

Guidelines for Establishing and Operating Institutes, Centers, and Laboratories at UTHealth

I. Overview and General Statement

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston ("university" or "UTHealth") encourages collaborative efforts among faculty to enhance its mission and goals. To that end, the university enables programs, divisions, departments, schools, other organizational entities and the university itself to establish collaborative units for activities that complement and/or enhance its missions of education, research, patient care, and public service. Such units are most often formed to conduct activities that require or are enhanced by interdisciplinary collaborations but in some cases may be established to enable activities that require highly specialized equipment and/or expertise not available in individual schools, departments, or divisions. Such units are most commonly referred to as institutes, centers, or laboratories and may be proposed, reviewed through the approval processes outlined below and operated within these guidelines.

II. Descriptions

Institutes, centers, and laboratories are commonly described as follows, but these are general descriptions rather than precise definitions. Flexibility is allowed in the naming conventions as appropriate to best convey the purpose, functions, and scope of a unit.

1. Institute

A major unit that performs, coordinates and/or promotes research, education, patient care, and/or public service activities on a continuing basis over a broad area that often extends across schools, campus and/or institutional boundaries. The unit may involve partnerships with non-university entities such as hospital partners or government agencies. Because of their typical size and breadth, institutes will most often be organized at the university level, and the President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight. A unit that conducts activities involving multiple departments or divisions of a single school may also be designated an institute with the approval of the President.

2. Center

A unit that conducts research, education, patient care, and/or public service in a designated field that requires interdisciplinary participation or is established primarily to provide facilities, expertise and/or administrative support services for the work of programs, departments or other organizational units of the university. A university center involves more than one school or unit of the university, and a school-based center involves multiple departments or operating units of a single school. A department-based center typically has the majority of the efforts based within a single department. The President or designee will have responsibility for institutional oversight of a university center, the relevant Dean or designee will have responsibility for a school-based center, and the relevant department chair or designee will have responsibility for a department-based center.

3. Laboratory

A unit that establishes and maintains facilities for research, education, patient care, and/or public service, often with the help of designated staff appointed in accordance with university policies. The President or designee will generally have responsibility for a laboratory that supports the work of faculty from multiple schools, and a Dean or designee will generally have responsibility for a laboratory that supports the work of faculty members primarily from a single school. The relevant department chair or designee will have responsibility for a laboratory that supports the work of faculty members primarily from a single department.

The Office of the Executive Vice President & Chief Academic Officer (EVP/CAO) has established separate guidelines for approval and operations of research service centers and traditional “Core Laboratories” that provide specialized research services to the university community (<https://www.uth.edu/research/research-service-centers.htm>).

The primary functions of university, school and department institutes, centers, and laboratories are to conduct and/or support UTHealth’s primary missions of research, education, clinical care activities and public service, especially those that are interdisciplinary or highly specialized in nature. Additional functions may be:

- disseminating information through conferences, meetings, and other activities;
- providing intramural or extramural training opportunities and access to facilities for observers, visiting students, professional trainees and collaborators from other institutions and organizations as well as UTHealth faculty, students, and trainees; and
- obtaining extramural funds.

The designation of an institute, center, laboratory or other organizational or administrative unit at UTHealth will refer only to an entity devoted primarily to a non-profit activity engaging faculty, students, trainees, staff and colleagues in activities related to the missions of the university.

In all cases, institutes, centers, laboratories, and other organizational or administrative units at UTHealth are subject to all policies and procedures of the university and the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System and may be subject to reporting and auditing requirements.

Institutes, centers, and laboratories may not offer a degree or certificate program requiring Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) approval unless included on the THECB’s Inventory of Institutional Administrative Structures. Faculty members of these units may participate in teaching in THECB approved degree and/or certificate programs of UTHealth schools (see Section III.C. Faculty Membership below).

If an institute, center, or laboratory wishes to establish an advisory committee/council, the establishment must be in accordance with the Regents’ *Rules and Regulations, Series 60302*.

III. Process and Procedures

A. Establishment

1. University Units

Proposals for the establishment of a university institute, center, or laboratory (collectively referred to as “the unit”) must be made by the President, the Executive Vice President/Chief Academic Officer (EVP/CAO) or a Dean. Applicants must seek preliminary approval from the President or EVP/CAO for the establishment of university units. Once preliminary approval is granted, a written proposal must be developed that includes the following information:

- a. The proposed name of the unit;
- b. The purpose of the unit and how it will support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the university;
- c. The organizational and governance structure for the proposed unit, including a list of the head/director and others with significant administrative and management responsibilities;
- d. A description of the initial and any anticipated future activities, programs, and functions of the unit;
- e. A description of space needs and the commitments for their provision;
- f. A proposed budget and source(s) of support for start-up funding, commitments and anticipated sources of support for ongoing support, and an assessment of the prospects for sustainable funding;
- g. Criteria and eligibility for faculty membership, the appointment process, expectations for participation and a statement specifying periodic review for continued appointment;
- h. A list of participating faculty members; and
- i. Any potential overlap or duplication of purposes and functions of the proposed unit with other university or school departments, divisions, or operating units.

