

Guidelines for Establishment and Review of NJIT Research Labs, Centers, and Institutes

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Research Labs, Centers and Institutes is to enhance the research and training efforts of the faculty and students at NJIT and to serve the community. Research Labs, Centers and Institutes are intended to promote a focused area of research and may require participation of faculty from a single department, or across departmental and college boundaries. These entities serve as a venue for scholarly activity and intellectual creativity, focal points for interaction with research sponsors, and serve to amplify NJIT's competitiveness in obtaining external research funding. The primary academic activities of the University are conducted by departments, schools, and colleges. Research Labs, Centers and Institutes can complement the standard academic structure where such need arises, for example in promoting interdisciplinary research that involves multiple departments or colleges. Research Labs, Centers and Institutes are expected to benefit undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-doctoral trainees by providing opportunities for research-related educational and training experiences.

This document recommends procedures for establishment and review of NJIT Research Labs, Centers, and Institutes.

II. DEFINITIONS

The terms "labs," "center" and "institute" have been used as synonyms in describing focused areas of research at NJIT. While this is the practice at many institutions, there are many others that attach specific definitions and expectations to these three terms. The following definitions of these terms are recommended:

Labs or Laboratories: An informal designation which does not require any special approval process by the University. The formal name of the Laboratory should be 'registered' with NJIT's Sponsored Research Administration (SRA) so that (a) a listing of the Laboratory's specialized capabilities can be advertised both within and outside of NJIT through NJIT's webpage and (b) there is no duplication of laboratory names on NJIT's campus.

Center: A collaborative effort, centered on a specific research or educational/training activity, often with participants from more than one Department or School. A Center is administered by a Director. Centers may report to a Department Chair, Dean or the VP for Research. The reporting structure must be detailed in the Center proposal (Section IV). By definition, Centers are collaborative efforts among at least three individual faculty and not the product of single individuals. The procedure for establishing a Center is described in the next Section.

Institute: A large, integrative unit, usually with participants from more than one College or School. An Institute may contain one or more Centers within its administrative structure. An Institute is administered by an Executive Director or President that reports to the Provost or President of the university. At a minimum, an Institute's approval will follow the same review process as a Center. However, the larger size and therefore impacts and risks associated with the formation of an Institute may necessitate additional requirements for its approval.

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTER

Centers are meant to facilitate research and education while addressing an unmet need. The establishment of a Center should lead to an intellectual environment that brings people together to solve scientific, technical, or societal problems. The Center proposal should clarify how the formation of the entity will serve as a means of focusing resources to advance these goals. Approval of a new Center is based primarily on the value of the proposed unit to the mission and goals of the sponsoring Department, College, and/or University as well as the likelihood of obtaining outside funding for support and sustainability within a reasonable period of time. Additional evaluation criteria include budgetary and space requirements as well as plans for including students and postdocs. In proposing a Center, the participants should be clear in their proposal how the formation of this entity will serve as a means of focusing resources to facilitate research and education to solve scientific, technical, or societal problems. Each Center must demonstrate a clear need for faculty members and staff to work together in a single administrative structure that allows them to carry out a research program more efficiently and effectively than they would be able to do working individually or in informal partnerships.

A Center may be established under one of the following general criteria:

A. Existence of core faculty and staff expertise at NJIT

An existing group of faculty and staff who are working together on common core research problems or themes can be formally recognized as a 'Center' based on a sustained track record of excellence resulting from that group and its activities. In motivating the formation of the Center, the proposing faculty should specifically address the need for a formalized Center and how this designation will advance the University's mission and substantially improve the group's efforts to facilitate research and education by solving scientific, technical, or societal problems.

B. Immediate Need, New Grant/ Contract Opportunity, University Strategic Direction

In some cases, a significant funding opportunity may be available that requires a "Center" or other umbrella organization to exist in order to respond to that opportunity. The University (or a School/College or a Department) might elect to establish a Center in the Strategic area where national or regional need is expected. Immediate needs resulting from regional, national, or international events (eg. Hurricane Sandy) and/or recent scientific discoveries may create immediate opportunities for establishment of a Center. The University may elect to embark on a new research area either based on its mission and/or a perceived long term benefit. In such a case, the proposal should address - in addition to the requirements of Section IV - how the proposed Center advances the University mission in the declared area, and the available faculty and staff expertise in that area.

Interim approval of Center status may be given in order to expedite the response to a funding opportunity or to provide a mechanism for a group to organize in order to respond to a funding opportunity. Interim approval shall be limited to one calendar year. To facilitate the expedited approval, a simplified application process is required and no NJIT resources are committed during the Interim period. Centers established under this criteria must be reviewed and evaluated for continuation under Section V.B after the 1 year interim approval.

