

# Guidelines for Proposing New Centers and Institutes

## Tufts University

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These guidelines outline the steps necessary to develop a written proposal, to obtain the approvals prerequisite to the creation of new Centers and Institutes, and for the evaluation of existing Centers and Institutes. The development of proposals for a new center or institute are supported by the university's Program Development & Approval Committee (PDAC). Initiatives, though defined here, are not subject to these guidelines and require only notification to PDAC. Questions about the role of PDAC can be directed to [pdac@tufts.edu](mailto:pdac@tufts.edu).

### *Definitions*

- Center: a group of faculty and/or staff from at least two departments and/or schools organized around a specific research topic and funded by one or more schools, reporting to the dean of at least one school
- Institute: a group of faculty and/or staff from at least two departments and/or schools organized around a specific research topic funded at least in part by the university and reporting to the Provost's Office
- Initiative: A targeted program put in place to address a specific academic need

*Please note: The above definitions apply only to Centers and Institutes developed from 2021 and on.*

### **Overview**

A proposal for a center or institute must pass through a formal approval process before it can be implemented and must receive written support from one or more school deans and, in the case of an institute, from the provost. Initiatives only require notification to PDAC and should follow any relevant school and university policies related to their development.

Proposals for centers or institutes must fully explain the details of academic, administrative and financial responsibility. All centers and institutes, whether they are embedded within a single school, reside in multiple schools or are established as a university-wide entity, must be designed to ensure that the programming fits the mission of the university, has the potential for excellence, and has adequate resources, governance structures and oversight. Lastly, they must have an established set of metrics by which they agree to be evaluated on a regular basis.

In order to move forward with a request to establish a new center or institute, the following criteria must first be met:

- Has a faculty or administrative lead
- Fills a distinguishing niche or role in fulfilling an unmet need at the university and beyond
- Has a clear mission and strategic vision that is directly tied to the mission of Tufts University and the school in which it is housed
- Has strong academic support from the department(s), program(s), and school(s) involved, including the dean(s), and, in the case of an institute, from the provost
- Has a comprehensive financial plan (including fundraising, gifts, and procurement of grants) that addresses the initial and ongoing financial viability of the proposed center or institute
- Has assessed the breadth and intensity of faculty participation to ensure that the viability of the center or institute does not depend either intellectually or financially on a single individual
- When the center/institute has philanthropic support, donors have been assessed and approved by Tufts from a regulatory and reputational standpoint

- Has metrics by which it agrees to be evaluated for continuance
- Provides opportunities not provided by traditional campus units
- Exhibits national/international excellence and prominence through intellectual and other contributions, according to metrics established in the proposal and agreed to by dean(s) and provost

The following steps are applicable in their entirety. PDAC will work with the faculty or administrative lead(s) to ensure adherence to all guidelines.

## **REQUIRED STEPS FOR PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Center/Institute Conceptualization**

The faculty and/or administrative lead(s) should discuss their concept with the appropriate deans of the school(s) that will host the center/institute and inform the provost in the case of a university-wide proposal. Because multiple schools may be involved in the sustained success of the center/institute, other school deans, academic deans, and deans of research may also need to be consulted. Once the dean(s) affirms support of the concept, the proposal lead should:

- a. Establish preliminary versions of center/institute name, mission and goals, a timeline for development, preliminary budget; identify potential funding sources; and indicate a possible administrative structure
- b. Identify members for a planning committee and include any faculty, chairs or administrators that will play a central role in the center/institute's development and delivery; when appropriate, detail plans for an advisory board
- c. Notify PDAC of the intent to develop a new center or institute and include a narrative of the preliminary details as noted above and email it to [pdac@tufts.edu](mailto:pdac@tufts.edu)
- d. In the case of an Institute preliminary commitment for funding should be secured from the provost

### **2. Form a Planning Committee to develop a formal and detailed Center/Institute proposal**

The enclosed **appendix** entitled “**Preliminary Questions for Center or Institute Creation**” contains a set of exploratory questions that should be thoroughly considered prior to the composition of a formal proposal. Your formal proposal should encompass answers to these questions.

For proposals involving key strategic areas for the university, PDAC may participate in the formation of the planning committee. PDAC can assist the planning committee throughout the proposal development process and will provide guidance and support on the consultations, market research, and approvals required. PDAC will also facilitate completion of certain pieces of the proposal including the Operating Plan, Financial Statements, and Evaluation Plan.

