



Operating Principles for Academic Research Centers at the University of California, Riverside (UCR)

(Drafted August 2024, this document supersedes all previous versions)

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I. General Information

I.A. Introduction

This document defines a new designation of Academic Research Center (ARC), which will apply to certain existing units that support faculty research activity at UCR. This document also lays out the procedures to be used reviewing and disestablishing existing such units on campus as well as guidelines for the creation of new ones. This document replaces Operating Principles published December 11, 2005, since there is no record that they were followed.

I.B. Definitions

UCR has a wide variety of units that facilitate collaborative, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary research. Although the term “Center” has been used for a collection of different research entities, below is an inventory of titles currently in use at UCR and a brief description of how they differ from

what will henceforth be known as ARCs.

Academic Research Center: An ARC is a unit that furthers research in a designated field. It may also engage in public service activities stemming from its research program. An ARC facilitates collaborations by multiple investigators on a research problem of common interest and/or between other units and departments. As such, an ARC may be housed within an academic department, college, or school, or span several colleges and schools. An ARC may be initiated with a defined amount of institutional support; it may be the result of a federal or other external award; or it may originate as a line item from the state legislature.

Institute: Although the term has not been consistently used, an Institute is a major unit, larger than a “center”, that coordinates and promotes faculty and student research on a continuing basis over an area so wide that it extends across departments, schools/colleges, and perhaps even campus boundaries. An Institute may also engage in public service activities stemming from its research program. While the term Institute can continue to denote a unit that involves several centers, the centers will be covered by the procedures for ARC set forth in this document.

The campus stipulates the terms and conditions for creating centers and institutes, including administration, programs, budget, and a process for regular review; the appointment of a director and advisory committee; an appropriate campus reporting relationship; and instructions for regular progress reports.

ARC differs from:

UC Multicampus Research Unit (MRU): An MRU is a multicampus research unit with facilities and personnel on two or more campuses. The MRU is appointed by the President of the University of California and reports through the UCR Chancellor’s designee on the campus that hosts the MRU’s administrative headquarters. The President retains ultimate responsibility for matters of general policy and intercampus coordination; the Chancellor or Chancellor’s designee oversees the MRU’s administrative relationship with the campus including matters related to personnel, services, and space. See <https://ucop.edu/research-innovation/programs-and-initiatives/state-and-system-wide-research/multicampus-research-units.html> for further information and <https://ucop.edu/research-initiatives/programs/mru/review-requirements.html> for information on the 5-year review of an MRU.

Currently there is only one MRU hosted on the UCR campus, UC-MEXUS, which is part of Alianza MX, the systemwide program umbrella related to educational and research activities with Mexico. In addition, there are two non-MRU but systemwide units in Alianza MX, the UC-Mexico Initiative and the Casa de La Universidad California in Mexico City.

Other UC Multicampus Institutes, Initiatives, or Programs: The UC Office of the President or its designee oversees in full or in part other systemwide research entities such as the non-MRU components of Alianza MX and the California Institutes for Science & Innovation (Cal-ISI), <https://ucop.edu/innovation-entrepreneurship/ie-resources/ie-alliances/cal-isis.html>. Currently, UCR participates in the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2), <https://calit2.org>. These entities have specific functioning and review guidelines established by the UC system.

Organized Research Unit (ORU): An ORU is formally recognized by the University and facilitated by significant commitments of institutional support. It requires campus level approval by the Chancellor, after advice by the Academic Senate, the relevant Dean(s), and the Vice Chancellor for Research & Economic Development. An ORU involves an organized group of participating faculty and is established to foster and promote the development of collaborative, interdisciplinary research that enhances the research goals of the campus. An ORU facilitates research and research collaborations; disseminates research results through research conferences, meetings and other activities; strengthens graduate and undergraduate education by providing students with training opportunities and access to facilities; seeks extramural research funds; and carries out university and public service programs related to the ORU's research expertise. ORUs may be focused on a designated field and need not be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature. A director, appointed by the Chancellor's designee, oversees the administration, oversight, budget, space, personnel, and scholarship of the ORU. An ORU is subject to an annual report and a five-year review under UC policies and has certain limitations on its lifetime. ORUs are provided with a substantial budget and administrative independence, similar to that of academic units. See <https://www.ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/content-analysis/academic-planning/compendium/research-units.html> for further information on Administrative Policies and Procedures and designations of ORUs. Currently there are no ORUs at UCR, and the campus is not considering the creation of such a unit.

