Guidelines for Research Center/Institute Review at Portland State University

Purpose of Research Center/Institute Review at PSU

Centers and institutes facilitate the academic and research functions of PSU, as well as provide student services. The center/institute review process outlined here addresses centers and institutes with research functions only. Review of student service centers is the responsibility of EMSA. OAA is responsible for review of centers and institutes with academic functions. The overall goal of the review is to provide directors, deans, the Provost and the Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships the opportunity to evaluate research center/institute performance, direction, future prospects, and return on investment.

The research center/institute review process is accomplished through a recurring schedule of data gathering, analysis, goal setting, and reporting. Ideally, research center/institute review should coincide with review of the academic program with which the center/institute is associated (see Guidelines for Academic Program Review at Portland State University), however, review independent and off the cycle for academic program review may also be appropriate to meet institutional objectives.

Deans are responsible for setting research center/institute review schedules for their units. Reviews should occur every five years, or more frequently if institutional priorities dictate. If a research center/institute is integral to specialized accreditation, the dean and department chair may mutually decide to coordinate research center/institute reviews with the accreditation cycles.

Procedures

Research center/institute review procedures are outlined below. Center/institute directors may modify these procedures to accommodate particular circumstances in consultation with the Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships, Provost, and Dean.

Preparation

Deans develop a schedule for reviews of research centers and institutes in their unit in consultation with Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships and the Provost. A college’s full rotation schedule of research center/institute review should be on file in the Office of Academic Affairs and in Research and Strategic Partnerships.

At the beginning of each academic year the dean will meet with the research center/institute director and the Associate Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships to develop a timeline for the reviews and to finalize agreements on the information that will be required.

The center/institute director will prepare review materials as described below. Research and Strategic Partnerships will assist by providing relevant sponsored project information for the review.
Review Process

The director prepares a report on the research center/institute. The center/institute report should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. An overview of research center/institute establishment, purpose (including definition of type as defined in the Process for Establishment, Elimination or Alteration of Academic Units), and history that addresses goals and objectives in relation to the overall university mission, themes, and priorities
2. Other pertinent contributions to the university and community
3. List of affiliated faculty, their position, FTE, and roles
4. List of administrative and research staff and FTE assigned to the center/institute and other administrative support
5. Undergraduate and graduate students involved in center/institute projects including their source of support in past 5 years
6. Proposals and awards in the past 5 years including PIAF number, sponsor, amount requested, amount funded, PIs and coPIs, and time period (may not apply to centers/institutes without external funding)
7. List of non-sponsored project efforts and accomplishments in the past 5 years
8. Center/Institute associated publications, presentations, workshops, symposia, etc. in past 5 years
9. Non-PSU collaborations (academic and community)
10. University-provided funding support in the past 5 years (source, amount, and purpose)
11. Assigned square feet (university-owned and leased)
12. Other university resources
13. Critical assessment of external funding environment and/or community support for center/institute activities and future directions, goals, and objectives for the center/institute
14. List of potential external reviewers

The dean coordinates the review of the director’s report with the external reviewers and prepares a semifinal report that incorporates external reviewer comments and summarizes the overall performance of the center/institute for submission to the Provost and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships.

The Provost and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships provide comments on the dean’s semifinal report and, in consultation with the dean, develop a final report and recommendations. The Provost and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships provide an assessment of the return on investment in the center/institute and approve the final report, its recommendations, and funding.

When operational or functional changes are recommended in the final report, the Provost and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships may require periodic reports on the progress in implementing the changes, and may make continuance of a center/institute conditional upon successful implementation of required changes. If elimination is the ultimate recommendation, the decision will proceed through the appropriate process map for faculty consultation. If implementation of required changes in center/institute operations is successful an additional review will typically not be required for five years following the prior review.
Use of External Reviewers

Research centers/institutes undergoing review are expected to include external reviewers in the process. Directors should submit names of potential reviewers to their dean, who may add additional names to the list in consultation with the Provost and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships. Two to three external reviewers should evaluate the center/institute review report. A complete assessment of center/institute capabilities and prospects may require campus visits by the reviewers. Deans are expected to pay expenses related to the external reviews and site visits.

Guidelines for Evaluation

PSU’s investment in centers/institutes underscores the university’s commitment to strategic and potentially transformative initiatives that provide a service to the people of Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, and the World. The following criteria should be considered during evaluation of center and institute performance and strategic value to the university.

Focal area. The fundamental mission of the university is to provide teaching, research, and service. All centers and institutes at PSU must address one or more aspects of this fundamental mission.

Transformational. PSU must be strategic in it’s investments to ensure maximum benefit. Investments in centers and institutes should establish PSU as the preeminent source of information, teaching, and research.

Self-supporting. Centers and institutes may require an initial infusion of funds for establishment and ongoing support, but after 3-5 years the program should demonstrate the capability of generating revenue sufficient to cover ongoing costs.

Return on investment. Return on investment can be measured in many ways: external funding and F&A recovery, publications, student success, engagement with the community, service, etc. The Dean, Provost, and Vice President for Research and Strategic Partnerships must weigh the benefits of a center/institute’s activities against the costs to the university.

Faculty and students. Centers and institutes should engage multiple faculty and students to create a critical mass of intellectual capital for continued growth and productivity. They should draw exceptionally talented new faculty and students to PSU.

Impact. The centers and institutes should address issues relevant to the outside world.

Statutory requirements. Centers/institutes created by legislative action should successfully fulfill the charge to the organization by the statute.