#### Prepare the formal proposal in draft form

Please include the following information in the draft proposal:

- **Executive Summary:** Name, description of the center/institute and brief rationale
- **Introduction:** Overview of center/institute mission, goals, and organization
- **Rationale:** Why this proposal is a good idea at the present time? why at Tufts? how does it differ from other similar entities at Tufts, if any? how does it fit with academic priorities?
- **Proposed outcomes:** Describe the outputs (products) and outcomes (impact) this center/institute is intended to produce
- **Programming:** List the primary and secondary activities that the center/institute will undertake, sponsor, or coordinate. For each such activity, the proposal should explain which members will

be responsible for ensuring that the activities are properly conducted.

- **Competitive landscape:** Describe similar or at least potentially competing institutions at Tufts and at other universities or organizations. How will the proposed center/institute distinguish itself from other centers so that it will be able to successfully compete for funding and human resources?
- **List of faculty/staff likely to be involved:** Include brief notation of subject area expertise and possible roles and/or contributions to center/institute activities.
- **Administration and Governance:** Include an organizational chart, governance model, and explanation of how the center/institute fits into the framework of the school(s) it will reside in. In the case of interschool centers and all institutes, explain which office will be responsible for administrative/financial oversight. Where will the center/institute physically be housed?
- **Plans for Roll-out:** Include a timetable for development.
- **Five-Year Budget and Operating Plan:** Working with the Budget Center, develop a budget that includes sources of revenue, expected expenses, including anticipated O&M and assessment, revenue distribution, and investment and payback plan, where applicable. The operating plan should include an expected road map for either developing a sustainable business model, addressing the long-term investment needs, or for an eventual phase-out.
- **Risks:** What are the risks in creating this center/institute? These might include reputational, operational, legal, environmental or other risks. What anticipated impact will the new center or institute have on existing departments and programs?
- **Evaluation:** The Evaluation Plan section will set-up review timelines for academic, business, and, in some cases, legal or other administrative functions. PDAC will work with relevant functional areas to ensure reviews are completed on the stated timelines. Results will be reviewed with deans and EADs regularly.
- **Exit Plan:** Develop an exit plan that outlines when and how the center/institute will be disbanded if goals or outcomes are not met.
- **Appendices:** Relevant charts, capital plans, equipment lists, abbreviated faculty CVs (no more than 5 pages per person), programs at other institutions, etc.
- **Letters of interest from participating faculty and other contributing partners:** A compilation of letters from participating faculty members, relevant department chairs, and other key internal and external colleagues expressing their intention to support the center and contribute to its ongoing success.

### **3. Submit the draft proposal to PDAC for input and review**

- PDAC will review the draft proposal and will provide additional input and guidance where necessary. PDAC can also facilitate completion of certain pieces of the proposal including the Five-Year Budget and Operating Plan, Financial Statements, and the Evaluation plan.
- When given the go-ahead by PDAC, proposers should proceed to finalizing their draft proposal into a formal proposal. The formal proposal can then go through the approval process as described below.

## **THE APPROVAL PROCESS**

PDAC should review the proposal before initiating the formal approval process with the deans and provost. When a final proposal is ready, it should be distributed as follows:

- a. **Executive Administrative Dean.** The Executive Administrative Dean (EAD) of each school involved should review the proposal and budget and be given an opportunity to comment prior to its formal approval by the dean
- b. **Department Chair.** Similarly, faculty chairpersons of any departments involved should receive a copy of the proposal and be given an opportunity to review what is stipulated therein
- c. **Dean or Provost.** The dean of each school should review and approve the final proposal for a

center. To indicate support of the center proposal, an email from the dean of each school involved, addressed to the provost, should be submitted to [pdac@tufts.edu](mailto:pdac@tufts.edu). The provost should review and approve the final proposal for an institute

- d. **Faculty Senate:** The university-wide Faculty Senate should receive quarterly notifications about proposed centers, and, in the case of institutes, should be solicited for input
- e. **PDAC:** PDAC should be consulted throughout the proposal development process to flag potential risks or areas of concern to be addressed. PDAC approval is required before the vice president of finance and provost approvals
- f. **Vice President of Finance:** PDAC will submit the final proposal to the vice president of finance for approval. Working closely with the Budget Center to develop the budget and operating plan in advance will expedite this step
- g. **Provost and President:** After the vice president of finance approval, PDAC will submit the proposal for provost and president approval
- h. **Notification:** PDAC will provide notification of approval, amendment requests, or denial

