ESTABLISHMENT AND REVIEW OF ACADEMIC CENTERS/INSTITUTES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

I. Introduction:

The University of Connecticut recognizes that the ability to make significant contributions to the University's teaching, research and outreach mission, and to solve increasingly complex problems, may be facilitated by interdisciplinary approaches that enable and encourage collaborative contributions from different disciplines. Thus, the University encourages the establishment of academic centers and institutes. Centers and Institutes are governed by Article XII of the Laws and By-Laws of the University of Connecticut.

The University recognizes that academic centers/institutes require a commitment of resources (including faculty, staff, operating budget, and space). Therefore, this document was created to outline the criteria for the establishment of centers/institutes, an understanding of the expectations as regards to outcomes, and the need for annual reports and periodic reviews.

II. Definition of a Center/Institute:

A *Center* has a focused mission and a clearly defined objective. It may involve a group of faculty from one or more departments from a single school/college or from different schools/colleges. A center may provide a useful structure to develop emerging or multidisciplinary approaches to research or teaching, provide a relevant focus for service to external or internal constituencies, promote sharing of resources (e.g. equipment or laboratories), or otherwise support the focused scholarship of groups of faculty and staff in their areas of specialty. A center must comprise of four or more core faculty members (including the director).

An *Institute* is ordinarily larger and has a broader mission and a more complex interdisciplinary focus than a center. Typically institutes evolve from highly successful centers with a proven track record of accomplishments, impact, and sustainability. It is expected that most institutes would involve faculty from multiple departments and schools/colleges. Unlike centers, the primary mission of institutes is an academic one. For more comprehensive definitions please refer to "Best Practices" page 5.

Based on their mission, centers/institutes may be classified as:

- *Academic Center/Institute:* These are established to promote scholarly activity; whether in research, teaching or outreach. Scholarship is defined as "creative, intellectual work that is validated by peers and communicated" (Weiser, 1997)[1].

- *Academic Support Center/Institute:* The primary function of these units is to support the teaching, research or outreach mission of the institution. Examples would be COR^2E and CETL.

- *Cultural Center:* The primary mission of these centers is to support diversity in the University community and promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity through co-curricular programming and other cultural and social activities. An example would be the African American Cultural Center.

This document focuses solely on the establishment and review of Academic Centers/Institutes.

III. Criteria for Establishing a New Academic Center/Institute:

The establishment of a new academic center/institute requires careful deliberation that includes an evaluation and justification of need and the potential for making a meaningful contribution. In 2015 – 2016, an *ad hoc* 'Centers and Institutes Re-visioning Committee reviewed policies and procedures and produced a "Best Practices" document (*http://provost.uconn.edu/centers-and-institutes/*) that provides guidelines for the formation of a new center and maintaining established centers/institutes.

For both centers and institutes the following apply:

The following information must be included in the submission:
- The center/institute should not duplicate activities already being performed elsewhere at the University.
- The activities of the center/institute should ordinarily involve individuals from more than one discipline.
- The center/institute director must be a tenured faculty member. Exceptions may be made for an established member of the university community.

The proposal for establishing a new academic center/institute should provide information regarding the following (using the template in the appendix):
- *Name of Center/Institute:* The name should describe the unique function(s) of the center/institute and should not duplicate or be similar to the name of an existing unit.
- *Center/Institute Director:* The name and contact information of the tenured faculty member who will provide leadership to the center/institute, and a brief description of his/her qualifications.

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[1] Weiser, C. J. 1997. The Professional Career -- Faculty Scholarship and Productivity Expectations--An Administrator's Perspective. HortScience 32: 37-39