IV. Application Process

Faculty or academic administrators seeking to establish a new Center or renew an existing Center submit a proposal to the Direct Report Department Chair and/or Dean as indicated in Section g – Governance

Structure of the Project Plan as well as to the Vice Provost for Research (VPR). A standing Center Review Committee (CRC) consisting of research active faculty will review the proposal and provide a recommendation to the VPR. The SCRC shall have a total of 7 members who are appointed by the Provost. 4 of the members are selected from a list recommended by the Faculty Senate. The remaining 3 members are chosen by the Provost. Committee members will serve staggered two year terms. During the review process, the CRC as well as the VPR may also seek input in the proposal's evaluation from internal and/or external groups. Normally, the CRC will review a Center proposal within 1 semester. For Center proposals using the 'Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity' criteria, the CRC will review the proposal within a month. The Committee's comments and recommendations are to be considered by the Vice Provost for Research before a final decision is rendered.

The following information must be included in the proposal.

PART I: Executive Summary

- a. Proposed name of Center
- b. Proposed name, rank, and departmental affiliation of Center Director. The Director must be a faculty member (Tenured, Tenure-Track, or non-Tenure Track (eg. Research Professor)).
- c. A mission statement detailing the purpose and need for the Center, particularly the need for participating faculty members to work together in a single administrative structure. The request to develop a Center must clearly and succinctly define the purpose of the new Center. This mission statement as well as defined metrics provided in the developmental plan will provide the basis upon which later evaluations of Center activities will be made.
- d. A statement detailing the relationship of the Center's mission to the strategic plans of the participating Departments, Colleges, and other units within the University. The strategic rationale must clearly define the benefits that the Center will provide to the University.
- e. Risk Analysis: A concise evaluation of the potential risks associated with the development and implementation of the Center must be discussed including areas such as cost risks (e.g. equipment acquisition and maintenance, salaries, laboratory operations), safety/ environmental risks, legal/ regulatory risks. *(This section is not required for Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity.)*

Part II: Project Plan

The main section of the proposal is a project plan for the Center over a 5 year period. A detailed project plan with an explanation of the proposed Center activities, plan for fostering student involvement in research, key personnel, timeline for development, and supporting analyses will form the basis for the proposal. The Project Plan must include the following:

- a. Description of Proposed Activities. A description of the research activities to be undertaken by the Center, and its relationship with ongoing activities in academic units.
- b. The role of the Center in undergraduate and graduate student preparation, participation, and degree programs.
- c. List of Participating Faculty. A list of participating core and affiliate tenured and tenure-track faculty, research faculty, and administrative staff and their academic affiliations should be included, as should an appendix containing curriculum vitae (2 pages maximum per person) of the core participating faculty. Included in this section should be a brief summary of the Director's qualifications to lead the effort. All tenured and tenure-track faculty appointments associated with a Center, regardless of the source of support, require a primary academic department appointment.
- d. Description of the proposed location/facilities. This description should include existing facilities within the participating departments, colleges, and University as well as proposed facilities/location which would be required as part of the Center.

- e. Funding. This section should include three components:
- A description and list of existing external funding of participating faculty which will contribute to the Center's activities. Gifts and Endowments in support of a Center should be included.
 - Analysis of future external funding: A concise evaluation of the opportunities for seeking and obtaining external funding support including targeted funding opportunities and other funding sources. Pending grants/ contracts should be included in this section.
 - Proposed Center Budget for 5 Years: It is recommended that some part of the overhead from grants/contracts to participating faculty may be provided to incentivized research to faculty and the Center. Any overhead return to the Center should be in addition to what is normally given to the individual faculty member. Any overhead return to the Center must be used to support the research and educational mission of the Center. An estimate of the anticipated overhead return and budgeted expenses for those funds should be provided.

Committed Departmental, College, and University resources: Describe and document any funding commitments on behalf of the participating Departments, Colleges, and University. Supporting letters documenting the support should be included in an Appendix. The committed funding may be in the form of direct or indirect costs. Indirect costs such as space, other facilities, and general administrative costs should be specified. The proportion of the Director's time to be dedicated to the Center, and needs for an Assistant Director, needs for other administrative staff and for clerical or technical staff, etc. must be described and source of funding detailed. *It is expected that upon final approval of the Center, the Center's Director, participating faculty, as well as NJIT administration and participating colleges and departments meet their obligations as specified in the proposal to support the Center.*

(This section is not required for Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity.)

- f. Evaluation Criteria. A detailed list of qualitative and quantitative measures and associated goals that will be used to evaluate the success of the Center must be provided. Among other measures, the plan must specify explicit goals regarding the number of graduate students and/or post-docs supported, research funds generated, faculty release time paid from Center projects, and indirect costs recovered. *(This section is not required for Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity.)*
- g. Governance Structure. Needs of an individual Center may require a reporting structure to a Department Chair, Dean or VPR. It is strongly recommended that the Center's faculty discuss the proposed structure with the Chairs and Deans prior to submitting a proposal. The reporting structure must be detailed in the Center proposal. The proposal should outline the selection process for the Center Director and governance structure for the Center including the roles of participating faculty and Advisory Board.
- h. Sustainability and Exit Strategies: Identify a plan for making the Center self-supporting and describe the key indicators that will be monitored as criteria for implementing exit strategies to dissolve the Center. Discuss the implications of the proposed exit strategies (e.g. impact on staff, faculty and students, impact on academic degree programs) that will be employed should they become necessary. *(This section is not required for Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity.)*
- i. Sign-off page including signatures of all participating Faculty, and the Department Chair and/or Dean as indicated in Section g – Governance Structure of the Project Plan.

