



Academic Research Centers and Institutes:

Policies, Practices, and Procedures

I) OVERVIEW, POLICY STATEMENT, DEFINITIONS

Overview

Academic Centers and Institutes facilitate a wide range of research, teaching, and scholarly activities at Georgia College & State University (the “University”/GC). The work of Centers and Institutes also fulfills the mission and values of GC by addressing “the pursuit of knowledge and truth for the public good.” This document establishes guidelines for the creation, operation, and review of new and existing Centers and Institutes at GC.

Centers and Institutes make essential and powerful contributions to a University's academic life when they are appropriately designed, regularly evaluated, and serve the public good. They help to advance the University's mission by providing alternative opportunities for teaching, scholarship, and service, while simultaneously enhancing the University's reputation as a leader in these areas. As unique entities that are affiliated with academic departments and colleges, Centers and Institutes contribute to the mission of the University, are mutually beneficial to the University and community, can demonstrate their value and purpose, are sustainable, and involve a wide array of stakeholders.

Policy Statement

The rules, regulations, and guidelines stipulated in this policy document apply to all currently existing Centers and Institutes (See definition *Existing Academic Research Centers and Institutes*) at GC unless otherwise indicated. They apply to all newly proposed Centers or Institutes without exception (See definition *New Academic Research Centers or Institutes*). The

policy is intended to ensure uniformity, quality, and to delineate expectations for all Centers and Institutes at the University. Prior to initiating a proposal for a new Center or Institute, it should be determined that all expectations can be fulfilled and requirements can be met. No Center or Institute will be approved outside of the guidelines or routing procedures laid forth in the policy guidelines. This policy applies to all faculty and staff at GC.

Policy Definitions

Academic Research Centers: A Center serves as an organizational base for research in a given academic area or closely related areas. It often provides a vehicle for multi- and interdisciplinary research in a given area involving faculty and students from a variety of internal administrative structures. It may be involved in the offering of continuing education activities related to its area(s) of interest. The "Center" structure may facilitate efforts of the college or university to obtain external funding in specific areas. It serves as a formalized link between the academic and professional communities in the area(s) of focus. A "Center" is not an autonomous structure within the internal statutory organization of a college or university. It is administratively most often an appendage of one of the traditional administrative structures, such as a department or college. A "Center" is not involved in the independent offering of credit courses or degree programs. (See [*USG Academic Affairs Handbook Section 2.14*](#)).

Academic Research Institutes: This unit, similar to the Center's focus, is also a space for research, provision of opportunity for multi- and interdisciplinary collaborations, involvement in continuing education activities, facilitation of securing extramural funding, and service as a link among the academic and professional communities. It is however, a far more formalized structure and may be equivalent to an autonomous unit within the internal structure of the college or university such as a department, division, school or (university level) college. It may, unlike a "Center", be involved in the offering credit courses and/or degree programs. (See [*USG Academic Affairs Handbook Section 2.14*](#)).

Academic Research Center or Institute Affiliates: The University's faculty and staff, community participants, or other external stakeholders may receive "Affiliate" designations when

appropriate. An Affiliate's designation indicates an individual's key role in a Center or an Institute.

Designation as an Academic Research Center or Institute: Designation as a Center or an Institute is a competitive process that is administered by the Office of the Provost/VPAA, in consultation with the Executive Cabinet and President. The University President makes the final decision regarding official designation as a new Center or Institute.

Existing Academic Research Centers or Institutes: Those Centers or Institutes that had an official designation (i.e., recognized by the University) as a Center or Institute before January 1, 2021. These include:

- Andalusia Institute
- Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy
- Center for Economic Education
- Center for Design and E-Commerce
- Center for Health and Social Issues
- Rural Studies Institute
- The Institute for Transportation and Logistics
- Science Education Center
- The Center for Georgia Studies

New Academic Research Centers or Institutes: Those Centers or Institutes that originate after January 1, 2021.