## POST-APPROVAL PROCESSES

### Evaluation of Centers and Institutes

All centers and institutes including those created prior to the establishment of these guidelines, are subject to evaluation. Annual reviews will be conducted by the unit or person(s) to which the center or institute reports and should then be submitted to the provost for final approval. In addition to annual reviews, each center or institute should undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least every five years. The Evaluation Plan section of the proposal will set up review timelines for academic, business, and, in some cases, legal or other administrative functions. PDAC will work with relevant functional areas to ensure reviews are completed by the stated timelines. Periodically, PDAC may also undertake a budgetary or academic review of a center or institute. Evaluations should include verification that the center or institute:

- Has a faculty or administrative lead
- Continues to fill a distinguishing niche or role in fulfilling an unmet need at the university and beyond
- Has maintained a clear mission and strategic vision that is directly tied to the mission of Tufts University and the school in which it is housed
- Has strong academic support from the department(s), program(s), and school(s) involved, including the dean(s), and, in the case of an institute, from the provost
- Has a comprehensive financial plan (including fundraising, gifts, and procurement of grants) that addresses the initial and ongoing financial viability of the center/institute
- Has maintained robust faculty participation that ensures the center/institute does not depend either intellectually or financially on a single individual
- Has donors that have been assessed and approved by Tufts from a regulatory and reputational standpoint
- Has metrics by which it agrees to be evaluated for continuance
- Provides opportunities not provided by traditional campus units
- Exhibits national/international excellence and prominence through intellectual and other contributions
- Includes an assessment of the performance and effectiveness of the center or institute's leadership and governance, including the director's leadership, management structure and decision making, establishment of strategic priorities, and engagement with advisory board, if relevant
- An assessment of the continued financial viability of the center/institute in-line with its

approved budget proposal

The written report should include findings and recommendations for improvement or change, as appropriate. If the person or unit who oversees a center/institute determines the need for an external review, the costs borne from that external review will be paid for by the unit(s) in which the center or institute resides.

### **Dissolution of Centers and Institutes**

After a comprehensive evaluation, if it becomes clear that a center or institute fails to meet one or more of the evaluation criteria a determination will be made as to whether the center/institute will be dissolved.

To dissolve the center or institute, a plan should be developed outlining the rationale and high-level steps that should be taken for dissolution. Either the center or institute director, sponsoring school dean(s), or the provost may make a plan to dissolve a center or institute. The plan should be reviewed by the center or institute director, involved department chairs, and the dean(s) of the school(s) in which the center is housed and, if an institute, the provost. The plan should be submitted to PDAC who will verify if there are any additional risks or considerations and will submit to the provost and other leadership members as needed.

The plan should state that any advisory boards to the center or institute, as well as any other institutions involved as partners, have been notified of the intention to dissolve.

Care should be taken regarding personnel issues, the disposition of funds, the reassignment of activities, and the many other considerations entailed in phasing out an operation. Contact the Office of the Provost if guidance is required.

Any issues that could potentially create a financial, legal, or public risk for Tufts should be raised early and coordinated closely with the Office of the Provost and other personnel as necessary and appropriate.

The relevant dean's or provost's office should ensure that the center or institute is removed from the university website and marketing materials.

## Preliminary Questions for Center/Institute Creation

The following questions are designed to help explore ideas and help initiate planning conversations in advance of the development of a draft proposal. Once you have had initial conversations with interested parties, please contact PDAC at [pdac@tufts.edu](mailto:pdac@tufts.edu) for a proposal template.

### Naming

- Consider the unit's provisional **name** and imagine acceptable alternatives. Proposal leaders must consult with PDAC about the name's appropriateness in order to avoid unintended duplication or confusion with other programs. The central administration and/or sponsoring schools will reserve the right to approve the final version of the center's name.

### Mission and Purpose

Exploring the questions below, prepare a concise **mission statement**.

- What are the educational, research, and societal goals for the center/institute? Why does it make sense for Tufts at this time?
- Are there other centers or institutes at Tufts working in the same disciplines and/or pursuing a similar set of intellectual goals? How would the proposed center be sufficiently distinctive to justify its creation? How would it manage unhealthy competition for personnel, resources, audience, and funding?
- Are there centers or institutes dedicated to similar topics at other institutions in the Boston area and/or elsewhere in the country that are good models for what is being proposed at Tufts? What makes these entities successful and good models for Tufts? Are there unsuccessful or inappropriate models that should be avoided?
- How would the proposed center/institute fit into a larger strategic priority for the school/university?
- How would the proposed center/institute ensure that it remains engaged with the activities of other schools, departments, and centers, and not become a silo of activity?
- How would the proposed center/institute accommodate the interests of more than one Tufts school or department?
- In what ways would the proposed center/institute allow for a new scale of activity in the areas it seeks to cover? What would be gained by the creation of the proposed center/institute that would otherwise be impractical or unlikely to take place without the center/institute's existence?