- *Mission:* The mission statement should clearly describe the purpose for establishing this center/institute. Explain how this mission is unique and distinct from that of other units.
- *Goals:* What unique contributions will the center/institute provide to the university? The outcomes should be clear and their impact should be measurable. Clearly justify how the center/institute will enhance scholarship and thereby contribute to the reputation of the University.
- *Metrics:* Provide the metrics by which the proposed center/institute should be judged on an annual basis (and during its 5-year review cycle). It should be clear from these metrics how this center's activities are unique contributions of the center and independent of regular departmental activities. For more information on metrics, see "Best Practices".
- *Budget:* Provide details of the amount and source of funds required for the operation of the center/institute. Clearly delineate the resources that will be necessary for the sustainability of the center/institute, and the plans for obtaining them. The center/institute should be able to document at least three years of funding support (e.g. via an Academic Plan Proposal) and a sustainability plan for the ensuing years.
- *Staff:* Provide a list of all staff (not including faculty) that will be associated with the center/institute. Include their title and a brief list of their responsibilities. For any staff not supported with center/institute resources, please provide a letter of commitment from the appropriate dept. head/dean.
- *Space:* What are the space needs of the center/institute? Is this space available? If not, what are the plans for identifying appropriate space? If the center/institute will have dedicated space, please provide a letter of commitment from the appropriate department head/dean.
- *Organizational Chart:* Provide an organizational chart. As a part of this, confirm that all impacted units (departments and/or schools/colleges) are supportive of the proposal. Letters of support from these units are the appropriate means of conveying this information.
- *Center/Institute Reporting Line:* Please indicate the administrator to whom the center/institute will report. Typically this will be a department head, dean, vice provost, or vice president depending on the nature and diversity of the participating faculty. Please refer to "Best Practices".
- *Core and Affiliated Faculty:* Provide a list of all faculty who have confirmed their interest and commitment to actively participate in the activities of the center/institute. For each faculty member, identify his/her rank, departmental and school affiliation, and expected contribution to the center/institute. Delineate roles and responsibilities of 'core' and 'affiliated' faculty associated with the center/institute and the term of these appointments. Emails documenting each faculty member's willingness to participate in the activities of the proposed Center/Institute should be included along with their CVs. For definitions of "core: and "affiliated" faculty, refer to "Best Practices".
- *Center/Institute Operations:* Please describe the operations of the center/institute, including frequency and types of interactions of its members (e.g. organizing conferences, pilot grants, reviewing collaborative grant opportunities, etc…).

- *Advisory Boards:* Please describe the membership criteria for any proposed advisory boards. For more information on advisory boards, refer to "Best Practices".

IV. Criteria for Establishing an Institute:

The request for a center to become an institute requires a submission of a full proposal documenting the center's record of accomplishments and a clear rationale for the transformation. Institutes must follow all the criteria listed above in section III.

V. Procedure for Establishing an Academic Center/Institute:

The establishment of a center/institute requires the following procedure to be followed:
- Any individual(s) interested in establishing a center/institute must seek approval from their department head and dean. The individual(s) must complete the *Academic Center/Institute Approval* documentation (found in appendix below). See criteria discussed in Section III above.
- The Center/Institute Director forwards the completed document to the dean of the proposing school/college for approval. Where multiple schools/colleges are involved, all Deans must support the establishment of the center/institute. In these instances, the center/institute director must identify the appropriate Vice Provost or Vice President to which the center/institute will report, as indicated on the organizational chart. Letter(s) of support from the Dean(s) of the collaborating school(s)/college(s) should be submitted as a part of the proposal.
- Once approved by the Dean(s), the director submits the document to the Provost's office for consideration. All proposals will be reviewed by the Academic Centers/Institute Review Committee, then reviewed by the Council of Deans. At any point during this process, constructive feedback and recommendations may be communicated to center/institute director. Upon the Provost's approval of center/institute establishment, the Board of Trustees will be notified at its next scheduled meeting.

VI. Review of Academic Centers/Institutes:

Each center/institute must submit an Annual Report (not to exceed four pages) that documents scholarly accomplishments and productivity, including funding obtained during the year, and any changes in the membership of participating faculty. The report is to be submitted to the administrator identified in the organizational chart, with a courtesy copy provided to the Provost's Office. The review guidelines can be found here.

In addition, the Laws and By-Laws of the University (Article XII) require that "All centers and institutes will be reviewed on a five-year cycle to determine their continued contribution to the University's mission". The 5-year review (self-study) is a vital component of the assessment of the performance of the Center/Institute. The 5-year review will provide the unit with an understanding of what it needs to move forward and the review committee with the relevant information needed to review the unit and its reauthorization. It may be helpful to consult the "Best Practices" resource document prior to conducting the self-study.
- The report should be single spaced, formatted for standard (8.5" x 11") paper with one-inch margins, and the font size no smaller than 12.
- The report should contain information on no more than the past 5 years, and should be a maximum of 25 pages in length.