Laboratory or Facility or Core: A Laboratory or Facility (Core) is a unit that establishes and maintains a unique group of instrumentation resources used by faculty and researchers in one or several departments, sometimes with the help of full-time research staff appointed in accordance with established guidelines. Such units typically have approved recharge rates for their services. These Cores reside either within a college or school or in the RED office. The processes and authority for reviewing such units, appointing directors, etc. are established by the head of the unit which has authority over them (i.e., the Dean or VCRED).

Research Support Station: A Research Support Station is a unit that provides physical facilities for interdepartmental research in a broad area (e.g., agriculture), sometimes housing other units and serving several campuses. A Station may comprise several Facilities. Terms such as Unit, Analytical Center, Observatory, or Vivarium may also be used to define the functions of these units more specifically. Such units are often self-supporting and have indefinite lifetimes. Continuation of these centers is dependent upon evaluation by the Chancellor in the periodic campus budgetary approval process.

Administrative Center or Service Center: An Administrative or Service Center is a unit that does not carry out research as its primary mission, but rather exists to provide a service for the campus or for the community, such as a teaching center or an outreach center. Continuation of these centers is also dependent upon evaluation by the Chancellor in the periodic campus budgetary approval process.

Research Program: Research Program describes the research endeavors of an individual faculty or a small group of faculty that does not rise to the level of an ARC.

Finally, an ARC differs also from a brand-new type of research organization recently created on the UCR campus:

Campus Interdisciplinary Research Center (CIRC): A CIRC is a unit devoted to research topics that require the involvement of faculty from at least three different Colleges or Schools and reporting to the VCRED. The CIRC receives a central budget allocation through RED and a percentage of the indirect cost recovery (ICR), or more properly called facilities and administrative costs (F&A), generated from externally sponsored awards. The CIRMs are renewed after a successful 5-year review conducted by the RED office. The CIRCs are closely tied to the campus overall strategic plans. The process for their creation and review are detailed at (provide website).

II. Establishment of Academic Research Centers

ARCs complement the academic mission of the university. They provide a way of flexibly responding to today's research questions and are most commonly created to address significant societal and scientific problems that can be solved only by bringing together the expertise of faculty in multiple scholarly disciplines. Although academic departments support both instruction and research, ARCs often best facilitate collaborations in research and scholarship across departments and colleges. The most important function of an ARC is its role in providing a site for intellectual discussion and work. It provides a framework in which people with overlapping research interests can come together collaboratively. An ARC can help provide the means for carrying out the research; it can help with personnel, space, equipment, and other things needed for research, with funding from both external and internal sources; and it can help find outside sponsors and provide support for the writing of proposals.

Before the creation of a new ARC, the faculty involved should have conversations with their corresponding Deans and Chairs. There are in general no funds specifically designated to the periodic creation of new ARCs, so it is important to determine early in the process how an ARC may be supported if created. All proposals for new ARCs must be reviewed and approved by the Dean and Department Chair of the proposed Center Director's main academic appointment. The Vice Chancellor for Research & Economic Development and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies may be consulted if the proposed ARC is intercollegiate or entails significant graduate student training via training grant support.

How a new ARC is created and reviewed will depend on the rationale for its creation and the type of resources needed for its functioning. In some cases, an ARC may be created in response to the common interest of faculty members to synergize their expertise, which may not need additional funds, while in other cases, an ARC may receive an investment from the Deans based on their unit's strategic plan. The latter type of ARC will undergo a more rigorous internal process than the former. The creation of other types of centers may follow a call from a funding agency. Such centers undergo the merit review of the funding agency, and their existence is dependent upon continued extramural funding. They still need formal approval from the corresponding Dean.

II.A. Principles Governing the Establishment of Academic Research Centers

Although ARCs may originate in a variety of ways, there are certain principles and processes that should guide their establishment:

- Each ARC must have a clearly defined mission that supports the major strategic objectives and core academic mission of the campus, college(s)/school(s), and/or departments.
- An ARC must contribute to the research activities of the campus, college(s)/school(s), and/or departmental faculties. It must contribute to the intellectual capital of the campus and

the education of graduate and undergraduate students and may involve teaching and training opportunities.

