Introduction

Centers and Institutes (CIs) are valued and encouraged at Rutgers University as vibrant and highly productive components of the University community. Increasing proliferation of CIs and a confusing framework for their creation, review, and renewal or dissolution, has led the Committee on Academic Planning and Review (CAPR) to be charged with analyzing the current status of CIs at Rutgers and making recommendations for improving the way CIs are organized and administered. Our previous version listed CBIs to include Bureaus, but no Bureau is listed anymore at the Rutgers Website for Centers and Institutes. For example, by action of the Board of Governors on February 10, 1998, the Division of the Life Sciences (DLS) was created and charged with broad New Brunswick-wide research, teaching, and service mission, thereby serving as the successor of and subsuming the Bureau of Biological Research. Therefore, the abbreviation is now CI. The purpose of this document is to propose specific procedures to enhance the operation and support of CIs throughout the University.

This report reviews and provides recommendations on issues central to CIs, including mission, criteria for membership, the responsibilities and benefits of membership, financing, reporting structure, and guidelines for the creation, review, and renewal or dissolution of CIs.

An earlier draft of this report was circulated to Deans and CI directors for comment, and this revised version has benefited from the advice and suggestions received. After the merger of Rutgers with UMDNJ and the introduction of the Responsibility Center Management (RCM) budget system, additional revisions have become necessary.

The Rationale for CIs

CIs serve several important purposes at Rutgers and at other academic institutions and a number of factors have led to their creation. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1) Rapid changes in and across various disciplines require the organization of faculty from different departments in interdisciplinary units to enable new scholarly activities not feasible in the existing departmental structure.

2) CIs can be used to attract scholars and/or retain outstanding faculty, especially in emerging fields, by offering them affiliation with a unit that is focused on and offers increased visibility for their particular area of interest.

3) CIs can include members from both clinical and basic science departments thereby fostering translational research.

4) CIs can serve as a fund-raising channel for federal, state, and private programs that seek to enhance certain scholarly activities with great societal impact.

5) CIs can be used to promote interactions between University members and people
from government, business, and/or non-profit sectors who share similar scholarly and policy interests.

6) CIs bring enhanced visibility to the University by creating a critical mass of researchers in an area that could not be easily achieved within individual departments.

7) CIs can serve as a focus for outreach, economic development, and service to local, state, and federal governments.

**Categories of CIs**

Existing CIs range in size from a few faculty housed within a department, to free standing buildings with dozens of faculty, staff, and unique resources. Unfortunately, there is no meaningful distinction among the terms centers and institutes, at least as they have been used at Rutgers in the past. Given this situation, one way to bring some measure of order to current and future CIs is to categorize them according to their level of approval and reporting relationship. The following four categories of CIs are considered in this report.

A. Initial approval and renewal or termination of such a CI is by the President and the director reports to the President. Typically, these CIs will have a substantial number of members from more than one decanal unit.

B. Initial approval and renewal or termination of such a CI is by the Chancellor and the director reports to the Chancellor. Typically, these CIs will have a substantial number of members from more than one decanal unit.

C. Initial approval and renewal or termination of such a CI is by a Dean and the director reports to the Dean. Typically, these CIs will be almost completely comprised of faculty from a single decanal unit, but not from just a single department in that unit.

D. Initial approval and renewal or termination of such a CI is by the department chair and the Dean of the unit to which the department belongs, and the director reports to the department chair. Typically, these CIs will be almost completely comprised of faculty from a single department.

Such a categorization facilitates the administration of CIs, since each supervisor could form and meet on a regular basis with a council of directors of CIs reporting to that supervisor.

There is a fifth category of CI that is not addressed in this report: those that do not seek University resources or recognition (either explicitly or implicitly by using the word “Rutgers” in their title). CIs of this type can be valuable, and it is not the intent of this report to set up administrative impediments to their formation.

In the future, it may be worthwhile to make distinctions in the use of the titles Center and Institute. An Institute would normally have a broader mission than a Center, and might include several Centers within it. The use of the titles Rutgers Center and Rutgers Institute must be reserved for those entities that are officially recognized by the University.
Creation, Review, and Renewal or Dissolution of CIs

Some of the reasons for the creation of CIs, discussed above, rise unexpectedly and require quick administrative action that is not normally possible within the departmental structure. For example, the creation of a department to house a new interdisciplinary area requires a complex approval process, whereas a CI can be created within an administrative unit without higher level of approval. Therefore, CIs represent a more dynamic structure in academic settings and provide administrators with greater flexibility and opportunity to adapt to competitive pressures. However, the ease of creation of CIs also presents a challenge, since without guidelines about the process of creating, reviewing, and renewing or dissolving them, CIs whose initial mission is no longer of sufficient importance may continue indefinitely, and waste scarce resources. CAPR believes there is a need for and benefit in having a formal University-wide process for the creation, review, and renewal or dissolution of CIs. Such a process is proposed below.

Creation of a CI

A basic requirement for the establishment of a new CI is that it not unreasonably duplicate activities already performed elsewhere in the University. For example, to create a CI almost entirely comprised of faculty from a single department would require justification of why its purpose is distinct from that of the department.

A proposal to establish a new CI must include the following basic information: (i) name of the CI; (ii) name of the director (typically a tenured faculty member); (iii) a mission statement; (iv) goals and expectations of accomplishment. These must involve clear outcomes and measurable impacts and they will serve as key elements in the review at the time renewal is considered; examples under “Expectations” below; (v) budget required (are funds available and if not, what are the expected sources of funding); (vi) staff needed and how they will be funded; (vii) space needed (if not available, a plan for identifying space); (viii) membership policies, including both the responsibilities and benefits of membership; (ix) an initial list of participating faculty and expected contributions; (x) organizational chart; and (xi) confirmation that a reasonable effort was made to inform impacted units about the plan for the CI.

Based on the category of the CI, as described above, a proposal for the creation of a new CI is then submitted for approval to either a department chair, Dean, Chancellor, or the President. CIs might also be created by the Board of Governors or the State of New Jersey, but this requires first approval by the President or his designee. If the CI is approved, the approver submits a letter of approval up through the academic chain of command to the President or Chancellor, with a copy sent to CAPR, and the CI Director. The letter of approval should contain a justification for establishing the CI, a plan for its funding, staff, and space needs, the length of time for which the CI is approved (typically not to exceed five years), and the criteria and conditions under which the CI can be evaluated for renewal.
Expectations, Review, and Renewal or Dissolution of a CI

While the specific criteria used to evaluate CIs across disciplines will differ, CAPR believes there is a benefit in a uniform process that guarantees consistency of CI reviews. Therefore, it will be important to lay out what is expected from a CI and how its performance is measured. These data may include publications and citation indices, elected memberships in academies, national and international prizes, but it could also include symposium invitations and honorary lectureships. Of course they also include outside grant awards, including individual awards, multi-investigator grants, and infrastructure and equipment grants, but other markers might apply to the arts and humanities. All accomplishments should be in support of the mission and goals of the CI.

Six months prior to the renewal/termination date of a CI, those CIs requesting renewal should submit to their approver a report which demonstrates how the CI has achieved the goals and met the expectations outlined in the initial proposal for the formation of the CI and has satisfied the criteria and conditions for renewal given when the CI was approved. In addition, the report should contain the goals and expectations of accomplishments if the CI is renewed, and any changes in the mission or other information about the CI appearing in the proposal for the establishment of the CI. The approver then has three options: (i) Terminate or renew the CI without additional review; (ii) seek an internal review of the CI to provide additional information before deciding; or (iii) request that the CI undergo an external review (similar to a strategic review of a department) before making a decision. If option (ii) is chosen, CAPR strongly recommends that outside letters of evaluation be solicited, just as in faculty promotions or review of grant proposals. This can provide a peer review of the reputation and accomplishments of a CI relative to external organizations with similar goals. If option (iii) is requested, (perhaps if the result of option (ii) is inconclusive), approval is needed from the President or Chancellor, with the review to be supervised by CAPR, and funded by the President or Chancellor.

After any additional input is obtained and a final decision is made, the approver of the CI submits a letter either terminating or renewing the CI up through the chain of command to the President or Chancellor, (or Board of Governors, if appropriate), with a copy sent to CAPR, and the CI Director. If the CI is renewed, the letter should contain a justification for the renewal (including any internal or external review reports), any changes in funding, staff, or space, the length of time for which the CI is renewed, (typically not more than five years), and the criteria and conditions under which the CI can be evaluated for further renewal. Dissolution of a CI should not infringe contractual obligations to faculty and staff. As such, dissolution of a CI requires a plan to reorganize human resources, and institutional, outside funding, and infrastructure issues within the organizational framework of the University. This plan should be spelled out in the termination letter of the CI, along with a justification for termination (including any internal or external review reports).

