

Centers and Institutes

9.13.23
Council of Principal Investigators



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Introduction

Texas A&M University C&I provide a conduit by which a critical mass of intellectual capability, disciplinary expertise, financial resources, and physical assets are brought together to successfully accomplish the university's mission of quality education, research, and service.

Texas A&M University C&I have been operated in accordance with purposes approved by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (BOR). *System Policy 11.02*, establishes the procedures for establishing C&I according to the following definitions:



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Definitions

Center – (a) smaller, interdisciplinary collaborative effort, revolving around a specific research or education activity, whose participants involve more than one academic department or unit; (b) administered by a director or agency director or below; (c) focused on largely externally supported research or education activities broader than those interests of a given department or administrative unit.

Institute – (a) large integrative units, housing intercollegiate or interagency activities; (b) administered by a director reporting to a dean or agency director or above; (c) focused on largely external supported research or educational activities much broader than those interests of a given department or administrative unit.

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System Policy 11.02

- Operational responsibility for each C&I is vested with the academic officer or agency program administrator under whose direction the C&I functions, but the member chief executive officer (CEO) retains overall accountability.
- Monitoring functions of C&I must be maintained by a responsible administrative official.
- C&I must be periodically reviewed at least every 5 years.
- Major changes in function (including dissolution of a C&I), focus, or funding sources must be approved by responsible CEO, the chancellor, and the BOR.

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Review of the Management of C&I

Conducted the review of how Texas A&M University is managing Centers and Institutes to be in compliance with:

- *System Policy 11.02 Creation of Centers and Institutes*
- *System Policy 11.02.01 Management and Evaluation of Center and Institutes*
- *TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01 Centers and Institute*



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Method of Assessment

DOR circulated a questionnaire to all C&I directors:

- 1) Description of C&I goals and procedures including does it have an external or internal advisory board.
- 2) Description of the impact of the C&I.
- 3) Description of how the C&I is funded.
- 4) Description of staff and financial commitments required to operate the C&I.

Compared to a thorough review of all documentation in the DOR C&I Evaluation Database. This included comparing the original C&I proposal to determine the timing of reviews, when the last review was completed and is a copy of the review in the database.



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TAMU C&I

- 63 Centers and 49 Institutes operating under the direction of TAMU. 112 total C&I.
- 6 of these C&I are jointly administered with the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES).
- 10 are jointly administered with Texas A&M AgriLife (AgriLife).
- Every college and school at TAMU has at least one C&I adloc to it, except for the College of Dentistry.
- College of Arts and Sciences has the largest number of C&I with 25.

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8 Interdisciplinary Thematic Areas

Climate and the Environment involves 14 centers and institutes whose focus relates to all aspects of the climate and environment, including atmospheric sciences, natural resources, and environmental and oceanic sustainability.

Computation and Information includes 13 centers and institutes related to the mathematical sciences, information and data science and engineering, cybersecurity, cyber-physical systems, internet of things, and autonomous systems.

Education and Outreach includes 15 centers and institutes whose main focus is in education, law, social issues, and the arts, broadly interpreted.

Energy, Food and Water encompasses 10 centers and institutes whose focus has societal, policy, ethical, or research components relating to food, water, energy, and the nexus, as well as sustainability of these resources.

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8 Interdisciplinary Thematic Areas

Global Health and Security includes 12 centers and institutes related to health and security on a global scale. Examples include vector borne diseases, antimicrobial resistance, vaccine manufacturing, human and animal health; and nuclear proliferation, terrorism, immigration, and cybersecurity (*also under Computation and Information*).

Healthcare includes 25 centers and institutes related to all aspects of human, animal, and plant health, including precision medicine, precision agriculture, microbiome, genomics, biological informatics, and remote healthcare.

Infrastructure, Materials and Manufacturing has 4 centers and institutes related to infrastructure, including transportation, the smart grid, urban development, logistics, as well as materials related research, and all aspects of manufacturing.

Society, Policy, and the Economy comprises 23 centers and institutes whose focus relates to the humanities, social sciences, policy and law, and the economy.



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Summary of Lessons Learned

Issue 1: There are inconsistencies in how the reviews of C&I are initiated, in how different administrative units (College and Schools) were conducting those reviews, and how those administrative units were reporting the results of the review back to the DOR.

