

University Research Centers

Application/Award/Operating Guidelines

Rationale (Overview)

Public and private funding agencies are focusing increasingly on finding solutions to interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research problems that will have a significant societal and/or economic impact. To assure Georgia State's competitiveness in attracting research funding to address these critical challenges, the University has adopted a strategic plan that calls for establishing University Research Centers (URCs). URCs include the University Level Research Center (ULRC) and the Emerging University Level Research Center (Emerging ULRC). University Research Centers will support problem-based projects that are built on successful interdisciplinary collaborations and address challenges facing our rapidly changing society. University Research Centers are administratively supported by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and are distinguished from college level research centers, which are established and administered by their respective academic unit.

The University Level Research Center will provide its faculty value-added administrative support and operational efficiencies necessary to facilitate the translation of scholarship into grant applications, economic development activities, products and services. The center will facilitate the recruitment of accomplished research faculty and scientists, and the highest quality graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, to carry out the research and scholarly activities of the center. A critical milestone for the center will be to attract a running three (3) year average of at least \$1 million per year in center-, institute- and/or program-level funded projects, and a total of \$3 million per year in funding from all sources.

Similarly, the Emerging University Level Research Center will provide its faculty administrative support and operational efficiencies to facilitate grant applications and economic development outcomes. The center will be limited to a maximum of three (3) years of support and it is anticipated they will seek designation as a University Level Research Center. An Emerging University Level Research Center typically will have received a three (3) year running average of at least \$1 million in annual external federal support.

Definitions

University Research Centers are semi-autonomous organizational structures within the University. Based on the Senate Research Committee's research center definition, they are single or multi-disciplinary units consisting of multiple researchers that are organized to facilitate the conduct of research, scholarship, and/or creative activities. University Research Centers are typically organized around a fairly specific theme, issue, project, or policy topic and often encompass interdisciplinary work spanning a number of academic fields. Depending on the reason for its creation, the lifetime of the center may be limited by time and financial commitment to completing a particular project or agenda. University Research Centers will reside administratively, and report to, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

The Board of Regents Policy states "a research 'center' provides an organizational base for research in a given academic area or closely related area. It often provides a vehicle for

interdisciplinary research in a given area involving faculty and students from a variety of internal administrative structures. A center may be involved in offering continuing education activities related to its area(s) of interest. The center structure may facilitate efforts of the college or university to obtain extramural funding in specific areas. It serves as a formalized link between the academic community and the professional community in the area(s) of focus. A center, however, is not an autonomous structure within the internal statutory organization of a college or university. It is administratively most often an appendage of one of the traditional administrative structures, such as a department or institute. A center is not involved in the independent offering of credit course or degree programs.”

University Research Centers have a number of goals, all of which are directly related to the quality and extent of their scholarship and research, and include but are not limited to:

1. Increasing collaborative/interdisciplinary research activities.
2. Obtaining increased external grant and/or contract funding.
3. Performing quality, cutting-edge research and scholarship that leverages the unique faculty expertise and facilities available at Georgia State.
4. Solving problems recognized as having important societal impact.
5. Creating an intellectually stimulating environment.
6. Attracting world-class research faculty and scientists, and the highest quality graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
7. Providing an infrastructure to translate research and scholarship into applications with societal and/or economic impact,

University Research Centers are founded on the premise of a specific benefit to develop and support a more robust and strategic set of university supported research activities as a key mechanism to advance Georgia State’s multidisciplinary and collaborative research agenda, funding growth, unique research training opportunities, and to provide the basis for increasing the University’s competitiveness for federally funded program project and center grants.

General Guidelines for Establishing a Center

It is expected that a University Research Center will possess, at a minimum, the following:

1. Scholarly or research focus that is aligned with the University’s strategic initiatives and goals.
2. Ability to address disruptive interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research problems that will have a significant societal and/or economic impact.
3. Ability to strengthen the University’s “brand” and improve its academic and research reputation.
4. Potential to transform the University and allow it to be recognized as, or quickly become, a leading research program among its peer and aspirational-peer institutions.
5. Ability to raise and/or compete for external funds that will make the center fiscally sustainable.
6. Ability to recruit exceptionally world-class faculty and research scientists, and high quality graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
7. Potential to impact the discipline on the national and/or international levels.

