Preamble

As Clarkson University evolves as an institution, developing in new and innovative directions while maintaining strength in traditional areas of endeavor, centers of activity that focus attention on specialized areas will develop. By their very nature, such activity centers transcend existing and more traditional modes of organizing activity and generally they appear interdisciplinary when compared to existing administrative units. Occasionally, such an activity or interest focus may be relatively short-lived. Often, however, the activity focus reflects the evolution of knowledge and represents a newly emerging pathway for activities consistent with Clarkson University's mission. When those involved in such foci of activity desire University recognition and support for their efforts, the procedures articulated in this document provide mechanisms for the establishment and management of organized activity units.

Scope

The procedures and policies found in this section are applicable to those entities desiring formal University recognition in support of cross-departmental and cross-function intellectual activities. These entities are composed of faculty and staff, who come from multiple departments, divisions, programs, and/or schools, for the purpose of pursuing interdisciplinary research, outreach, and/or educational activities. It is important that all groups seeking University recognition of and support for their activities. Because the nature of the activities addressed by this policy do not coincide with existing or more traditional administrative structures or modes of organization, this policy addresses the special concern that appropriate acknowledgement and recognition be given to individual and collaborative efforts put forth on behalf of the interdisciplinary unit.

Nature of Organized Units

There are two levels of organization at which units of the type included under these policies can be formed: school and university. In order to provide increased uniformity in defining these units, the following nomenclature is proposed:

Center

A center is a multiple purpose unit that can be organized at either the university or school/institute level that may support research, education, outreach, or other activities considered appropriate to the needs. The roles and responsibilities of the Director of a Center and the background and position of the director at the university should reflect its mission and scope. Correspondingly, the Director may be a senior academic staff member or hold a full-time academic appointment. The Director's roles, responsibilities and qualifications should be described in the Center's founding or renewal proposal. The Director's workload may be shared between the center and a department. If the Director is selected from Clarkson's current faculty or staff, then the sharing department may receive compensatory funds from the appropriate administrator or the Center, itself, for the loss of the Director's time that otherwise would be available within the home unit. Note that this definition of Center does not preclude other uses of the term "center," for example, physical locations, student support activities, or activities that fall within the University's normal organizational structure.

Institute
An institute is a university-wide unit that is organized for multiple purposes including research, education, and outreach, or other activities considered appropriate to the needs and interests of the institution but that extend beyond or cross between current departmental or school boundaries. An institute may have centers, as defined in the forgoing paragraph, administratively assigned to it when appropriate.

An institute would have the leadership of a director who reports to the Chief Academic Officer (e.g., Provost), would operate with the assistance of supporting staff, and could benefit from the participation of faculty, staff or student affiliates or “members”. The institute’s director may be a senior academic staff member or a full-time faculty member within an academic department or equivalent academic unity (including the Institute) as appropriate to the missing of the institute.

For an Institute that has full-time faculty appointments, joint-faculty with principal appointments within it, or a degree-granting academic program under it, it must have as Director a full-time faculty member at the rank of Associate Professor or Professor or, it must have an Academic Director to oversee academic programs and faculty within the institute. The Academic Director to oversee academic programs and faculty within the Institute. The Academic Director will be considered to have the roles and responsibilities of an academic Chair as described elsewhere in this Operations Manual. The individual serving as the Academic Director must have a majority appointment to an academic unit that has a tenured leader (e.g., a Department of School).

The evolution of the institute, similarly, may lead to circumstances whereby the University would benefit from the formal establishment of degree programs within the institute that are consistent with the interdisciplinary mission of the unit. For the University to ensure the degree programs in such an institute receive academic support adequate to achieve and maintain institutional standards, the University also may require the institute to maintain a core faculty. Because institute faculty provide disciplinary expertise which may not coincide with that of existing academic departments, the tenure of institute faculty may reside within the institute. The allocation of faculty members (tenured, tenure-track, clinical or teaching track) to the institute requires concurrent approval by the institute director, the Provost, and the University President. In cases where a faculty member is reallocated from a department to an institute, a written request by the faculty member is also required. Allocation of existing faculty members to an institute from a department requires the additional approval of the dean. Contract letters for faculty who are appointed to an institute will note this fact.

Formation of Recognized Units

Those requesting University recognition and support for a center or institute as defined above should prepare a proposal that contains the following:

1. a statement of need that specifies the particular role of the proposed unit within the University,
2. a description of the manner in which this need will be effectively met by the proposed unit in a way that cannot be achieved by existing units,
3. identification of the unique value of the activity to the University,
4. outcomes the unit intends to produce,
5. specification of an inception date for the unit that would permit its review and potential approval to be coordinated with the annual budget preparation process,
6. identification of the personnel, research, educational or outreach programs that would be initially included within and supported by the unit and a projection of their involvement over the initial five years of the unit’s operation,
7. a budget, including anticipated sources and amounts of income generated, estimated student credit hours generated, proposed and existing major programs of study to be supported by the unit, and estimated overhead costs,
8. an estimate of space and equipment needs and a description of potential mechanisms for providing the identified infrastructure,
9. a description of the governance structure of the unit (e.g. steering committee, external advisory committees, and mechanisms for transmission of appropriate input to the unit’s administration),
10. a description of the proposed administrative and reporting structure for the unit (Director and other leadership positions as appropriate), including the equivalent rank of the leaders (e.g., equivalent to Dean of Chair as appropriate for the mission of the unit for purposes of expectations define throughout the rest of this Operations Manual; terms of appointment and criteria for appointment of principal administrators of the unit), and
11. a proposed periodic review cycle (typically five years).

