

University of Houston
Guidelines for Establishing Academic Centers and Institutes
&
Operating Policies and Procedures for Academic Centers and Institutes

The following guidelines apply to all Academic Centers and Institutes (ACIs) that are formally recognized by the University of Houston (UH) under MAPP 12.03.03. ACIs seek to advance scholarly and/or educational activities by drawing on the strengths of multiple faculty members, academic departments, and/or colleges. More specifically, ACIs are faculty-driven, multilevel frameworks that provide an inclusive foundation for collective scholarly activity and foster the sharing of ideas through activities devoted to scholarship, education, training, and/or dissemination. The overarching goal is to develop a critical mass of skills within the UH System (UHS) that promotes the mission of the University. In contrast to ACIs, centers and institutes where research is the primary purpose are designated as Research Organizations (ROs), which are governed by separate MAPP guidelines and are administered by the Division of Research.

ACIs are distinguished by their reporting structure. A University-level Center or Institute must be interdisciplinary, involving multiple colleges, and/or departments. A University-level ACI reports directly to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost (SVPAA/P). ACIs may also have a reporting structure at the level of the College or Department and may or may not be interdisciplinary. A College-level ACI reports to the Dean of the College and typically (but not necessarily) involves multiple departments. A Department-level ACI reports to the Departmental Chair, and is usually centered on activities of faculty within that department. Both College-level and Department-level ACIs may expand to include other faculty and departments across colleges to reach a level where the ACI could apply for designation as a University-level ACI reporting to the SVPAA/P.

1. PURPOSE

An Academic Center or Institute (ACI), for the purposes of these guidelines, is a non-profit organization at the University of Houston whose primary purpose is to enhance scholarly and/or educational activities among the University of Houston and its faculty, with other activities possible, including research, student services, and public programs. ACIs exist to provide a critical mass to attain national recognition, pursue grants, and partner with other institutions and outside organizations/entities. The SVPAA/P will maintain a list of recognized ACIs.

2. POLICIES

- 2.1 An Academic Center or Institute (ACI) is a non-profit organization that engages in scholarly and/or educational activities, with other activities possible, including research, student services, and public programs.
- 2.2 An ACI may be multidisciplinary, be identified primarily with one discipline, may support activities in a wide variety of areas, and may involve more than one UHS campus or institution. These organizations may involve activities that are primarily scholarly, creative, educational, involving dissemination, or a combination of these types.

- 2.3 ACIs are classified according to their purpose and constituency as University-level, College-level, or Department-level.
- 2.4 An ACI may be supported by appropriated funds or depend entirely on sponsorship by outside agencies and foundations.
- 2.5 The Chancellor/President to the SVPAA/P delegates approval of a new ACI. Any agreements between an ACI and the SVPAA/P must be in writing.
- 2.6 An agreement between an ACI and the SVPAA/P must provide at least the following:
 - a. That the SVPAA/P approves of the creation, existence, and purpose(s) of the ACI.
 - b. That the ACI may not engage in nor promote activities that fail to support, in their entirety, the mission of the University.
 - c. That the ACI will undergo an extensive review every fourth year of a five-year term, which is the normal length of the charter. The review period and depth of the evaluation will depend on the nature of the ACI. The charter will not automatically renew, but can be renewed based upon performance according to the fourth-year review. For University-level ACIs, the Committee on Academic Centers and Institutes (CACI) will play a key role in this review process.
 - d. That the ACI is subject to all policies and procedures of the Board of Regents and UH System administration, and must submit to reporting and auditing requirements as established by the UHS administration.
 - e. That the ACI will submit a business plan and analysis relating to planned pursuits to actual results to the appropriate reporting unit (i.e., SVPAA/P, Dean, or Chair).
 - f. That the ACI will submit an annual report with updated contact information for its Director and Officers by January 15 to the appropriate reporting unit (i.e., SVPAA/P, Dean, or Chair).