Appendices: Any necessary data or supporting documents relevant to the proposal. Include documentation from the appropriate departmental, college, or university officials that confirms the commitment of any space and/or funding required by the Center. *(This section is not required for Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity.)*

Establishment of a Center has implications for the Departments, Schools, and Colleges with participating faculty. Centers involve Department/School/College personnel and facilities. Any Departmental or College funding or infrastructure commitments, including ‘release time’ for the Center Director or other Center administrators, student support, administrative or secretarial support, office or laboratory space, must be included in the “Funding” section of the proposal and documented in the Appendix.

If the direct report of a Center as defined in Section g of the project plan is a Departmental Chair, approvals of the Chair, Dean, and VPR are needed. Centers reporting to a Dean require approvals of the Dean and VPR.

Faculty whose proposal was not approved at a particular level can appeal at the upper level, including the President’s Office.

The completed proposal with Sign-Off page is to be delivered to the Vice Provost for Research for final approval. A final decision from the VPR should be communicated to the Center Director within 30 days of receiving a recommendation from the CRC. For Center proposals using the ‘Immediate Need or New Grant/ Contract Opportunity’ criteria, the approval for an Interim Center should be communicated to the Center Director within 1 week. In the event that a proposal is not approved, the VPR should provide some constructive feedback to the Center Director concerning the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal.

V. ANNUAL REVIEW, EVALUATION, REAUTHORIZATION/TERMINATION

A. Annual Review

All Centers must submit a report annually to the Administrator to whom they report with a copy to the Vice Provost for Research. The annual report should give an account of research and training activities performed, involvement of students and Post-docs in such activities, and contributions of the unit to the strategic plan of the University. Updates or modifications of the Center strategic mission and project plan (Section IV) should accompany the annual report. The annual report should include the following sections: (a) Goals (which can remain the same year to year) (b) accomplishments including but not limited to publications, patents, external funding, and broader impacts (c) future plans (d) major modifications in structure, mission or membership, and (e) financial summary showing expenditures and revenues for the past year and plans for continued funding.

It is highly recommended that Centers provide opportunities for sharing outcomes with the NJIT community through web pages, social medial, research symposia and/or seminars.

B. REAUTHORIZATION/TERMINATION

Centers will be reauthorized periodically to determine whether their continued existence is justified and in the best interest of the University. Centers should be discontinued (i.e. sunset) when they no longer serve the purpose for which they were created. At the end of the establishment period, the existence of the Center will terminate unless it is specifically reauthorized to continue following its review and evaluation. Centers with Interim approval are reauthorized at the end of one year. As part of their reauthorization process, Centers that were established with Interim approval must provide a complete Project Summary and Project Plan as specified in Section IV. New Centers are reauthorized at the end of their first three years of existence. Existing Centers are reauthorized once every five years.

In the final year of authorization or on the occasion of a major change in structure, mission, or leadership, each Center will submit a self-study and undergo a thorough review and evaluation of its activities and accomplishments. Reauthorization usually would not be granted unless the Center has achieved its stated

goals (Section IV). The review should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Director and their suitability to continue in (or assume) that role.

Renewal of the Center must follow the same approval process (Section IV) required for the initial establishment of the Center. The review of a Center is based on an evaluation of the Annual Reports, the proposal upon which the unit was formed, the Center's self-study report, and an updated Project Plan.

ADDENDUM

'Grandfathering' of existing centers.

Upon adaption of this policy document, existing Centers may request to be 'grandfathered' for a period of 2 years. During the first 6 months of this period, Centers which wish to be 'grandfathered' must submit to the VPR an Executive Summary as outlined in Section IV. At least 1 semester prior to the expiration of the grandfathered period, the Center is required to submit a full proposal for Reauthorization according to the guidelines above.

For Centers reporting to the Dean or the VPR, it is expected that they have their own "Department Cost Center". This means that faculty within a Center could be PIs on proposals even if the Center Director is not involved in the proposal. In fact, there are situations, where the Center Director is not involved in a particular proposal. However, the Center Director's signature is needed for all proposals emanating from the Center.

The Teaching load policy for faculty within Centers follows the NJIT policy and the individual faculty member's Departmental policy. Student support and advisement, intellectual property, and funding allocated to faculty could be "claimed" both by the Center and by the Department/ College to which the faculty member belongs.