- The mission and activities of any new ARC should not duplicate those of an existing department or center on campus or within the college(s)/school(s) or departments. Proposed new ARCs must be reviewed in the context of other activities that are ongoing within the campus to ensure that the campus's overall efforts in a given field of inquiry is strengthened.
- ARCs are often, though not always, interdepartmental, providing opportunities for new relationships on campus, within the college(s)/school(s), departments, or broader intellectual communities.
- ARC directors should serve for specified terms as defined in the proposal for their establishment, especially if they receive compensation. Appointment letters for externally recruited new faculty who may serve as directors should specify limited terms.
- An ARC's focus should be defined broadly enough to attract the intellectual and professional participation of a critical mass of faculty members. Additionally, students should be involved in a center's work and activities in significant and systematic ways.
- An ARC should only be formed when multiple faculty members plan to be significantly involved in the work of the center, and its viability does not depend on the work of a single faculty member. Individual faculty can establish their own research programs.
- An ARC should be financially self-sustaining or deemed worthy of core support or cost-sharing by appropriate campus unit(s) at the time of their establishment. ARCs should not expect any reallocations of F&A unless agreed upon by the corresponding dean(s).
- Funding for the establishment of an ARC should be designed with sufficient flexibility to accommodate shifting intellectual priorities or organizational arrangements over time.
- All ARCs must be subject to regular review, with meaningful participation from impartial outsiders in addition to that of center constituencies.

II.B. Application to Establish Academic Research Centers

After conversations with the dean(s) and department chairs involved, the case for the establishment of a center must be made in a formal application to the appropriate dean and must include the following elements:

- 1) **A strategic plan describing the mission and goals of the proposed research center, with short-term objectives covering the initial period of operation and longer-term objectives that provide appropriate flexibility over time.** The plan should point out the unique strength(s) of the ARC that support its establishment. The plan should also outline specific challenges, issues, and problems that the proposed research center intends to address. Additionally, it should address the anticipated contributions of the proposed ARC to UCR's graduate and undergraduate teaching programs, as well as its impact on UCR's external communities.
- 2) **A research plan for the first year of operation compared to subsequent years of operation.** The research plan must include the research areas that will define the proposed ARC, highlighting UCR's recognized expertise and describe how UCR researchers will be encouraged to participate collaboratively to realize the research agenda of the proposed center. Also, the plan should inventory similar units that exist elsewhere (on and off-campus), describe the proposed center's relationship to those units, and outline the contribu

tions to the field that the proposed center is expected, which are not addressed by those units.

- 3) **An organizational and management plan.** The plan should include an organizational chart, a description of the role of the oversight committee(s) and selection process of committee members, as well as a description of how the director will be selected and reviewed, and the term of their appointment.
- 4) **Projections of numbers of faculty members and students, professional research appointees, and other personnel who will actively participate in the center for the first year of operation and in subsequent years.**
- 5) **Budget estimates for the first five years of operation to meet the strategic objectives of the proposed research center.**
- 6) **A business plan that details the mechanisms that will be utilized to achieve financial security.** The business plan should document the sources from which funding will be obtained to operate the proposed research center and comment on any commitments made to date.

The distinction must be made between a budget and a “business model/plan.” A detailed budget outlines how money is to be spent; while a business plan details how the money will be obtained. Unless the ARC is being proposed with a finite fund and thus a finite lifetime, the research center application must include plans for the financial sustainability of the center.

- 7) **Statement of the immediate resource needs** (e.g., space, capital equipment, library resources) of the proposed ARC, related commitments for the first year of operation, and realistic projections of future resource needs.

The level of detail to be provided in the above items will depend on the nature of the ARC and whether it will require investment of resources, at the discretion of the deans.

III. Annual Report and Review of Academic Research Centers

III.A. Annual Review Overview

ARCs must be accountable in accordance with agreed-upon campus metrics for both their creation and continued existence. The metrics for a given center should be crafted appropriately for that center’s mission and opportunities. Depending on the type of ARC and the area of scholarship, metrics may include but are not limited to 1) research and scholarly publications or creative output, 2) prestigious faculty awards, 3) peer-reviewed extramural funding, 4) industry awards, 5) student successes and internships, 6) intellectual property created and royalty-producing licenses, and 7) activities that include public outreach or dissemination of knowledge.