II) GOVERNING PRINCIPLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHMENT

Designation as a Center or Institute is a singular honor reserved for those entities that are a) central to the mission of Georgia College & State University, b) interdisciplinary, c) entrepreneurial in approach, d) research/scholarly intensive, e) venues for faculty teaching and student learning, and f) engaged with the community and external stakeholders. Additionally, Centers and Institutes must build upon faculty and staff strengths; facilitate the creation of a multidisciplinary community of scholars; be linked to at least one academic program in order to provide research, service, and experiential teaching and learning opportunities for faculty and students; demonstrate the potential for attracting external support and/or demonstrably enhancing the University's reputation; and include linkages to the community.

Centers and Institutes require thoughtful analysis before they are established. Proposals for their establishment should include a statement of need, mission statement, goals and objectives, proposed name, benefits, a communications plan, relationships, consultations, and a business plan. Please see *Procedures for Establishment* for more detailed instructions.

Management & Structure Of Centers/Institutes

Directorship Role: Center and Institute Directors are responsible for ensuring that their units contribute to the academic vitality and visibility of the University. Center Directors are appointed by the Provost/VPAA upon the recommendation of the relevant Dean; Institute Directors are appointed by the Provost/VPAA with approval by the Executive Cabinet and President. They must be members of the faculty, unless otherwise approved by the Provost/VPAA in consultation with the respective Vice President. The appointment of a Director must include a written enumeration of any compensation and/or additional compensation, workload adjustments, other alterations of the faculty member's responsibilities, and any conditions of employment. The Director's faculty contract will be modified or redrawn as necessary to reflect new levels of responsibilities and/or compensation.

Human Capital: Center and Institute Directors are encouraged to develop relationships with the faculty/staff and other stakeholders within and outside of the University. The Director has responsibility for recommending any affiliate positions to his/her supervisor. Center or Institute affiliates should receive letters of appointment that contain the specified periods of service,

position descriptions and responsibilities, compensation terms (if any), and descriptions of alterations in workload if appropriate. Before agreeing to participate, any member of the faculty/staff who anticipates serving in an affiliate role should seek advice from their Chairs and/or Dean concerning the impact that his/her involvement will have upon tenure and/or promotion. Institute affiliate faculty members who participate in Institute courses or degree programs must also be approved by the relevant Chair and Dean.

Leadership Boards: It is recommended that Centers and Institutes establish a Leadership Board to provide the unit with support and counsel. Its responsibilities may include advising the director about activities that are consistent with the unit's mission, reviewing the unit's accomplishments in light of its goals, providing long-range guidance for the unit's strategic planning, and contributing to and promoting the financial viability of the Center or Institute. The board may include qualified representatives from academic communities, professional organizations, corporations, governmental agencies, or other suitable entities that are relevant to the Center or Institute. Members are appointed by the Director in consultation with the Provost/VPAA and a senior representative of University Advancement. Upon establishment, the Director shall draft and implement Bylaws that articulate expectations and terms of membership. Additionally, University Advancement will identify a Donor Engagement Officer or appropriate staff expert as a liaison to support the philanthropic and governance efforts of the board in coordination with the director.

Responsibilities

- A. It is the responsibility of the President to approve the establishment of all Centers and Institutes;
- B. It is the responsibility of the Provost/VPAA to precipitate the periodic review of all Centers and Institutes;
- C. It is the responsibility of the Provost/VPAA, Vice Presidents and Deans, where appropriate, to sponsor development of the Centers and Institutes, monitor their ongoing activities when appropriate, and participate in periodic evaluations;