- The report should not include any unsolicited letters or appendices with grant proposals, reprints of publications, etc.

The criteria used for evaluating academic centers/institutes will include the following (from the time the unit was approved or last reviewed):

1. **Cover Page:**
   - *Name of Center/Institute:* Describe any changes to the name of the Center/Institute.
   - *Center/Institute Director:* List current Director. Describe any changes in leadership since the last review and efforts in leadership succession.
   - *Center/Institute Structure*: Provide a brief description of the Center/Institute structure (funding/support lines/affiliations between departments/schools) and any changes that have occurred since the last review.
   - *Unique Function(s) of the Center/Institute*: Describe unique functions of the Center/Institute that go beyond the academic/research/service mission of the affiliated departments/schools.
   - *Mission:* Describe any changes to the Center/Institute mission from the last review and how/why the changes evolved. Explain how this mission is unique and distinct from that of other units.

2. **Previous 5-year Goals and Outcomes:**
   - *Goals:* What unique contributions did the Center/Institute provide to the University since the last review? What are the goals for the next 5 years? Clearly justify how the center/institute will enhance scholarship and thereby contribute to the reputation of the University.
   - *Previous 5-year Budget*: Provide details on how the budget was used to meet the goals of the Center/Institute.
   - *Metrics:* Provide the metrics by which the Center/Institute was evaluated. For more information on metrics, see "Best Practices".
   - *Include Scholarly Productivity over the Past 5-years. Include as appropriate*:

   Publications: Please attach a full bibliography of journal articles, books and monographs cited in standard format used in your discipline. Identify whether these emanate from the teaching, research or outreach mission of the Center/Institute. Do not include unpublished work or work in preparation.

   Other creative contributions: Please include here any patents received, exhibitions and performances, etc. If available provide information on their impact.

   Contributions to the State of Connecticut or local communities: Describe any unique services, expertise, and /or products provided to the State of Connecticut and/or local communities, particularly those that would not be available or accessible without the existence of the Center/Institute.

   Contributions to the University's reputation: Please list any conferences/workshops hosted, keynote addresses delivered, invited presentations, and service on state and federal panels.

   External funding: In a tabulated form provide a listing of all external funding (from state, federal, foundation or other sources):
   Agency Name / Project Title / Duration / Total Funding / Direct Cost

   Visiting scholars: Please provide a listing of all visiting scholars and post-docs

who worked at the center/institute, with the start and end dates of association with the center/institute.

- *Summary*: Provide a synthesis of the Center/Institute's success and impact on the University community of scholars and external community partners. What are the opportunities and threats that the Center/Institute faces in the next five years and how might they influence the Center/Institutes's success over the next five years?

3. **Future Goals, Strategic Plan and Operations:**

- What are the unit's strategic goals for the next five years? Use of the SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) is highly recommended.
- What are the metrics and indicators that will determine whether these goals have been accomplished?
- What are the unit's specific objectives for each of these metrics and indicators**? It is important to specify these objectives in terms of performance that would not have been attained if the unit did not exist. Another way to specify this is to consider what the incremental contribution of the unit is. For example, the scholars who comprise a Center/Institute will likely publish whether the Center/Institute exists or not, but some publications would not occur if the Center/Institute did not exist. Those publications should be the objective.**
- *Budget:* Provide details of the amount and source of funds required for the operation of the center/institute. Clearly delineate the resources that will be necessary for the sustainability of the center/institute, and the plans for obtaining them. The center/institute should be able to document at least three years of funding support (e.g. via an Academic Plan Proposal) and a sustainability plan for the ensuing years.
- *Staff:* Provide a list of all staff (not including faculty) that will be associated with the center/institute. Include their title and a brief list of their responsibilities. For any staff not supported with center/institute resources, please provide a letter of commitment from the appropriate dept. head/dean.
- *Space:* What are the space needs of the center/institute? Is this space available? If not, what are the plans for identifying appropriate space? If the center/institute will have dedicated space, please provide a letter of commitment from the appropriate department head/dean.
- *Organizational Chart:* Provide an organizational chart. As a part of this, confirm that all impacted units (departments and/or schools/colleges) are supportive of the proposal. Letters of support from these units are the appropriate means of conveying this information.
- *Center/Institute Reporting Line:* Please indicate the administrator to whom the center/institute will report. Typically this will be a department head, dean, vice provost, or vice president depending on the nature and diversity of the participating faculty. Please refer to "Best Practices".
- *Core and Affiliated Faculty:* Provide a list of all faculty who have confirmed their interest and commitment to actively participate in the activities of the center/institute. For each faculty member, identify his/her rank, departmental and school affiliation, and expected contribution to the center/institute.
  - Delineate roles and responsibilities of 'core' and 'affiliated' faculty associated with the center/institute and the term of these appointments. Emails documenting each faculty member's willingness to participate in the activities of the proposed Center/Institute should be