Each ARC will provide an annual report to the Dean that will form the basis for a five-year evaluation. In particular, the annual review should evaluate the “return on investment” when substantial funding has been provided and examine future funding prospects if applicable

At the end of each fiscal year (i.e., by June 1), each ARC must prepare a report for submission to the Dean or Dean's designee that contains the two sections described below. The on-time submission of the report is a responsibility of the ARC director.

A. Narrative Report

- A.1. General Narrative: A short statement highlighting the main activities in which the center engaged during the review period, and how those activities align with the mission, goals, and objectives of the ARC, as well as address the challenges, issues, and problems central to the work of the center. The general narrative should also outline how the center contributed to UCR's graduate and undergraduate programs, as well as its impact on UCR's external communities during the review period.
- A.2. Research Narrative: A summary of any significant trends during the review period.
- A.3. Organizational and Management Structure Update: Describes any changes that have been made during the review period.

B. Data Report

- B.1. Participating Personnel: Center should list names of all who actively participated in center activities during the review period (including UCR Senate faculty, other academics, professional/technical/research/staff, administrative and support staff, graduate students, undergraduate students, and advisory committee members).
- B.2. Publications and Dissemination of New Knowledge or Creative Products: List of publications or creative products resulting from center participants, including books, journal articles, reports, web sites, artistic presentations, etc. Publications and creative activities listed should include only those that have resulted from programs administered through the center and should not include publications that have resulted from individual programs of researchers who may be affiliated with the center. Listed publications should identify those jointly authored resulting from collaborations among members of the center.
- B.3. Distinguished Awards: List of prestigious awards from professional organizations/industry/etc. received or held by participants in the center.
- B.4. Events Sponsored by the ARC: Details related to events sponsored by the center during the review period.
- B.5. Space: Description and amount of space currently occupied by the ARC for both its administrative and research operations.
- B.6. Sponsored Funding Proposals and Awards: List of proposals that have been submitted for external funding by the ARC and an indication of their funding status. The proposal list should only include projects where the intellectual content resulted from center collaborations, not proposals made possible solely due to the availability of center facilities and/or equipment.
- B.7. Funding Available: Sources and amounts of all funding that support the center's programs, as well as income from all sources, including publications or public outreach.

B.8. Any other information deemed relevant for the evaluation.

Data should be transferred to a five-year summary table, as described below.

III.C. Annual Review

An annual in-person meeting will be held to discuss the information provided in the annual report. Such meetings will be held following the receipt of the report and will typically include the center director and the dean or officer to whom the center reports. The purpose of this review will be to assess the progress made in the previous year with respect to the center's strategic, business, and budget plans. A record of the discussion and any recommendations for action will be made and attached to the annual report.

IV. Five-Year Review of Academic Research Centers

IV.A. Five-year Review Overview

Five-year reviews of ARCs are conducted to provide an in-depth evaluation of the center's programs and goals, to ensure that the research being conducted under the center's auspices is of the highest quality, and to assess that campus resources are being wisely allocated in line with campus priorities.

Reviews should utilize the descriptive data provided in annual reports from the past five years to assess the quality and the adequacy of personnel, space and budget adequacy (if provided), the center's success in meeting its purpose and objectives, the ARC's return on investment, research accomplishments, and future plans for maintaining financial viability and adapting operations to meet the needs of the field.

All ARCs must establish a rationale for continuance, in terms of scholarly/scientific merit and campus priorities at five-year intervals. To begin a review, an ARC should develop a formal proposal and self-assessment for its continuance, support funds, and space in the context of current campus needs and resources. The proposal and self-assessment should include all the information required of proposals for establishing ARCs; assess the accomplishments of the ARC in the past five years, its specific contributions to research, graduate and undergraduate education, and public service; and describe the consequences if the ARC were to be discontinued. It should comment on the effectiveness of its administrative and governance structure and identify any problems. It should present an updated business plan for the next five years of operation, as well as a plan for programmatic changes to enhance the reputation and contributions of the ARC to teaching and research at the campus level and in the national and international arenas. It should also consider whether the ARC should merge with others or be disestablished. Request for additional space, funding, or other resources should be realistic and consistent with the limitations, opportunities, and strategic plans of the unit and campus.

The performance of each director will be reviewed concurrently with the ARC review, following the same procedure. If the ARC is to be continued, the decision regarding the director's appointment will be made by the campus official to whom the ARC reports.

At the discretion of the overseeing dean, a five-year review commensurate with the resources pro-

vided to the ARC may involve an internal and/or external review committee.