D. It is the responsibility of Center and Institutes:

1. Create strategic plans and goals in the context of the University's academic mission and strategic plan;
2. ensure that the units' activities are consistent with their missions, goals, and strategic plan;
3. interact with University faculty and administrators, as well as with external constituents, to advance the mission of the unit;
4. solicit faculty, visiting scholar, and community stakeholder participation in the unit and secure affiliate appointments as appropriate via the chair, dean, Provost/VPAA or other Vice Presidents;
5. collaborate with University Advancement, to secure financial resources to support the Center or Institute and oversee fiscal matters and submitting financial reports as required;
6. document resource allocation to support strategic priorities; identify and document impact of resource expenditures relevant to the strategic priorities
7. effectively employ and manage staff within the unit;
8. ensure that terms contained in any grant and donor agreements are met;
9. participate in the development of annual reports as described in *Section III, Evaluation of Centers and Institutes*;
10. conduct a five-year self-study and participate in a formal evaluation; existing Centers and Institutes as of January 01, 2021 will be initially evaluated according to the methodology and timeline described in *Section III, Evaluation of Centers and Institutes*. New Centers or Institutes (those that did not exist prior to January 01, 2021) will be evaluated on the fifth anniversary of their establishment. Thereafter, all Centers and Institutes, whether *New* or *Existing* on January 01, 2021, will be formally evaluated every five years of operation as described in *Section III, Evaluation of Centers and Institutes*.
11. All Center and Institute employees and Affiliates are responsible for understanding and adhering to the University's values for Reason, Respect, and Responsibility and documented policies and procedures at University, federal, state, and local levels,

including but not limited to financial and human resources policies and procedures, the gift acceptance policy, sponsored research policies and procedures, procurement policy, capital projects planning procedures, and all other relevant policies and procedures.

Procedures For Establishment

Proposals should include all information that addresses the areas outlined below including a formalized business plan. Proposals will be created using the [proposal template for new Centers and Institutes](#) that has been approved by the university. Prior to completing the proposal application, the faculty, department chair(s), college dean(s) and Provost will discuss the prospectus for the establishment of the new Center or Institute. Following these conversations, the Provost decides if the prospectus is appropriate. If deemed appropriate, the Provost then authorizes the development of a formal proposal. Upon completion, Center proposals must first be reviewed by the appropriate Chair and Dean, while Institute proposals must first be reviewed by the Provost/VPAA (or designee as appropriate). The University President makes the final decision regarding official designation as a new Center or Institute.

The proposal shall include the following:

- A. **Timeline:** Indicate the target date for Center/Institute launch.
- B. **Context:** Summarize the origins and rationale for establishment.
- C. **Center/Institute Name and Structure:** The proposed name for the Center or Institute and the rationale for the name. Also provide a description of the organizational structure of the unit (director, assistant director, student workers, leadership board, relationship to other units on campus, etc.). This must include a discussion of how students are active participants in the Center or Institute.
- D. **Center/Institute Purpose:** Describe how the entity will advance the University's mission and what gaps/needs will be addressed if the Center or Institute is established.
- E. **Mission and Goals:** A mission statement should be developed that clearly describes the Center or Institute's purpose, measurable goals, and objectives. The statement should

link to the University's statement of mission, current Strategic Plan, and should provide clear indication of desired outcomes.

- F. **University Relations and Commitment:** Identify and explain the institutional commitments to the Center/Institute. List examples, faculty affiliates, staff affiliates, funding, administrative support, Advancement affiliate, etc. Please discuss the interdisciplinary nature of the Center or Institute in this section.
- G. **Center/Institute Functions:**
- a. **Research and Scholarship:** Describe the proposed research/scholarly agenda(s) associated with the Center or Institute. For Institutes, map out a curriculum plan and associated learning objectives for-credit courses that will be offered (if applicable). Are there opportunities for continuing education offerings? What programming will the Center or Institute offer? Describe multi-and interdisciplinary research endeavors and research related activities the unit is anticipated to conduct.
 - b. **Consultations:** Document the entities that have been consulted within and/or outside of the University. Copies of any letters of support must be included with the proposal.
 - c. **Community Contribution:** What is the target community for the Center/Institute? Describe the proposed contribution to the community. The description should include: technical assistance needed, capacity building opportunities, resource sharing, and continuing education.
 - d. **Impact and Outcomes:** Describe the proposed impact on faculty, students, staff, and the community. Document how these metrics will be designed and tracked.
 - e. **Communications Plan:** Identify the frequency and vehicle for the new unit to communicate with the University community and to external stakeholders.
 - f. **Relationships:** Describe the relationship of the proposed unit to the faculty and to other educational programs, Centers, Institutes, the community, or other external constituencies. Indicate faculty, staff, students, student organizations, and/or external stakeholders that will be involved in operations, activities, and/or outreach.