Proposals shall be distributed by the EVP/CAO to the University Executive Council and other leadership groups as appropriate for comment. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

After comments and any revisions by the sponsor, the EVP/CAO will submit the final proposal to the University Executive Council for consideration and a recommendation to the President who will make the final decision. A list of all university institutes, centers, and laboratories shall be maintained on the Academics & Research at UTHHealth website.

2. School Units

Proposals for school-based centers or laboratories will be submitted to the Dean of the appropriate school and should include information comparable to that for university-based units in Section III.A.1 above, including how the proposed unit would support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the school as well as those of the university if applicable. Proposals will receive an initial review by the Dean to determine if they should be considered further.

Proposals approved for consideration by the Dean should be distributed for comment to appropriate departments and units within the School as determined by the Dean. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

Following the internal school-based review, the Dean shall make a final decision whether to approve the proposal. If approved, the Dean will provide a copy of the proposal to the EVP/CAO who will distribute it to the University Executive Council for comments, which the Dean may consider for possible modifications of the proposal.

3. Department Units

Proposals for department-based centers or laboratories will be submitted to the relevant department chair or designee and should include information comparable to that for university-based units in Section III.A.1 above, including how the proposed unit would support and/or enhance the mission and goals of the department as well as those of the school and university if applicable. Proposals will receive an initial review by the department chair or designee to determine if they should be considered further.

Proposals approved for consideration by the department chair or designee should be distributed for comment as appropriate within the department as determined by the department chair or designee. The sponsor may consider these comments for possible modifications of the initial proposal.

Following the internal department-based review, the Dean shall make a final decision whether to approve the proposal. If approved, the Dean will provide a copy of the proposal to the EVP/CAO who will distribute it to the University Executive Council for comments, which the Dean may consider for possible modifications of the proposal.

B. Naming, Branding, and Marketing

All naming, logo design and marketing strategies for all institutes, centers, and laboratories (university-based, school-based and department-based) must be approved by the UTHHealth Office of Public Affairs (713-500-3050).

Proposals to name an institute, center, or laboratory for an individual or non-university entity must comply with HOOP Policy 65 Naming Policy.

C. Faculty Membership

Prior to receiving an appointment in a university, school or department institute, center, or laboratory, a faculty member must have an academic appointment in a department of a UTHHealth school.

Recommendations for initial faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure (if applicable) must originate from the department(s) in which the faculty appointment is being proposed or in which the current faculty member holds an academic appointment. Requests for appointments, promotions, and tenure shall follow established department, school, and university processes.

The department chair(s) shall have overall responsibility for a faculty member's assignments and evaluations. Assignments for work within an institute, center or laboratory and any related salary support, space, or other resources must be mutually agreed upon by the department chair(s) and the head/director of the relevant unit.

D. Review of Unit

Institutes, centers, and laboratories will be reviewed at least every six years to determine whether the unit shall continue, undergo substantial modification, be phased out or be discontinued. Key considerations for the review include whether the goals of the unit remain relevant to the university, whether the unit is achieving its goals, and whether the unit is an efficient and effective use of university resources.

University institutes, centers, and laboratories will be required to submit a written report and self-study to the President, who will determine the format and schedule of the reviews for each unit. The EVP/CAO will distribute the final report to the University Executive Council for a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

School and department institutes, centers, and laboratories will submit written reports on a schedule and format to be determined by the relevant Dean for each unit. After consideration of the report and obtaining any desired input, the Dean will make the final decision.

E. Exceptions

These guidelines are not applicable to Research Service Centers and "core" laboratories at UTHealth as defined below.

A Research Service Center (RSC) is an organizational unit within an academic department, institute, center, school, or UTHealth administration that provides research-related services or products to users principally within the UTHealth community. An RSC recovers the cost of its operation through charges to its users. The costs of providing the services or products are charged to users on a 'rate' basis. The difference between an RSC and a laboratory as defined above is that an RSC is primarily a fee for service unit providing technical service and support for the work of other investigators. A laboratory is established primarily to design and conduct experiments for members of the laboratory.

Federal or other research sponsors may provide funding from center, program project, or other grants to support "core laboratories" (often referred to simply as "cores") that provide services to investigators participating in the grant at no cost or at a subsidized rate. In these cases, an RSC that contains such a core may be required to charge different rates to faculty participating in the grant than to other users.

Information about organizing and operating RSCs and core laboratories at UTHealth may be found at <https://www.uth.edu/research/research-service-centers.htm>.

(Approved by the University Executive Council, February 5, 2020)