Corrective Action: The DOR will implement a common set of practices for the implementation including a common timeline for C&I review that will be incorporated into the revised University SAP and C&I Operations Manual which will serve as a minimum standard for reviewing C&I. Administrative units (College and Schools) will be charged with implementing the C&I reviews process according to DOR guidelines.



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Review of C&I

Action 001: Annual reports will now be required from all TAMU C&I Directors which will be reviewed by the appropriate oversight unit administrator, or their designee and those annual reports filed with the DOR.

Examples of some assessment criteria include:

- Evidence of scholarly impact
- Evidence of educational opportunities
- Evidence of multidisciplinary and global engagement
- Evidence of effective governance and administration
- Evaluation of the overall impact
- Assessment of future plans and challenges

The annual report informs decisions on unit resources and provides an opportunity for the administering unit to ensure the C&I is making acceptable progress towards achieving its stated goals as well as making contributions to the university's mission.



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Review of C&I

System (11.02.01) policy now requires that each C&I be reviewed at least every 5-years to determine if the C&I under its leadership, organizational structure and funding level is making sufficient progress toward the C&I goals and objectives. Critical elements of the review process include:

- Whether the C&I serves as a productive incubator of multidisciplinary research and other scholarly works, engaging faculty across departments and colleges.
- Whether the current leadership, organizational structure and funding level is facilitating sufficient progress in achieving the C&I goals and objectives, and if C&I activities remain aligned with university's goals and priorities.

Action 002; the DOR will clearly communicate what the minimum standards are for the review of C&I.

Action 003: The DOR will review and approve the review plans of TAMU administrative units who choose to develop their own policies to ensure compliance with the university and system policies. These changes will be incorporated into the revised [TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.MO.01](#) and the C&I Operating Manual.



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Review Process

- A C&I directors self-assessment report that includes a review of the accomplishments of the C&I, challenges the C&I has faced, and the future opportunities and goals of the C&I.
- The unit head appoints a review committee with relevant expertise. The review committee may include faculty experts from peer university or programs.
- The review committee will usually base its evaluation on the self-assessment document and should consider the mission statement and goals of the C&I. Reviews can include site visits, interviews with key members of the C&I and other relevant faculty and administrators, as well as students engaged with the C&I.
- The review committee prepares and submits an assessment report and recommendations to the unit head (usually dean) who distributes the report to the C&I director and affiliated department heads.
- The C&I director prepares a response to the evaluation.
- The unit head submits the assessment, directors' response, and any recommendations to the VPR office. The VPR or designee shall review the reports and may provide comments and/or recommendations as to improvements or other actions that may be indicated, including personnel actions, modifications of the center or institute's mission or programs, or dissolution of the C&I.

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Review Process

Action 004: Implement a common timeline for C&I review that will be incorporated into the revised University SAP and C&I Operations Manual.

Action 005: Revise and improve the “centers and institutes evaluation document receipt and process check sheet” to incorporate a tracking calendar with set milestones for completion of the different stages of the review process and to help ensure the appropriate evaluation of the reviews by the appropriate university-level administrative office. This form/tracking system will also be used to track any further actions that need to be taken based on the review recommendation and to **ensure reviews are submitted to the System on an annual basis.**

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Summary of Lessons Learned

Issue 2: There has been uncertainty about who the primary responsible party is for C&I shared between TAMU and the Texas A&M agencies.

Corrective Action: DOR will improve the communication of expectations on the part of TAMU and the agencies. Central to this effort is that the DOR will work with the appropriate agencies in developing the University SAP and C&I Operations Manual to ensure that both entities' policies work for the review of co-administered C&I.



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Summary of Lessons Learned

Issue 3: Most C&I with External Advisory Boards were not seeking appropriate approvals.

Corrective Action: DOR will revise [*TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01*](#) and the C&I Operating Manual to include the requirement of President of TAMU approval of C&I Advisory Board Members. DOR will also maintain a database of C&I External Advisory Board members including length of appointments to ensure changes are reported and tracked.



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External Advisory Boards

Of the 112 centers and institutes 35 reported that they have external advisory boards. In April 2023 TAMU was notified that the Chancellor and BOR approval for External Advisory Board members was no longer required but the decision to continue with President of TAMU approval of Advisory Board Members was made.