H. Proposed Business Plan:

The proposed business plan should include:

- a. A budget that includes anticipated revenues and expenses for the first five years of operation.
- b. Current external funding, if any, and the duration of that funding. A proposal must be submitted to and approved by the Provost/VPAA prior to the initiation or acceptance of external funds. In some cases, a grant proposal may be used to justify establishment of the Center or Institute. In such circumstances, the principal investigator must provide sufficient time for the Chair, Dean, and Provost/VPAA to evaluate the proposal.
- c. Potential sources of internal funding and how those resources plan to be leveraged.
- d. Analysis of the anticipated true cost of the unit including any in-kind donations (e.g., personnel, operating supplies, travel, equipment, space, etc.).
- e. A long-term methodology and plan to sustain the unit.
- f. Listing of faculty and staff who will be involved in the proposed unit, what their roles will be, and the impact the new unit will have on their current responsibilities (if any). CVs for current faculty and staff should be included.
- g. The unit's proposed administrative structure and organizational chart.
- h. The space, equipment, or other physical requirements. Explain how existing facilities and resources will be used, or what facilities and resources must be added.

Routing Procedures

1. After initial and preliminary conversations regarding the establishment of a new Center or Institute, the Provost must determine if the prospectus is appropriate and then authorize the development of a formal proposal.

2. The proposing person(s), department, or unit prepares the proposal and accompanying business plan for consideration. The proposal and business plan must be complete, detailing all of the requirements in the proposal template.
3. Center proposals are submitted to the respective college dean(s) for review who may request revisions or recommend for approval. Once recommended for approval, the proposal is sent to the Provost/VPAA for review.
4. Institute proposals are submitted to the Provost/VPAA or designee for review who may request revisions or recommend for approval.
5. Center and Institute proposals are reviewed by the Provost/VPAA, and if recommended, are forwarded to the University President and the Cabinet.
6. The University President reviews the request and makes the final decision. The Provost/VPAA informs the University Senate via Provost/VPAA Report.
7. The Office of the Provost/VPAA announces the final decision to the University.

In order to stay current, mission focused, and viable, an established Centers and Institutes may wish to *restructure, reorganize, or rename* their unit. Significant changes to the unit must be proposed and approved following similar procedures and processes as for establishing a new Center or Institute. Following preliminary discussions, the Provost will authorize the unit to develop an abbreviated prospectus outlining the changes they wish to propose. The abbreviated proposal must include:

- a. Contextual information (name of the Center/Institute, year established, main functions and services offered, organizational structure),
- b. Rationale for the change(s) being proposed,
- c. Outline of the changes being proposed with explanations for each,
- d. New goals/outcomes for the revised unit,
- e. Impact the changes will have on the university and greater community,
- f. Budget implications.

Once completed, the proposal will follow the same routing procedures (See *Routing Procedures*) as detailed in items 1-7 above.

Branding/Graphic Identity

All Centers and Institutes affiliated with Georgia College will use Georgia College branding and graphic identity standards, including the use of approved Georgia College logos and trademarks. This will be accomplished in coordination with University Communications, and all Center and Institute branding and marketing materials must be approved by University Communications and by the Office of Academic Affairs.

III) EVALUATION OF CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

Annual Reports

All Centers and Institutes will submit an annual report by August 1 of each year to the dean of the college in which the Center resides (Centers) or to the University Provost/VPAA or designee (Institutes). These annual reports will review and report on the previous fiscal year, covering the time period of July 1-June 30. These annual reports are reviewed by the Dean (Centers) or Provost/VPAA or designee (Institutes), and recommendations are made to the Center or Institute regarding operations for the following fiscal year. All annual reports are submitted to and housed in the Office of the Provost/VPAA.