Any college-level research center, area of focus or group of faculty may request designation as a

University Level Research Center if it meets these current minimum standards by making an application to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development. The application should document evidence that the center meets the above criteria for such designation, including funding levels (see proposal and center requirements below).

In order to further develop a critical set of opportunities for new University Level Research Centers, existing college-administered research centers, areas of focus or new groups of faculty that want to be considered for university level research center designation, can apply to become an Emerging University Level Research Center. Emerging University Level Research Center designation is intended to support the founding, development and growth of new or emerging research centers that have the strong potential to meet the goals and framework to grow into University Level Research Center within a three (3) year period.

The Emerging University Level Research Center (incubator) program will provide the support of a University Research Center “launch” staff, which has the experience and knowledge to help provide the center faculty and staff with core administrative support to start-up, grow and run the day-to-day center functions so that they may focus on their scholarship, science, and grant proposals. The “launch staff” will (as appropriate):

1. Support the faculty team to establish the strategic and action plans for the center.
2. Support the faculty team to define the performance metrics for the center.
3. Organize meetings to begin the process of developing strategic and action plans, performance metrics, general vision, mission and specific goals of the center, as well as establishing scientific collaborations.
4. Assist with advertising, recruiting and hiring personnel for the center.
5. Assist in facilitating the process to develop administrative and workload agreements with central administration colleges and departments.
6. Support the establishment and administration of financial accounts and develop annual financial and performance reports for the center.
7. Assist in locating and developing office and lab space for the center.
8. Ensure appropriate and adequate information technology support for the center.
9. Assist with website creation, communications and public relations plan development for the center.
10. Assist in the purchase of research supplies, equipment and tools for the center.
11. Oversee and assist in the development, completion, and submission of grant proposals, and their approval process, and post-award support for the center.
12. Convene internal and external advisory groups.
13. Train and transfer responsibility to permanent managing director and staff.

An Emerging University Level Research Center will be provided with program support for up to three (3) years, annually renewable based on its progress toward meeting the goals as outlined in the center’s performance plan and documented in their annual reports. At the end of three (3) years, if not before, they may request a special review to be designated as an ongoing University Level Research Center.

In addition to the criteria for creating a University Research Center (above), it is expected that transitioning from an Emerging University Level Research Center to a University Level Research Center will include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Satisfactory annual performance reviews.

2. Strategic plan for expanding the scope (as appropriate) to meet the milestone expectations of a University Level Research Center.
3. Commitment from the primary academic unit(s) to support the transition to a University Level Research Center.
4. Appointment or a proposed plan for the appointment of a permanent director and the requisite staff to support the new center.
5. Demonstrated ability to attract at least \$3 million per year in funding from all sources, including \$1 million per year in center-, institute- and/or program-level funded projects.

Guidelines for Proposal Submission

The process to establish a University Research Center (University Level Research Center or Emerging University Research Center) typically has two stages, a preliminary stage and a proposal submission stage.

In the preliminary stage (prior to proposal preparation), the following should be addressed:

1. Determine the proposed center's alignment with University's goals and priorities described in its strategic plan (<http://www.gsu.edu/strategicplan/>).
2. Define the proposed center's relationship with current academic units, identifying its "value proposition".
3. Create a 3 person board that would help to identify and negotiate the variables impacting the proposed URC and its participating departments (e.g., research expenses, graduate students, center dissolution).
4. Engage the appropriate deans, department chairs and/or institute directors to seek their support for the proposal, including commitments of funding and administrative assistance.
5. Engage the appropriate college deans, department chairs or institute directors to enlist their support, particularly for the participation of department faculty members in the proposed center.
6. Demonstrate the center's potential for attracting research funding from external sources to provide evidence of fiscal sustainability.
7. Engage the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Provost and other members of central administration (if appropriate) to address financial and other commitments that will be needed from central administration if the proposal for a new center is approved.

The formal proposal should address the following:

1. Provide evidence that new activities, or an increase in existing activities, require the establishment of the proposed center.
2. Describe the combination of faculty expertise, research infrastructure, and external factors that creates an optimum environment for the center's success.
3. Describe the existing or planned interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research collaborations that provide a foundation for the center.
4. Identify the senior leadership and faculty that will initially populate the center.
5. Provide specific details regarding the needed and committed resources from the University and external partners (if appropriate), including proposed timelines for securing resources.