Multiple actions are being taken in response to this finding.

Action 008: the DOR will revise the [TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01](#) and the C&I Operating Manual to include the requirement of President of TAMU approval of C&I Advisory Board Members. In fact, this process has already been effect since April.

Action 009: The DOR is maintaining a database of C&I External Advisory Board members including length of appointments to ensure changes are reported and tracked. The database has been established and is being used for new request and we are in the process of adding those C&I Advisory Board Members whose approval was not routed thru the DOR.

- ~35% currently have full approval for EABs (processing ~200 EAB members)



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Next Steps

- Input from URC and CPI-EC on revised [TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01](#) and the C&I Operating Manual.**
- Circulate revised TAMU Standard Administrative Procedure 11.02.99.M0.01 for comment and approval.
- Publish and distribute (DOR web and hardcopy) C&I Operating Manual and conduct listening sessions for input from C&I Directors.
- Complete 2023 Reviews using revised guidelines.

Next big project will be focused on potential opportunities for alignment of C&I with emerging research priorities.



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Questions



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Research Development Fund

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RDF

As the current Research Development Fund (RDF) agreement (RDF 3.0) expired August 31, 2023, the Interagency Coordination Group (ICG) has been working on a proposal to continue RDF.

- a. Support amongst the ICG and the stakeholders for the RDF program.
- b. ICG recognizes the current uncertainty that exist within Texas A&M University and the agencies.
- c. In particular with the number of leaders in interim rolls.

The ICG agrees to a one-year agreement to continue the RDF collaborative program as described in version RDF 3.0.



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RDF 3.0 for FY24

Continue with the 10% IDC system member contribution to the RDF program as defined below:

- A. 5% RDF Classic Program** continues to be focused instrumentation and research infrastructure with a broad definition.
 - a. Instrumentation proposals in the form of instrumentation acquisition or matching funds for other significant proposal submissions.
 - b. Facilities proposals including traditional STEM/laboratory facilities, as well as more broadly defined facilities including innovation hubs, think tanks, policy focused centers, and visual and performing arts facilities among others.
 - c. Programs that support interdisciplinary research and creative ideas/art/policy formation spanning multiple colleges, schools, and agencies with a focus on capacity building.
 - d. Proposal will be reviewed by the RDF Advisory Committee (RDF-AC) who make recommendation to the RDF Management Committee.



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RDF 3.0 for FY24

B. 2% Recurring Support (RDF-RF), partial recurring support for existing shared core facilities to support recurring cost associated with operating core facilities. Proposals would continue to be reviewed by the RDF Recurring Fund Committee (RDF-RF) making recommendations to RDF-Management Committee.

C. 3% for combined **Collaborative Strategic Initiatives** and **Immediate Priorities** to support strategic research priorities across Texas A&M University and the Agencies, new opportunities, and to address unforeseen challenges. RDF-Management committee will work collaboratively to make funding decisions.

This extension will continue with a 5% IDC contribution to the **TAMU/Agency Program Development Fund**. The intent of this funding element is to increase overall competitiveness in advancing strategic priorities of the individual units and provide the flexibility to meet unforeseen challenges and opportunities.



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RDF FY24 Timeline

RDF Classic run this fall per normal schedule

1. Monday September 18, 2023, RDF Classic Fall 2023 RFP announced.
2. **October 9, 2023, RDF Classic Fall 2023 Deadline at noon Monday.**
3. Week of November 20 RDF-AC meets to discuss reviews.
4. Week of December 4 RDF-AC and RDF Management Committee meeting.
5. **Week of December 18 award notices, request for additional information (if required), and decline notices go out.**
6. January 12, 2024, final award notices go out.

[Research Development Fund \(rdf.tamu.edu\)](http://rdf.tamu.edu)



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RDF FY24 Timeline

RDF Recurring Funds will be run in the Spring per normal schedule

1. February, RDF Recurring Funds 2024 RFP announced.
2. **March RDF Recurring Proposals Due.**
3. **April early May final decisions announced.**

The Recurring Fund RFP will be informed by a working group to define what a core facility (Fall 2023).

Provide CPI-EC with a report on RDF expenditures in FY 2023 this fall.



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RDF Questions



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