

GUIDELINES FOR CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

Approved by Provost's Council – May 27, 2026

I. PURPOSE

Cal Poly Pomona recognizes that Centers and Institutes contribute significantly to the academic, research, and public service mission of the university. These entities create structured opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, external partnerships, innovative scholarship, and student engagement, and serve as a mechanism for advancing research and creative capacity and supporting the development of externally funded initiatives that extend the University's impact. This document outlines the formal process for the creation, operation, evaluation, and, when necessary, closure of Centers and Institutes to ensure institutional alignment and accountability.

II. DEFINITIONS

While Centers and Institutes share core purposes—supporting scholarship, creative activity, and service—they differ in scope, complexity, and institutional reach. All Centers and Institutes must comply with the requirements outlined in these guidelines and in [EO 751](#).

The following describes how these titles are defined at Cal Poly Pomona:

Centers are organizational or administrative units established to advance scholarly activity through research, creative endeavors, or service. They typically focus on a single theme, topic, or applied issue. Centers may involve interdisciplinary collaboration but are usually housed within a single college or administrative division. They support faculty and student scholarship, outreach, and educational enrichment aligned with their mission. While some Centers may engage in outreach or partnerships beyond the campus community, their scope is generally regional or campus-based. Centers must demonstrate self-sufficiency through grants, service revenue, or philanthropic support. Centers maintain formal governance structures, which may include faculty, staff, and administrators.

Institutes, by contrast, are organizational or administrative units established to advance scholarly activity with a broader and more complex scope. They are designed to engage faculty and students across multiple colleges or institutions, coordinating interdisciplinary programs, research initiatives, public service efforts, and, where appropriate, engaging external partners and stakeholders to extend the University's research, educational, and public service mission. They are expected to involve faculty and students from diverse academic backgrounds, sustain significant extramural funding, and strive to attain regional, national, or international visibility and strategic relevance. Institutes maintain formal governance structures and may include or oversee affiliated Centers. Institutes must demonstrate self-sufficiency through grants, service revenue, or philanthropic support.

The designation as a Center or Institute must align with the scale, mission, and operational framework described above.

The terms "Center" and "Institute" should not be used for research labs, groups, organizations, activities, or programs that fall outside the formal definitions provided above. A list of officially recognized Centers and Institutes will be maintained by the Office of Research and Innovation and reported to the Chancellor's Office in accordance with CSU policy. Exceptions to this rule include campus central administrative or service units such as the Center for the Advancement of Faculty Excellence and other non-research units approved by the Provost.

III. ESTABLISHMENT

A Center or Institute may be proposed by faculty or administrators. Proposals must be reviewed and endorsed by the relevant college Dean(s) before being submitted to the Provost's Council for review and approval. Following Council endorsement, the Provost will make a recommendation to the President for final approval.

A formal proposal must include:

1. Title and type (Center or Institute), with justification
2. Description of the mission of the proposed Center or Institute and its alignment with university priorities. Explain its academic, research, creative, or service focus; how it will advance research or creative capacity and extend the University's impact; and how it complements existing campus units without unnecessary duplication of activities.
3. Initial program plan and 3–5 year goals - Provide a detailed outline of the Center or Institute's planned programs, initiatives, or services for the first three to five years. Identify key activities, target audiences or stakeholder groups (e.g., faculty, students, external partners), and proposed timelines. Include specific goals for years 3 and 5, along with metrics for evaluating progress and impact. In addition, identify potential risks to achieving these goals (e.g., funding gaps, limited participation, space or staffing constraints) and describe strategies for mitigating those risks.
4. Governance and reporting structure - Describe the proposed organizational structure, including roles such as Director, advisory board (if applicable), and reporting lines (e.g., to Dean, Provost). Explain how key positions will be selected and evaluated. In addition, identify the individuals or roles responsible for implementing day-to-day activities, managing operations, and supporting program delivery.
5. Faculty and staff participants
6. Financial plan, including startup and sustainability model
7. Exit strategy

Centers and Institutes are formally chartered for an initial term of five years. Continuation beyond this initial term is contingent upon a successful five-year review and formal reauthorization by the President, following the process described in Section V.

All proposals must follow the official Center/Institute Proposal Template.

IV. OPERATION

Director:

Each Center or Institute shall be led by a faculty or MPP Director appointed by the appropriate administrator (Dean, Provost, President, or their delegate), in consultation with campus partners. Director appointments are normally for a renewable term of up to five years and are subject to regular evaluation as part of the annual and five-year review processes. Directors are expected to provide academic and administrative leadership, secure external support, and uphold the mission and operational integrity of the Center or Institute.

Advisory Boards:

Centers and Institutes may establish an advisory board to provide strategic guidance, assess progress, and support connections across departments, colleges, or external stakeholders. The advisory board may include faculty, administrators, students, alumni, or external partners, as appropriate to the mission of the entity. The composition and role of any advisory board should be described in the initial

proposal or annual reporting. Advisory boards should be periodically evaluated for effectiveness in supporting the mission and strategic goals of the Center or Institute.

All Centers and Institutes must:

- Operate under a clearly defined mission and purpose
- Submit Annual Reports to the Dean or appropriate administrator and to the Office of Research and Innovation
- Establish and maintain financial self-sufficiency; university base funding may be provided at launch but is not guaranteed for ongoing operations
- Follow university and CSU policies on personnel, finance, and academic integrity
- Ensure meaningful participation by faculty and students

Instructional Limitation:

Centers and Institutes may not offer for-credit academic instruction or confer academic degrees. They may support instruction through co-curricular activities, public programming, training, or collaborations with academic departments, but for-credit courses must be housed within a recognized academic unit.

V. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Centers and Institutes are not intended to be permanent entities and must demonstrate continued value and alignment with university priorities through the review and reauthorization process.

1. **Annual Reports** are required each academic year, documenting activities, finances, participants, and progress toward goals.
2. **Five-Year Reviews** will be conducted by an ad hoc review committee appointed by the Provost or designee. The committee will evaluate:
 - Programmatic relevance and impact
 - Financial sustainability
 - Faculty and student engagement
 - Alignment with university priorities
 - External engagement and visibility

Review outcomes include:

- Continuation
- Continuation with conditions (minor issues to be addressed in the next cycle)
- Probation (continued operation contingent on submission and implementation of a corrective plan)
- Recommendation for closure

The Provost will make a recommendation to the President based on the committee's findings.

VI. DISSOLUTION

A Center or Institute may be closed:

- At the request of the Director and/or Dean
- Due to inactivity or non-compliance with reporting
- Following an unfavorable review or failure to meet follow-up conditions
- By directive of the Provost or President

Closure should include proper notification, reassignment of resources, and archiving of records in coordination with Academic Affairs.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

These guidelines apply to all existing and new academic Centers and Institutes. Existing academic entities will transition to this framework upon their next scheduled five-year review.

Supplementary materials, including templates for proposals and reviews, may be appended to this document as needed.