6. Describe the proposed timeline for launching the center.
7. Provide a detailed budget describing the resources needed (and source of funds) for all programs and activities in the center.
8. Provide a strategic plan for attracting funds to support the research and research training (e.g., graduate students and postdoctoral fellows) in the center.
9. Provide letters of support from the Deans and/or Chairs of the academic units participating in the center.

Proposal Review and Center Designation Process

To review a proposal for establishing a University Level Research Center or Emerging University Level Research Center, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development will constitute an advisory panel, in consultation with the Provost and Senate Research Committee, of external experts in the area of center's proposed focus. The advisory panel will be charged with evaluating the center's proposal and ancillary materials to determine alignment with the University's strategic plan, the potential for cutting-edge contributions to the center's field of study and the potential for innovation and/or other scholarly outcomes that will drive economic impact and/or public benefit. The advisory panel will provide a recommendation regarding establishment of the center to the Vice President. Based on the University's strategic priorities, the President, Provost and Vice President will determine whether a center be designated as a University Level Research Center or an Emerging University Level Research Center.

General Operating Guidelines

With the designation of University Level Research Center or Emerging University Level Research Center status, the center will be guided by the following general operating principles:

1. Center will reside administratively, and report to, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.
2. Faculty will be hired through a joint process that includes the center and the primary academic unit(s). Faculty appointments will be made in both the center and the primary academic unit.
3. Faculty promotion and tenure decisions will be the responsibility of the primary academic unit with full participation of the center director. Applications for tenure will be reviewed, awarded and held in the primary academic unit.
4. Graduate students will be appointed in their primary (degree granting) academic unit. The academic unit will have administrative responsibility for all aspects of the student's academic program.
5. Postdoctoral fellows will have their primary appointment in the center with the option for an adjunct appointment in the appropriate academic department. Postdoctoral fellows will be expected to enroll for course credit in the respective academic unit(s). The center will have administrative responsibility for all aspects of the fellow's research programs and professional development.
6. Staff will be hired and administratively managed by the center.
7. Space will be allocated and managed through the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

8. Sharing of the academic unit's portion of F&A (indirect cost) funds derived from individual grants of center faculty will be 50% to the center and 50% to the academic unit. In those instances where center faculty have primary appointments in more than one academic unit, the distribution of IDC funds will be determined by an algorithm that takes into account the faculty members' percent contribution to the funded award. To incentivize the center to increase its large interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research projects, sharing of F&A funds from center-, institute- and/or program-level funded awards will be 70% to the center and 30% to the academic unit.
9. Instruction (teaching) and service commitments for center faculty will be determined jointly by the primary academic unit(s) and the center director.

Annual Report Requirement

University Research Centers are required to submit an annual report detailing, but not limited to, the following:

1. Accomplishments for the year ending with an emphasis on the goals and target metrics outlined in the University's strategic plan.
2. Goals for the year beginning with an emphasis on the goals and target metrics outlined in the University's strategic plan.
3. List of all publications that are a part of the center's programs, and seminal contributions in the field/area of study.
4. List of the center's research proposals and awards.
5. List of graduate students and/or postdoctoral fellows with a description of their progress.
6. List of innovations and/or other scholarly outcomes with an economic development or public benefit impact.

Guidelines for the Continuation/Renewal of Center Status

On a yearly basis, the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, in consultation with internal and external experts (as appropriate), will review the center's progress toward meeting its goals as outlined in the center's performance plan and documented in its annual reports. The center director will be encouraged to provide a list of specific metrics for performance review that acknowledge any unique approaches the interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research problems the center is addressing. Based on the strategic priorities for the University, the President, Provost and Vice President will determine the center's continuation status.

At the end of the University Level Research Center's fifth (5th) year of operation, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, in consultation with the Provost and Senate Research Committee, will appoint an advisory panel of external experts to conduct a comprehensive review of the center's performance to date and its proposal for continuation. The advisory panel will evaluate the center's proposal and ancillary materials to determine their alignment with the objectives of the University's strategic plan, the potential for cutting-edge contributions to the center's field of study and the potential for innovation and/or other scholarly outcomes that will drive economic impact and/or public benefit. The advisory panel will provide a recommendation to the Vice President regarding the center's proposal for continuation. Based

on the strategic priorities of the University, the President, Provost and Vice President will determine the center's continuation status as a University Level Research Center.

(Approved: Senate Research Committee, March 19, 2012)