included along with their CVs. For definitions of "core: and "affiliated" faculty, refer to "[Best Practices](#)". Please also list other governance roles within the Center/Institute and how these support the Director and the Center/Institute's mission.

- *Center/Institute Operations:* Please describe the operations of the center/institute, including frequency and types of interactions of its members (e.g. organizing conferences, pilot grants, reviewing collaborative grant opportunities, etc…).
- *Governance and Advisory Boards:* Please describe the membership criteria for any current or proposed advisory boards, and the role of these board in the governance of the Center/Institute. For more information on advisory boards, refer to "[Best Practices".](#)

VII. The Review Process:

The Academic Center/Institute Review Committee will consist of six faculty members who will be named by the Provost. The Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives will serve as an *ad hoc* member of the Committee and his/her office will be responsible for the logistics of the reviews.

Timelines and Process - The Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives develops a schedule identifying the academic year in which each Center/Institute will be reviewed. Each center/institute will have at least two months in which to prepare for the review. The review process will include:

a) The center/institute will prepare a self-study that addresses the questions in Section VI.
b) The center/institute director will have an opportunity to meet with the committee if there are questions that arise following review of the self-study report. The committee reserves the rights to obtain feedback from external sources if it so deems.
c) After evaluating the self-study document and any external input, the committee will make its recommendation to the Provost. This recommendation will include an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Center/Institute.
d) The recommendations will be one of the following:
   - Approve for another five-year term
   - Approve with conditions. In this situation any deficiencies must be rectified in the prescribed time period or else the Center/Institute may be recommended for discontinuation.
   - Merge with another Center/Institute that has a similar mission.
   - Fold a center under a related institute
   - Discontinue (see Section VIII below).
e) The Provost will make his/her decision and will share it with the appropriate dean(s), department heads(s) and Center/Institute director. The decision will also be communicated as an 'information item' to the Board of Trustees.

## VIII.	Discontinuation of a Center/Institute:

Following a recommendation by the Academic Centers and Institutes Review Committee, the Provost will authorize the discontinuation of a center/institute if it meets any of the following criteria:
- it is no longer making sufficient contributions in terms of scholarly activity
- it fails to demonstrate meaningful contributions to the academic mission of the university and of the units to which it is connected.
- it has become defunct or no longer has the support of the participating faculty or the administrator to which it reports.
- it is no longer financially viable

Any Center/Institute that does not submit its self-study document in a timely manner and thus has not been reviewed within five years will be recommended for discontinuation.

A Center/Institute may change its name or mission, disband, merge with another center or fold into an institute provided all stakeholders are in agreement. This decision must be ratified by the Academic Centers and Institutes Review Committee and must be approved by the Council of Deans and the Provost, who will communicate the decision to the Board of Trustees.

Appendix:

ACADEMIC CENTER/INSTITUTE APPROVAL

Proposals should be single-spaced and prepared on standard (8.5" x 11") paper, with one inch margins and font no smaller than 12-point. The proposal should be paginated as a single document. Please provide detailed information requested below

- Name of Center/Institute:
- Center/Institute Director: (include contact information)
- Mission:
- Goals:
- Metrics:
- Budget (include source and amount of funds):
- Staff:
- Space:
- Organizational Chart:
- Reporting Line:
- Core and Affiliated Faculty (include name, rank, department and title):
- Center/Institute Operations:
- Advisory Board:
- Letter of support (see section V for details)

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Approvals:

_____   Date_____
Dean (of proposing school/college)

_____   Date_____
Provost and Executive Vice President

Note: This approval expires five years after the date of approval

Originally approved: April, 2006; Revised 2016/2017/2020   11