Using the [GC Centers and Institutes Annual Report Template](#), the annual report will include:

- a. Statement of purpose/description of the Center or Institute
- b. Discussion of performance on the year's annual goals including next steps
- c. Discussion of new annual goals (for following FY) including targets for achievement and responsible roles
- d. Discussion of the year's highlights, challenges, and anticipated needs
- e. List of funding sources/grants received during the year
- f. Financial statement of expenditures

Five-Year Self-Study

Every five years, each Center or Institute will engage in a comprehensive self-study for the purpose of demonstrating skillful oversight, sustainability, performance, and impact of the work of the Center or Institute on the campus community and community at large. The completion of the self-study will be facilitated by the director of the Center or Institute. The self-study may be supplemented with any reports the Center or Institute has recently prepared for an external sponsoring or funding agency. The annual report does not have to be submitted during the year of the Center or Institute's self-study.

Using the [GC Centers and Institutes Self-Study Template](#), the report will include the following:

- a. Statement of purpose/description of the Center or Institute
- b. Discussion of how the Center or Institute assists in fulfilling the mission and values of Georgia College and how the Center or Institute contributes to the preeminence of Georgia College
- c. Organizational chart of the Center or Institute including advisory board if applicable
- d. Description of stakeholders involved including: (1) external agencies, (2) professional organizations or associations (2) community stakeholders (3) faculty, staff, and other internal participants. This must include a discussion of how students are active participants in the Center or Institute
- e. Discussion of how the Center or Institute has been successful in meeting its goals and objectives
- f. Description of the Center or Institute's research goals, accomplishments, and plans for research and scholarship over the next 5 years
- g. Discussion of long-term goals for the next 5 years, including anticipated action steps to accomplish goals
- h. Discussion of any anticipated obstacles or challenges facing the Center or Institute
- i. Discussion of anticipated needs of the Center or Institute over the next 5 years

- j. Discussion of financial considerations: Does the Center or Institute have adequate financial resources for continued operation? How has the Center or Institute leveraged campus resources? How has the Center or Institute leveraged external funding sources?
- k. For Institutes only: Discussion of the offering of for-credit courses, programming, or certificate programs as applicable

Directors of Centers and Institutes should submit their Five year Self-Studies to provost@gcsu.edu and copying their respective dean. If there are any questions, please reach out to jordan.cofer@gcsu.edu.

Evaluation of the Five Year Self-Study

Self-study reports will be evaluated by a committee. Appointed by the Provost/VPAA, this standing committee shall consist of at least four GC faculty members, one from each college, and an administrative liaison (Provost/VPAA or designee), each who will serve rotating, three-year terms. The Provost/VPAA may also seek participation from external constituencies upon the committee's recommendation. Using the *GC Centers and Institutes Self-Study Evaluation Rubric*, the committee will evaluate the submitted self-study report, consulting the director if questions arise. After evaluating the self-study document, the Committee will report its findings to the dean of the college and to the Provost/VPAA. The committee's report shall articulate the unit's strengths and weaknesses and shall contain recommendations to 1) continue the Center or Institute for an additional five-year period, 2) conditionally continue the Center or Institute for a prescribed period until improvements (as articulated by the Committee) are met, 3) merge the unit with another unit on campus, or 4) dissolve the unit. In the latter case, the Committee should make recommendations to the Provost/VPAA about an orderly transition of any personnel or assets contained within the unit. The Provost/VPAA will review the report from the committee and will make a recommendation based upon the self-study documents and the committee's ensuing evaluation. A final report including the Provost/VPAA's recommendation and any additional observations will be given to the President for final action. The final report will be made available to the Center or Institute director and dean of the college in which the Center or Institute resides.

Discontinuation of Existing Centers and Institutes

Discontinuation of a Center or Institute may be initiated in two ways. First, the Five-Year Evaluation Committee, after extensive deliberation, may recommend to dissolve a Center or Institute pending sufficient evidence for the recommendation. Second, the supervising unit or division may decide that they no longer wish to support or sustain the Center or Institute, pending sufficient evidence and rationale for the decision to recommend a closure. In either scenario, discussions to deactivate an existing Center or Institute should involve, as appropriate, associated stakeholders including members of the Center/Institute leadership board. Once the decision has been made to discontinue, a formal request for deactivation should be prepared by the dean of the college if the anticipated closure is regarding a Center, or by the Provost/VPAA or designee if the closure is being recommended for an Institute. The request to deactivate a Center or Institutes must include:

1. a rationale for the deactivation of the unit,
2. a detailed statement of the financial condition of the Center/Institute,
3. a plan for fulfilling or cancelling (with approval) any contractual obligations of the Center/Institute, and
4. a plan for phasing out the activities of the Center/Institute, including any recommendations for continuing activities of the deactivated Center/Institute through other organizational units of the University.