3. PROCEDURES

The operations of each ACI must guarantee appropriate fiscal controls as well as oversight of the scholarly/educational mission of the ACI. Each ACI must have policies to ensure that the operations conform to state statutes and regulations, Board of Regents policies, UHS administrative memoranda, and other institutional policies. An ACI may be approved for a full five-year period or may be approved for a probationary one-year period. An ACI may be terminated for a variety of factors (see "Guidelines for Terminating an ACI"). The policies of an ACI should include, but not be limited to the following matters:

- 3.1 **Creation of the ACI:** To establish a new ACI, a group of faculty members should develop a proposal based upon a five-year strategic plan. The proposal must be approved by the department chair(s) and dean(s) of the department(s)/college(s) involved, and submitted to the Office of the SVPAA/P. The SVPAA/P will act on the proposal within three months. The Committee on Academic Centers and Institutes (CACI) will review all proposals.
- 3.2 **Content and Form of the Proposal Submission:** The proposal should include a statement of objectives, a list of faculty and other participants, and an indication of how the center will be funded. It should include the following components at a minimum:

- I. Introduction** – Presents a justification for the existence of the proposed ACI.
- Provide a brief overview of the proposed activities. Provide a brief history of the topic in general and relevant activities at UH, specifically.
 - What other universities/entities claim this topic as an area of expertise?
 - How will this ACI be differentiated from its competitors?
 - How will this ACI respond to needs currently unaddressed by the competition?
 - What are the competitive obstacles to success?
- II. Goals and Objectives** – The benefits to UH should be presented along with the benefits to the faculty involved.
- How will this ACI fit into departments and colleges within UH?
 - How will existing strengths at UH be leveraged in forming this ACI?
- III. Delineation of Organization, Governance, and Membership** – Faculty membership can include tenure-track, clinical, instructional, and research faculty. The role of the faculty in the ACI should be defined, and standards should be set for faculty involvement. Faculty members listed as members of the ACI should be active participants in the activities of the ACI with defined roles and academic programs, including a clear statement of how they are involved with the ACI.
- How will the ACI be managed and by whom? Describe the administrative organization of the ACI, including rules governing membership and how prospective members will join or leave. The role of the director and his/her authority over the members in the ACI should be delineated. Describe the plans for ensuring that information on activities completed by the ACI is available to the appropriate administrators, deans, and department chairs.
 - Describe the rules governing how the director is chosen, appointed, and terminated, whether there is a governing or advisory council, and how it is constituted, and the frequency of meetings of the officers of the ACI.
 - Provide an organizational chart of the ACI.
 - Will you have an advisory board?
 - Describe the proposed ACI hiring plan in terms of staffing (e.g., faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students, and staff).
 - What business processes will ensure efficiency of operations and best return on investment?
 - Is there any relationship with other institutions or outside organizations/entities?
 - Describe the procedures for the dissolution of the ACI.
- IV. Budget and Fiscal Accountability** – The operating budget of the ACI should be submitted for the first year. Provide documentation of financial operations and business practices of the ACI, including statements on financial accountability. If funds are being requested, include the following:
- What faculty lines and amounts are necessary to fund the ACI?
 - What additional personnel resources are required?
 - What startup package levels are necessary to fund the ACI?
 - Specify and define applicable charging mechanisms for use of equipment and facilities and how these funds are used to support the ACI.

- V. Space** – Space requirements should be identified.
- Where will the new ACI be housed?
 - What facilities, equipment, and technology are needed?
- VI. Commitments** – Administration-level, college, and departmental commitments should be described.
- VII. Members** – A listing of faculty who will be members of the ACI along with two-page curriculum vitae for each member should be submitted.
- VIII. Reporting Point** – The proposal must state to whom the ACI will report. If the ACI will be primarily in one department, then the ACI will report to that department chair. If the proposed activity is primarily within one college, then reporting will be to the dean of that college. Truly multi-disciplinary ACIs that involve multiple departments, colleges, and/or external institutions/organizations will report directly to the SVPAA/P. The SVPAA/P must be consulted prior to submission of a request for establishment of a multidisciplinary University-level ACI.
- IX. Funding** – A list of recently funded activities related to the proposed ACI and projected sources of future funding should be provided.
- How will existing grants and related external funding support the ACI? Include specific IDC credit-splitting arrangements negotiated at the departmental, college, or university level.
 - Will existing research dollars be brought into the University with any targeted hires?
 - What funding agencies and opportunities exist for the activities?
 - How will these funding opportunities be pursued (e.g., a strategic proposal development plan)?
 - What are the sources of these potential funds? List sources such as philanthropic, graduate student fund generation, federal initiatives, state line items, and IDC return.
 - Detail the projected return on investment.
- X. Impact** – How the new ACI will impact the UH/UHS?
- What are the projected impacts on graduate and/or undergraduate student programs (e.g., new degree programs, new tracks in existing programs, increasing student involvement in scholarship and/or research; for undergraduates, the latter ties in with the SACS QEP)?
 - What are the specific impacts on graduate and/or undergraduate student enrollment and thus formula funding?
 - Are there other impacts on UH/UHS that are anticipated as a result of the new ACI?