

**Title:** Establishment of Centers and Institutes

**Abstract:** This policy establishes the guidelines for establishing and ongoing review of a center or institute.

**Responsible Office:** Office of the Provost

**Official:** Provost

**Contact(s):** Provost, 226-4650

**Applies to:** Academic and administrative offices of Academic Affairs

**Effective Date:** August 1, 2015

**Revision Dates:** January 20, 2019 (minor update to new SACSCOC standards)

**Introduction and Background:** The College has a tradition of establishing centers to assist in the coordination of teaching, research, and public service programming that transcends individual departments. No formal policies or procedures have guided the establishment and review of these centers in the past. Although not required by accreditation standards, the establishment of a formal policy for the establishment and review of centers or institutes aligns with SACSCOC Core Requirement 7.1 concerning the “ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes...”.

**Purpose:** This policy provides guidance for the creation, review and continuation of centers and institutes at Birmingham-Southern College. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that centers and institutes both serve the mission of the College and conform to the College’s academic and administrative policies.

**Applicable Regulations:**

Policy Statement: Centers and institutes must be evaluated and justified on the basis of need and the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the mission and programs of the College. The following should be considered relevant to decision-making concerning the implementation of a new center or institute:

The center or institute should provide new resources or benefits to the College that cannot efficiently or effectively be accomplished through other administrative structures. 1 Throughout this document, except when a distinction is explicitly indicated, the term center is meant to be inclusive of both centers and institutes.

The activities of the center or institute should ordinarily involve a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary array of approaches to the particular focus of the center.

The center or institute should involve multiple individuals and be focused more broadly than around a particular discipline. Typically centers or institutes are meant to address a particular problem, topic, or issue from more than a single perspective.

Centers are not meant to replace or augment the degree granting and curricular authority vested in departmental units. That authority rests with the faculty as represented in the

academic department and as approved by the faculty as a whole. Unit-bearing instructional programming (courses and recognitions) may be offered in conjunction with centers, but only if reviewed and approved through the College's normal curricular approval process. Non-unit bearing programming may originate from a center or institute without such review, but may be subject to other forms of review as appropriate.

Centers and institutes serve the academic mission of the College. They may augment the curriculum or enrich other work of the faculty through broader collaborations, for by example, developing supplementary co-curricular programming, providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, or through creation of research-based opportunities. Because of centers' academic mission, the provost is the ultimate arbiter of disputes or authority for decisions with respect to ongoing operations, purposes, and scope of centers or institutes. The operation, purpose, and scope of a center or institute is articulated in center's mission, which guides the actions of the director or coordinator of the center or institute and provides the basis for governance and evaluation of the center or institute. While directors of centers or institutes can operate with latitude with respect to the mission, they ultimately report to the provost and are subject to the academic mission of the College.

**Details:**

*Establishing a Center or Institute*

In order to propose the creation of a center or institute, participating units or individuals must prepare a proposal and operating plan. The proposal must be submitted to the Provost and will be reviewed by the Academic Policy Council (the Associate Provost, Academic Area Chairs and Faculty Advisory). If approved, the request to establish the center or institute will be forwarded to the President and the Board of Trustees. The following information is required in the proposal:

1. A statement specifying the proposed name of the center, its purpose, the constituencies to be served, and the particular objectives to be accomplished. The statement of purpose must clearly address how the objectives and scope of the center is consonant with and furthers the mission of BSC.
2. A description of why these needs, purposes and objectives cannot be accomplished given current campus structure and units. Put another way, why the creation of a center is the best solution to dealing with the issue or focus of the center.
3. Estimated fiscal resources required and projected sources of funding for a five-year period; the source of funding and if the funds are not already available, what the plan is for obtaining 3 additional funding; the impact on previously approved programs or initiatives if resources are being reallocated or redeployed internally.
4. Space needs of the center including thoughts about what plans for growth might entail and specific equipment and facilities required.
5. Description of the administrative and governance structure of the center or institute including coordination with other departments and centers at the College. The faculty or staff member who will provide leadership should be identified (if currently at BSC), along with a description of his/her charge in administering the center. Identification of the personnel

(leadership and staffing) to be involved initially and a projection of anticipated involvement over the initial five-year period. If staff or faculty are to be assigned to the center on a part-time basis, what the implications are for the other units to which they report.

6. Proposed goals for five years with timelines for implementation. As part of the proposal, a general assessment plan detailing what success would look like with respect to each of the goals must be submitted.

### *Review*

As with academic departments, the center or institute is responsible for assessment measures as part of the annual institutional effectiveness process. Likewise, centers and institutes must be reviewed every seven years in order to assure that their mission, structure, goals, programming, and level of support remain relevant and viable within the institutional context. A self-study and an external program evaluation are part of the regular cycle of review.

In addition, annual reporting to the provost is required that summarizes the work and status of the center or institute based on the accomplishments, challenges, goals, and if appropriate, student learning outcomes. If the mission, structure, goals, or resource requirements of the center change, those changes should be highlighted in the annual report. Annual institutional assessment measures may be included in this report. The annual report must include an assessment of the programmatic efficacy of the work it has undertaken for the previous year.

### *Continuation of Centers*

Centers or institutes may be discontinued when one or more of the following conditions obtain:

There is no longer a compelling need for their services or programs

Goals for external support have not been achieved or the center or institute is no longer financially viable

Qualified staff are not available to staff the center or institute

Mismanagement or malfeasance has occurred

Alternative structures to support of the programs offered within the center or institute are preferable and cost effective

The work of the center or institute is deemed to not be achieving the mission and goals as articulated

If, on the basis of an annual or comprehensive program review, for any of these reasons a decision is made to reduce a center's funding or discontinue its operation, a phase-out plan will be developed under the leadership of the Provost.

### **Definitions:**

**Center** is a formal designation for an educational support unit that ordinarily has a focused teaching, learning and/or scholarship mission, clearly defined objectives, and sponsors programs or provides services that fall outside the routine duties or mission of an academic department or other institutional

unit. A center will usually entail an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach to its substantive focus and commonly provides an interface between the campus and broader communities.

***Institute*** is an educational support unit that ordinarily has a broader mission and a more complex interdisciplinary or educational focus than a center. Several centers may be subsumed within an institute assuming that there are common threads to the centers' goals and objectives. Institutes might also facilitate the coordination of multiple ongoing programs or initiatives not currently housed in a center.

**References:**

SACSCOC, Principles of Accreditation 2018,  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf>