**Guidelines for Establishing and Reviewing**

**University Research Centers and Institutes**

1. **Introduction**

The University of Mississippi has a wide variety of centers and institutes. These units represent invaluable resources that expand opportunities for teaching, research, and service. UM has a strong interest in promoting the creation and continuation of successful centers and institutes in order to advance the goals of the University. This document serves that interest by setting forth guidelines for planning, establishing, reviewing, and reauthorizing research centers and institutes.

1. **Application of the Guidelines**

This set of guidelines applies to *research* centers and institutes—defined as units that have research as their primary activity. The guidelines do not apply to centers and institutes which have instruction or service as their primary activities. The terms *center* and *institute* are often used interchangeably in the university context, though the term *institute* sometimes suggests a broader research focus. These guidelines recommend for future practice that *center* be used for smaller entities focused on more specific areas of research and that *institute* be reserved for larger entities focused on broader areas of research.

1. **Establishing a New University Research Center or Institute**
2. **Steps to Create a New Center or Institute**

Creating a research center or institute at UM requires several steps:

1. Approval of the basic concept by the Department Chair/Director and Dean of the School or College
2. Approval of the Strategic Plan by the Vice Chancellor for Research & Sponsored Programs (VCRSP)
3. Approval of the Proposal for Establishment of a New Academic Unit by the Council of Academic Administrators and the Chancellor
4. Approval by the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL)
5. **Preliminary Activities and Pre-Proposal Discussions**

Pre-proposal discussions should include recommendations from College/School deans and department chairs/directors, outline faculty involvement, determine leadership, and identify funding sources. A pre-proposal form can be found at <http://research.olemiss.edu/centers-institutes>.

1. **Deadlines for Submission of Strategic Plans**

To begin the formal proposal process, a strategic plan must be submitted to the VCRSP. The VCRSP will accept strategic plans throughout the year, but all strategic plans will be evaluated in consideration of IHL deadlines.

* Proposals received **October 1-March 31** will be considered for the July 1 IHL deadline.
* Proposals received **April 1-September 30** will be considered for the February 1 IHL deadline.
1. ***Successful Strategic Plans***

A successful strategic plan will focus primarily on why the center is needed, providing a persuasive argument for the center’s establishment and its potential to improve the university. Accordingly, strategic plans should answer the following questions: How will the center positively align with the UM’s broader strategic plan? Why is the focus area critically important to the university’s success? Will the center be a leader among peer institutions? Will it attract exceptionally talented faculty and students? Will it have a broad impact?

A successful strategic plan will also address the following:

* ***Opportunity.*** The plan will give a detailed explanation of any existing favorable conditions that would be assets to the center, including funding resources, infrastructure, and human capital.
* ***Mission, Vision, and Objectives.*** The plan will identify the center’s mission and vision and will set forth measurable objectives/goals.
* ***Benchmarks and Timeframe.*** The plan will specify how the center’s progress can be monitored and establish a general timeframe for accomplishing the goals set forth in the “Mission, Vision, and Objectives” section.
* ***Accountability.*** The plan will provide a sunset/reauthorization provision (normally six years) and a commitment statement affirming the center’s ability to comply with the self-reported biennial review, the reauthorization review, and discretionary comprehensive reviews.
* ***Administration.*** The plan will propose by-laws and administrative plans, list the names of all involved faculty members, and supply an estimated operational budget.

The format of the strategic plan may follow UM’s broader strategic plan. (UM 2020 strategic planning forms are available online at: <http://www.olemiss.edu/um2020/document_library.html> )

1. **IHL Proposals**

The strategic plan will be submitted to the VCRSP. If the strategic plan is complete and the need/opportunity for the center is demonstrated adequately, the VCRSP and the strategic plan author will work in conjunction to develop an IHL Proposal. The Provost will submit the finished proposal to IHL by the deadline for new academic unit proposals, February 1 or July 1 of each year.

1. **Guidelines for Reviewing University Research Centers and Institutes**

Reviews are necessary to ensure academic excellence and financial accountability. The VCRSP and Office of Research will conduct reviews and will work with individual centers and institutes to establish appropriate review procedures and reporting requirements. For instance, a center’s timeline for review might be set to coincide with the schedule established by Institutional Research and Assessment for the institution-wide assessment process. Additionally, if a center is required to submit a regular comprehensive report to an external funding source, the VCRSP might accept that report in place of an independent UM review process.

As a default review process, these guidelines recommend biennial review with a comprehensive reauthorization review every six years.

Centers may also be comprehensively reviewed on a periodic basis subject to the discretion of the Dean, Chancellor, Provost, or VCRSP.

1. **Benchmarks**

Benchmarks to be assessed during review may include the following: publications (quantity, quality, impact); intellectual property (disclosures, patents, licenses, start-ups); speaking events (lectures, panels, symposia, conferences); achievements of center faculty members (membership in prestigious societies/academies); faculty awards/distinctions; other contributions to the University’s broader mission (instruction of students, service to communities); external funding awards; total award activity; expenditures.

1. **Biennial Review**

Centers under the default biennial review will be responsible for completing the VCRSP’s annual self-reporting form (which will be made available on the VCRSP website) and returning it to the VCRSP by the default deadline of August 1 of each year.

The VCRSP biennial report will focus on how the center has met or made progress toward the goals outlined in its strategic plan.

The VCRSP will review the center’s biennial report form and provide brief written comments to the center in response. Comments will be provided within six weeks of the submission of the biennial self-reported form.

1. **Comprehensive Reauthorization Review**

A comprehensive reauthorization review will be conducted by the VCRSP periodically. As a default process, that review will take place every six years on a timeline set by the VCRSP and will involve forms and procedures similar to the biennial review.

The outcome of the reauthorization review may be to reauthorize the center for a set period of time with a newly-established reauthorization date (normally six additional years) or it may be to request additional information and/or reevaluate the need for the center. Reevaluation discussions may include the Council of Academic Administrators and other appropriate administrators. The reauthorization review may also suggest the expansion of highly successful centers or counsel struggling centers on potential pathways to greater success.

If a center is required to submit a review/report to an external funding agency as part of its review process with that agency, the VCRSP may accept that review/report as documentation for the comprehensive reauthorization review. Comments or feedback from the external funding agency must also be provided to the VCRSP.

1. **Discretionary Comprehensive Review**

An additional periodic comprehensive review may be conducted by the VCRSP at the request of the Dean, Chancellor, Provost, or VCRSP. The reauthorization review form may be adapted for the discretionary review in part or in whole.