IV.B. Review Procedures

The appropriate dean or dean's designee, potentially in consultation with the Vice Chancellor for Research & Economic Development for intercollegiate ARCs, establishes the review schedule for each ARC and is responsible for conducting the five-year review. The extent of the review, at the discretion of the dean, should be commensurate with the resources devoted to the ARC. For ARCs that receive significant funding from an academic unit, the dean may, at their discretion, consider creating either internal, external, or both types of review committees.

The appropriate dean will work with the ARC under review to ensure assembly of all review materials and prepare a letter to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor summarizing the findings of the five-year review.

Review Materials. Background materials, including the self-assessment, are prepared by the ARC.

Center Profile:

1. Summary Table of Annual Reports for the Past 5 years
2. Detailed Reports from Annual Reports for the past 5 years

Self-Assessment:

1. Mission: A concise statement detailing the mission and goals of the center and any projected changes if the center is continued.
2. Evidence of accomplishments: The section should focus on the preceding five years, but should also consider the lifetime of the ARC, evaluating its success in meeting its stated mission and goals. This section may refer to the data under "Center Profile" above.
 - a. Research:
 - i. Describe the quality and significance of research accomplished and in progress.
 - ii. Comment on significant trends within the disciplines represented in the unit and relate these to current research specialties in the ARC or on campus.
 - iii. Comment on how the ARC benefits the campus in general overall, as well as specific academic programs.
 - iv. Comment on the ongoing productivity and influence of ARC participants, locally, as well as nationally and internationally. Comment on evidence of their prominence in the fields represented in the ARC.
 - v. Comment on the ARC's collaborative/interdisciplinary work, its quality, and its impact on center research efforts and the campus.
 - vi. Describe the possible sources and availability of extramural funds to support the ARC's research and activities.
 - b. Graduate Education:
 - i. Describe contributions to graduate education at UCR.
 - c. Undergraduate Education:
 - i. Describe contributions to undergraduate education at UCR.
 - ii. Provide evidence that the ARC helped contribute to job placement rates or graduate/professional school enrollments for undergraduates after graduation, if any.
 - d. Public Service:

- i. Describe the ARC's contributions to public service.
 - ii. Describe interactions with other similar units in other institutions or other relationships with outside entities.
 - iii. Describe other services that the ARC provides to the community, state, and nation, such as distribution of research information of policy significance and recognition by non-academic groups or governmental agencies.
3. Administration and Governance: Describe the administrative structure and operation of the ARC, including campus location and reporting lines (include an organizational chart for illustration). Describe the ARC's advisory and/or governance committee(s), their roles, frequency of meetings, and if any changes are needed.
4. Problems and Needs: Assess the adequacy of the ARC's resources (e.g., space, personnel, equipment, finances) to fulfill its mission and goals. Describe any constraints which prevent the ARC from functioning at a more optimal level (e.g., if more space is needed, describe the needs and benefits of additional space). Describe other resources that are needed by the ARC (e.g., capital equipment, FTE staff) and, if provided, the benefits that the ARC and UCR would accrue.
5. Projections for Next Five Years: Describe the ARC's plans for the next 5 years, including plans for external fundraising through sponsored projects, gifts, and endowments, and plans for program changes to enhance the effectiveness of the ARC. It should be clear how the ARC's plans will evolve from its present situation.
6. Justification for Continuance: If the director and participant faculty believe that the ARC should continue to exist, they should explain the unique contributions to research that the ARC provides, the benefits to UCR and its communities, and any other justifications for continuance that are not addressed elsewhere in the report.

V. Disestablishment of Academic Research Centers

The recommendation for disestablishing an ARC may follow a five-year review of the center, continued failure to submit annual reports, lack of necessary financial resources for the unit's operation, or violation of any campus, university, state, or federal regulations or policies by the ARC. This also applies if there is demonstrated negligence in preventing such violations by any of the center's members. After review, the appropriate deans, department chairs and center directors may recommend a request for disestablishment to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor.

The phase-out period for a center to be disestablished should be sufficient to permit an orderly termination or transfer of contractual obligations. Typically, the phase-out period should not exceed one full year after the end of the academic year in which the decision is made to disestablish the unit. However, violation of any campus, university, state, or federal regulations or policies by an ARC, or a demonstrated negligence in preventing such violations by any of the center's members may lead to the immediate disestablishment of the ARC.