The request/recommendation for deactivation of a Center must be prepared and submitted by the college Dean, approved by the Provost/VPAA, then approved by President of the University. The request/recommendation for deactivation of an Institute must be prepared and submitted by the Provost/VPAA or designee then approved by the President of the University.

Initial Evaluation of Existing Centers and Institutes

Centers and Institutes in operation prior to January 1, 2021 will be given a period of one year to comply with the new policy guidelines for Centers and Institutes at GC. By August 1, 2022, each existing Center or Institute will submit mid-year plan to the dean of the college (Centers) or Provost/VPAA or designee (Institutes) that will detail how the Center or Institute is making adjustments in order to fulfil the requirements and protocol for Centers and Institutes at GC.

This plan should include, as appropriate, a brief SWOT analysis that outlines the needs and resources the Center or Institute may require in order to comply with the new guidelines. Subsequently, the first annual report or five-year review for existing Centers and Institutes will be submitted to the university on August 1, 2023. Reports for existing Centers and Institutes will adhere to the following schedule:

Center/Institute	Year Established	Five-Year Report Due
Andalusia Institute	2020	8/1/2025
Rural Studies Institute	2020	8/1/2025
Aquatic Sciences Center	2021 (active 2022)	8/1/2027
Center for Design and E-Commerce	c. 2000 CODEC merged with Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship effective 7/1/2023. CODEC was dissolved as a standalone center.	8/1/2023
Center for Economic Education	1982	8/1/2023
The Center for Georgia Studies	1998	8/1/2023
Center for Health and Social Issues	2008	8/1/2023

Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship	2022	8/1/2027
Center for Music Education	2018	8/1/2023
Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy	2017	8/1/2023
Science Education Center	2001	8/1/2023

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Appendix

As referred to in this document, an Academic Research Center at Georgia College is one that adheres to the University System of Georgia (USG) definition of an Academic Research Center (see p. 3, *Policy Definitions* of this document). Among other characteristics, such entities are distinctive in that they:

¹ Approved Feb 2021; Last ammended Oct 2023

- Serve as organizational structures for research and dissemination of research
- Involve stakeholders who are external to the institution
- Are interdisciplinary in nature
- Often provide a public service including programming and/or continuing education opportunities

However, important to note is that it is very typical in a university's organizational structure to have other types of centers for which their sole purpose is to provide services and support to students and often faculty and staff. These centers do not carry the responsibility of producing research, do not involve outside constituents, and do not offer public services or programming. Such centers are internal to the operation of the university and serve a particular niche or function related to teaching, learning, or student life. These include units such as GC's Writing Center, the Center for Testing, the Women's Center, the Career Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the GIVE Center. They are most often designed to enhance students' educational experiences and to provide assistance and support for students in their academic, personal, and professional pursuits while at Georgia College. While any student-serving center could apply to carry the rank of an Academic Research Center, they generally are focused on student support services and function exclusively to serve those purposes.²

The following Centers and Institutes meet the USG definition of an Academic Research Center outlined above (as of the last update October 2023):



Academic Research Center or Institute (as of 09/2023)

² As of January 1, 2021, newly created units that do not fall under the classification of an Academic Research Center are discouraged from using the designation of "Center" in the title of the new unit. Preferably, new units will utilize alternative designations that may include "Office", "Lab", "Department" or a similar, alternative title that aptly names the unit but does not identify it as a Center.

<i>Provost and Academic Affairs</i>	Andalusia Institute
	Rural Studies Institute
	Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy
<i>College of Arts & Sciences</i>	Science Education Center
	The Center for Georgia Studies
	Aquatic Sciences Center
	Center for Music Education
<i>College of Business</i>	Center for Economic Education
	Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
<i>College of Health Sciences</i>	Center for Health and Social Issues