

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON
POLICY ON INSTITUTES AND CENTERS

Revised¹: September 22, 1994

I. PREAMBLE

The purpose of this policy is to define the activities of institutes and centers, to locate them in the administrative structure of the university, to provide for their regular review, and to specify the nature of appointments to institutes.

II. DEFINITIONS

Institute – An institute refers to a distinct and freestanding unit of substantial size, established to enhance the urban land grant university’s mission of teaching, research, and service. Institutes will normally be interdisciplinary and applied in nature, often with a substantial public service component. They may vary in emphasis, structure, and activities. Indeed, an essential point of institutes is flexibility—to utilize different combinations of research, service, and teaching resources to focus intensely on policy issues and problems in a defined area.

Center – A center is viewed as a subordinate unit within an existing department, college, or institute². A center should make a significant contribution to the major unit of which it is a part and have an adequate concentration of talent to carry out its mission.

III. SCOPE

A center or institute is an organizational unit that engages in teaching, research, or public service activities. Centers and institutes are, however, distinct from the traditional academic units, such as colleges or departments. Other units bearing the title center, such as the campus day-care center, are not governed by the requirements of this policy.

IV. POLICY ON INSTITUTES

Establishment of Institutes

Proposals to establish institutes will be submitted to the provost for review. Criteria for the establishment of new institutes will include the appropriateness to the mission and goals of the campus, and the adequacy of resources, including capital investment. Upon review of the proposal, the provost will seek the advice and recommendations of the Faculty Council. However, the decision to recommend the establishment of an institute to the chancellor remains with the provost. The president of the university will be informed of the decision to establish a new institute.

¹ Titles of officers and administrators updated and format errors corrected May 7, 2004.

² Three units on the UMass Boston campus that are designated as centers actually function as institutes. They are Center for Survey Research, the Center for Social Development and Education, and the Joiner Center. These units will retain their names, which have been used for many years and which have a wide recognition on and off campus. They will, however, continue to function as institutes according to the definition given in this policy.

Governance and Administration

Each institute director will report to the vice provost for research. If an institute has explicit functions beyond the area of academic affairs, dotted reporting lines to the appropriate vice chancellor may be established. As directors of independent freestanding entities, institute directors normally do not report to a college dean.

An Institutes and Centers Council, composed of the directors of all campus institutes and centers, will be established. The council's primary purposes will be to promote communication across institutes, to respond to campus policy and governance issues, and to encourage growth and development of the institutes and centers.

Activities

Institutes may promote, advance, solicit, and support research, often involving several disciplines or academic units. Institutes may also publish journals, reports, books, and related publications.

Institutes may support interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary instructional programs by providing instruction or resources to support or enhance degree granting or certificate programs. However, the authority to award degrees is vested in the colleges and the office of graduate studies.

Institutes may support service activities by engaging technical resources within and outside of the university to respond to issues external to the university. Such activities include community service, agency partnerships, technical assistance, outreach, and special events. Institutes may offer workshops, symposia, colloquia, mini-courses, and educational programs to the public as a pro bono service or on a fee basis.

Resources and Personnel

Institutes, as distinct budgetary units, may occupy their own identifiable space, may have professional and classified staff, and may engage faculty from academic departments. Hiring of professional and classified staff by institutes will be done in accordance with the affirmative action and hiring procedures followed by all university units. Institutes may retain consultants and engage contractors. However, only academic units may make official recommendations on faculty appointments.

Each institute will establish a faculty advisory committee that will meet regularly and be consulted on institute programs and plans. This committee will facilitate faculty interchanges between departments, as well as the use of professional staff with appropriate academic credentials as adjunct faculty. These arrangements will be subject to the approval of the institute director in consultation with the faculty advisory committee.

Institutes may appoint fellows for specified lengths of time to participate in the service or research activities of the institute. The selection of unpaid fellows is at the discretion of the institute directors, but such appointments require the approval of the vice provost for research and the concurrence of the provost.

The institute director is responsible for the management of the institute budget.

Review of Institutes

Each institute will be subject to periodic review by a committee external to the institute, established by the vice provost for research in consultation with the director of the institute. Such review will occur at least once within a period of five years from the institute's formal establishment. The criteria for evaluation of an institute will reflect the mission and purpose of the institute as well as its success in making a substantive contribution to the mission of the campus. The president of the university will be informed of the outcome of such reviews.

Institute directors are normally appointed for a period of three years subject to review and renewal upon the recommendation of the vice provost for research to the provost. There will be an annual review of performance of the institute director by the vice provost for research.

Each institute director will submit an annual plan of activities at the beginning of each academic year and will provide quarterly reports on the progress made toward meeting the goals established in the annual plan. Each institute will also prepare a five-year plan for program development and funding (both state and non-state). Such a plan should articulate how an institute intends to acquire non-state funding to enhance its total resources within five years. These plans and reports will be submitted to the vice provost for research.

Termination of Institute

A recommendation to terminate an institute will be made by the vice provost for research to the provost. The procedure will follow the same steps as the establishment of an institute. The provost will seek the advice and recommendations of internal and external bodies, including the Faculty Council, but the decision to recommend to the chancellor the termination of an institute remains with the provost. The termination of an institute will be reported to the president of the university.

V. POLICY ON CENTERS

Establishment of Centers

As subordinate units, centers will be established through normal governance procedures of the parent unit. The criteria for approval of a new center will include the appropriateness to the mission or goals of an existing department, college, or institute, and the adequacy of available resources. The proposal is approved when it receives the approval of the department chair and the appropriate academic dean or institute director. Establishment of new centers will be reported to the provost, the chancellor, and the president of the university.

Governance and Administration

The department chair and the dean or director of the unit that supervises the center retain full authority and responsibility for the oversight of the center's management and the expenditure of any funds associated with the center. All documents and publications, such as grant and contract proposals, brochures, and news releases, must clearly identify the center as being part of the parent unit.

Activities

A center may be established for the purpose of concentrating research, teaching, or service efforts within a clearly defined academic area.

Resources and Personnel

Any commitment of personnel, space, or other resources must have the prior approval of the appropriate chairperson or director.

Review of Centers

Each center will be subject to periodic review by a committee established by the appropriate academic dean in consultation with the department chair (or by the institute director if the center is within an institute). Such review will occur at least once within a period of five years from the center's formal establishment. The criteria for evaluation of a center will reflect the mission and purpose of the center as well as its success in making a substantive contribution to the mission of the parent unit. Reviews of centers will be reported to the provost, the chancellor, and the president of the university.

Termination of a Center

A decision to terminate a center is made by the dean or department chair of the unit in which the center is housed. The termination of a center will be reported to the provost, the chancellor, and the president.