This proposal should be submitted to the President, or the President’s designee, for review by the Provost, the Deans, and any other personnel deemed appropriate by the Provost or the President. It should also be forwarded to the Faculty Senate for review. Review of the proposal should be deliberate and as expeditious as possible. Upon completion of the review, the Provost or the Provost’s designee will prepare a recommendation concerning the approval of the application for recognition and support. This recommendation may address any and all aspects of the proposed unit’s operations. The decision concerning approval of the proposed unit rests with the President. If the application for recognition and support is approved, the modes and levels of institutional support involved as well as timelines within which that support are to be provided will be clearly identified in the documents whereby the President grants recognition.

Review of Recognized Units

Each recognized center or institute must be reviewed by the University to assess the degree to which it is meeting its objectives and evaluate the continuing need for its operation. The founding proposal will identify the nature and periodicity of the unit’s review. The process for periodic review will include submission to the Provost of a report that documents the accomplishments of the unit relative to its desired outcomes and objectives and outlines the reasons for the continued existence of the unit and associated allocation of institutional resources. The dimensions along which the report is evaluated by the Provost or the Provost’s designee(s) will be based on the set of outcomes articulated in the unit’s founding proposal and the continuing needs of the University. Reviews will be conducted no less frequently than the period specified in the organizing proposal.

Termination of Recognized Units
Termination of recognized centers or institutes may occur for a number of reasons. These include, but are not limited to:

- incorporation of the unit into the permanent administrative structure of the University
- cessation of the underlying programs for which the unit provides primary support
- major change in strategic direction by the University that reduces the utility of the unit to the overall mission of the University
- failure of the unit to effectively meet the objectives that have been defined for the unit.

Decisions concerning termination of recognized units will be made by the President after consultation with the Provost, the Deans, and the Faculty Senate. For tenured and tenure-track faculty who are appointed to an institute, references to “department” in Operations Manual Section 5.5-“The Tenure Policy” (including Subsection 5.5.E-“Termination of Tenured Faculty Members”) shall be understood to include “institute.”

Personnel Evaluations

Center/Institute Administrator

The individual appointed to lead the unit will be evaluated annually by the administrator to whom the unit reports. This evaluation will consider the individual’s performance as administrator of the unit. A special circumstance arises in the case of an active faculty member who directs a unit but who also has obligations by contract to a department for teaching, research, and/or service. In such instances, the administrator to whom the unit reports will provide relevant parts of this review to the department chair who evaluates the individual as a faculty member. Similarly, the department chair will provide relevant parts of her/his review of the unit director to the administrator to whom the unit reports so that the overall performance of the person in support of the mission of the University can be effectively evaluated.

Center/Institute Personnel

The Director (or Academic Director) of an Institute serves in the same role as a department chair or Dean for faculty appointed to the institute in terms of providing effective mentoring, performing annual evaluations, and instituting reviews for tenure and promotion. The review of hiring, tenure, and promotion of faculty appointed to an institute would occur through a process that would be part of the governance of the unit as defined by the initial proposal to form the organized unit.

Faculty affiliates of centers and institutes are evaluated regularly by the unit director:

- annually for inclusion in faculty performance evaluations, which are under the purview of the affiliates’ department administrator, and
- in conjunction with reviews conducted in support of special personnel actions, such as dossiers compiled for honors, awards, tenure and promotion.

Department administrators shall attach importance to and respect the interdisciplinary scholarship and service that their faculty contribute to the advancement of centers or institutes with whom they affiliate. (Cf., Operations Manual Sections 5.3.A-B)

Recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of the activities of centers and institutes, a key responsibility of a center or Institute Director/Academic Director is to ensure that untenured faculty affiliates of centers or institutes receive proper mentoring within the scope of the unit activity. This responsibility arises from the value of the investment of time by faculty in furthering center/institute activities and the interdisciplinary character of those activities.

Paralleling this responsibility of directors for mentoring, however, a similar responsibility exists on the part of department administrators to ensure untenured faculty who affiliate with centers or institutes receive proper mentoring within the scope of interest of the department. Department administrators also must recognize that senior faculty members who mentor their untenured colleagues are performing an essential service.

Administrative assistants and clerical and technical support staff are evaluated by center and institute directors, as appropriate, according to normal procedures followed under guidance provided annually by the Director of Human Resources.

History

Adopted April 2007
Revised December 2019
Revised March 2020

Related Information