

Guidelines and Procedures for Establishing Centers, Institutes, and Specialized Testing or Service Laboratories at Stephen F. Austin State University

Centers, institutes, and specialized testing or service laboratories (hereafter referred to as “centers”) are entities within Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) that engage in educational, research, scholarly, service, outreach, and/or faculty development activities that directly support the mission of the University. They include all entities at SFA that represent themselves as a center even if they do not incorporate the term “center” in their name, including institutes and specialized testing or service laboratories (refer to University Policy A-71).

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a formal process for the recognition, effectiveness, and accountability of centers operating at SFA, including their fiscal management and adherence to policies and procedures of the University, as well as to state and federal laws and regulations.

Creation of a Center

A center may be established within an academic department or division of a college, or by the University, and may be interdisciplinary. To establish a new center and for initial recognition of an existing center, a proposal must be submitted to the appropriate administrative level (see below).

Center proposals should include the following sections:

1. Mission of the Center – The mission of the center should clearly support the mission of the University and support the University’s strategic plan.
2. Principal Activities – The proposal should list all of the following descriptors that apply to planned center activities:
 - a. Research (indicate if this represents $\geq 50\%$ of center activities)
 - b. Service
 - c. Contract Services
 - d. Outreach
 - e. Faculty Development
 - f. Student Services
 - g. Other (please describe)
3. Goals and Objectives – Short-term and long-term goals and measurable objectives should be outlined that clearly describe current and proposed center activities and expected outcomes.

4. Organization – The organizational structure of the center should be outlined, including its relationship with the appropriate department(s) or division(s), colleges(s), and/or the University. A list of participating faculty and/or staff members should be provided along with a description of their roles in the center. Center leadership should be described. In addition, the proposal should clearly indicate a clear line for reporting. For example, in academic areas a center in a single department would report to the department chair, in multiple departments within a college would report to the dean of the college, and in multiple colleges would report to the Provost/VPAA.
5. Resources – Current sources of external and/or internal funding should be outlined, and/or plans for seeking funding, and/or a description of how the center will operate effectively without a specific source of funding, if applicable. This section should also include a description of institutional commitments and space requirements or commitments.
6. Budget – A minimum of a one-year operating budget should be provided. If no budget is required, explain how the center can effectively operate without funding.

Approval of a Center

Proposals will be approved by participating department chairs, academic deans, and the appropriate Vice President within sixty (60) days of receipt of the proposal.

If approved by all appropriate administrative levels, recommendations for formal recognition of centers will be forwarded to the President for review and final approval.

Decisions to establish a center will be documented on a Recommendation to Establish, Continue, or Dissolve a Center, Institute, and Specialized Testing or Service Laboratory form that, when completed, is submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for recording.

Naming of a Center (Institute or Laboratory)

Centers may be named by the Board of Regents for deceased persons who have made outstanding contributions to the university or its prestige. In extraordinary circumstances, particularly when a significant donation has been made to the university, the Board of Regents may name a building, or other facility, for a living person. The minimum amount for board consideration of the naming of a center or institute within a college is found in SFA policy D-22 (Naming Guidelines).

Annual Assessment

Annual Reporting

A center will prepare an annual report for the dean of their respective colleges or to a Vice President, as appropriate. A common template for reporting is provided for consistency, although department chairs/colleges may add to the template to meet individual needs. For example, a financial statement may be required.

Inventory and Website

Each center will provide annual updates to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), as needed, to ensure that the center inventory and website is up-to-date. This may be in the form of the annual report described above, or in another format developed by ORSP.

Required Periodic Reapplication and Center Dissolution

A center will be disbanded within five years of the fiscal year in which it received initial approval unless a request for review and continuation is submitted. This request will be made no less frequently than five years to the appropriate administrative unit (department, college, or university) within a timetable established by the administrative unit.

The review process will include, at a minimum, criteria that assess the effectiveness of the center in meeting its mission and objectives, including obtaining external or internal funding and/or the level of activity of the center.

Decisions to continue or dissolve a center will be documented on a Recommendation to Establish, Continue, or Dissolve a Center, Institute, and Specialized Testing or Service Laboratory form that when completed is submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for recording.