Transitioning of Currently Existing CIs

The review and renewal or dissolution process described above applies to all existing CIs, unless such a process conflicts with existing contracts or agreements. In the case of CIs with such conflicts, the CI should still be reviewed and the contracts/agreements evaluated. This
gives an objective basis for possible renegotiation of contracts that could benefit both the CI and the University. Since many existing CIs do not have an explicit renewal/termination date, (and hence there is no date to start the review process), CAPR recommends that this date be replaced by a date set by the approver that takes into consideration the length of time the CI has already been in existence, but that should be no more than five years in the future.

**Budgeting of CIs**

Under previous budget models, funding for CIs has come from a variety of sources, both internal and external to the University. Especially in the sciences and engineering, where Facilities and Administration costs (F&A) on grants can be substantial, funding of operational and recruitment expenses of CIs has been based in the past on a percentage of the F&A. The obvious advantage of this approach is that the University is only supporting CIs that are successful in obtaining outside funding and thus even with no sunset provision unsuccessful CIs will lose their funding. There are also potential disadvantages with this method of budgeting. First, it gives CIs an incentive to compete for faculty to process their grants through a particular CI, even where there is no real intellectual connection with the work of the CI. In addition, since grant funding can be highly variable, it may be difficult for CIs to do much long-range planning.

Under RCM, many CIs are funded through their decanal units similarly to departments. However, CIs that are designated as RCM units receive a combination of F&A return and any gifts that are restricted to that CI. CIs are allocated appropriate costs associated with research and support space used by the CI. A dean or chancellor may decide to provide a subvention to the CI, but this is a discretionary decision. Research space may also be used for the instruction of undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers. In that case, tuition dollars for instruction go to the school, and the school should bear the share of the RCM space charges in proportion to the amount of space used for course instruction.

Furthermore, CI faculty also teach in their tenured departments, while their research space is in the CI building. Therefore, a formula is required to balance instruction and research space for CIs under the RCM model as is done for decanal units.

**Principles Governing Shared Department/CI Responsibilities for Faculty**

Because of the shared responsibility between departments and CIs, a CI faculty search should be initiated jointly with the Dean where tenure of the incoming faculty would reside. To avoid later problems, before an offer is made, there should be an agreement between the units involved, specifying the distribution of the salary allocation, space allotment, start-up cost, and the responsibilities of the incoming faculty to the department and to the CI. This may vary greatly with the specific CI involved. For example, in some cases CIs may be fairly autonomous with their own funding sources for faculty recruitment. But because tenure resides in the department, the University’s commitment to a joint hire must include a commitment to cover a tenured faculty member’s salary as necessary.
Members of CIs require action by both the CI and the home department in cases of merit and promotion. It is important that the decanal units receive input from the center as well as the primary department in such considerations.

Shared return on royalties and subvention can be used to foster the cooperation between departments and CIs that is essential for faculty recruitment and retention. The financial benefit could then be used for joint recruitment and retention of faculty members, their research programs, activities, and infrastructure.

There are two reasons that a CI member can lose membership. One is due to a negative review of her/his contribution to the mission of the CI; the other is due to dissolution of a CI. If membership ceases, faculty would lose the portion of their line and/or salary that is provided by the CI, which has to be replaced by the unit responsible for tenure. It is therefore important that decanal units budget so that salary is available if CI membership ends. Members that revert 100% to a unit different than the CI, would also need to be physically relocated if the CI needs to reassign space and resources.

Faculty workloads should be consistent with a balance of research and instruction in departments and CIs. In addition, whether a faculty member is in a department or a CI, the same criteria should be applied in determining whether a reduction in teaching obligations is appropriate in light of a faculty member’s research responsibilities and accomplishments. However, CIs may in some cases emphasize certain scholarly activities, such as an increased focus on research. In such cases, membership in the CI may be in part dependent on productivity in the specific scholarly activity.

**Additional Recommendations**

1) While CIs can differ widely in their scope, at a minimum, each should place on its website the mission, membership policies, infrastructure resources, list of faculty with their research interest and additional affiliations, and annual report of the CI.

2) When starting CIs, long-term source of funds should be identified by the Dean, Chancellor or the President.

3) Once rules for the establishment, review, and renewal (or termination) of CIs are agreed upon, they need to be publicized and made official by adding them to University regulations.

4) We recommend that the University devote a web page to officially recognized CIs that highlights and promotes their value and accomplishments rather than just lists them. Although there may be too many CIs to do this for all of them, it could be done for a limited number of “Signature CIs.”

5) We recommend that the President, Chancellors, and Deans who supervise a substantial number of CIs, form and meet on a regular basis with a council of directors of CIs reporting to that supervisor.
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