explicitly established to provide support for *interdisciplinary research* that complements the academic goals of departments of instruction and (2) have anticipated *annual budgets of at least \$3,000,000*, representing the sum of research grants and contracts managed through the unit’s operations as well as institutional and other funding. Units that meet these two criteria must be established and operated according to HOOP Policy 169 *Establishment and Review of Organized Research Units* and Regents' Rules and Regulations, [Series 40602](#).

2. Research Service Centers (RSCs) and “Core” Laboratories

A Research Service Center (RSC) is an organizational unit within an academic department, institute, center, school, or UTHealth administration that provides research related services or products to users principally within the UTHealth community. An RSC recovers the cost of its operation through charges to its users. The costs of providing the services or products are charged to users on a ‘rate’ basis. The difference between an RSC and a laboratory as defined above is that an RSC is primarily a fee for service unit providing technical service and support for the work of other investigators. A laboratory is established primarily to design and conduct experiments for members of the laboratory.

Federal or other research sponsors may provide funding from center, program project, or other grants to support “core laboratories” (often referred to simply as “cores”) that provide services to investigators participating in the grant at no cost or at a subsidized rate. In these cases an

RSC that contains such a core may be required to charge different rates to faculty participating in the grant than to other users.

Information about organizing and operating RSCs and core laboratories at UTHHealth may be found at <http://www.uthouston.edu/research/research-service-centers.htm> .

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