### Activities

Gather information to support the **rationale, feasibility, and community support** of the center/institute.

- Is there currently a critical mass of faculty and students who would be excited by the creation of the proposed center/institute and be able to contribute immediately to the start-up and launch phases of development?
- Thereafter, what is the plan to keep participating faculty engaged and committed to the ongoing success of the proposed center/institute's activities? Would key faculty participants be willing, for example, to collaborate on research, help write grants, attend special events and sponsored lectures, take part in relevant governance meetings, make available their professional networks for the benefit of the center/institute, share time and resources with the center/institute?
- What are the incentives, disincentives, and tradeoffs that would affect the quality and duration of faculty participation and their ability to balance engagement with the proposed center/institute and commitments to home departments, programs, or schools?

- How would the proposed center/institute enhance the educational and research experiences of undergraduate, graduate and professional students from across the university? How would the involvement of these students be managed to ensure a meaningful level of participation that is balanced with their other academic commitments?
- What facilities, resources, equipment, etc. would the proposed center/institute need to access or share with other departments, offices, laboratories, etc.?
- If applicable, how will the proposed center/institute strengthen our faculty's competitiveness for external grant funding?

### Start-up and Ongoing Funding

- How much seed **funding** would be needed to begin operations?
- What fraction of annual operating expenses would the proposed center/institute likely require from the host school/s or central administration as a subvention, and for how long?
- What is the proposed timeline for the center/institute to be fully self-sustaining?
- Will any tuition revenue support the center/institute?
- If there is an advisory board, will board members have giving expectations?
- What are the most likely sources of external funds (for example, state and federal grant programs, foundations, for-profit corporations, private individuals and donors, etc.) that will be needed to keep the center/institute viable? How will the proposed center/institute integrate its ongoing pursuit of funding into its activities?
- If applicable, have financial arrangements for sharing in indirect cost recovery /overhead funds been agreed to and clarified in advance with input from all relevant deans and/or financial officers?
- What are the essential new investments in equipment or facilities that would be required for the proposed center/institute to begin its activities? Would the cost and use of these resources be shared with other units? Are there external funds to cover these investments for which the center/institute would be competitive?

### Administration and Management

Envision how the center/institute will be **governed, administered, and housed**.

- What are the anticipated staffing needs for core administrative tasks such as financial management, event planning, procurement, and communications? If applicable, would the center/institute be able to afford the appropriate level of professional and/or technical staff?
- Would any new demands that might be placed on existing staff be reasonable and within the scope of their job descriptions and salary levels?
- Will there be a director? If so, who, and how will this person be compensated?
- What kind of steering committee will be involved in the ongoing operations?
- Will the center/institute establish an advisory board and, if so, what will be the role and expectations of the board?
- What is the proposed location for housing this center/institute? Can it be virtual, or does it require a unique physical space of its own?
- Are there ways to leverage existing business operations of other units to ensure professionalized management of finances, operations, communications, and event planning?
- How would the center/institute give credit to participating faculty for bringing in funding that is most pertinent to the center/institute's activities?
- How would the center/institute ensure that coordination with participating departments or schools is considered as it relates to organizing sponsored lectures, distributing seed grants to students, post-docs, or faculty, and in hosting similar events or activities?
- If a center/institute crosses schools, have plans for cost sharing, overhead sharing, O&M, and reporting lines been agreed to?

## Evaluation and Self-Assessment

- Consider how the achievement of the center/institute's goals will be **assessed**. With the help of PDAC, a timetable, process for evaluation, metrics for success, and an exit plan should be proposed along with an ongoing mechanism for ensuring the unit follows its mission and fulfills its goals.
- What are the benchmarks that the center/institute will use to determine whether it is making progress in its first five years towards meeting its goals?
- How would the proposed unit measure its performance and impact at regular intervals?
- All new centers/institutes will be established with the understanding that they may be discontinued if certain criteria are no longer being met: for example, financial sustainability, academic excellence, critical mass of engaged participants, or compelling goals that serve the mission and strategic priorities of the university and/or host school/s. Periodic reviews will be used to assess whether such conditions are being met. What are the other criteria by which the unit's performance should be evaluated?
- All directors of new centers/institutes will have terms of appointment that may be renewable contingent upon the successful outcome of a performance review and the mutual agreement of the responsible academic sponsor (provost and/or school dean) and the director. What are the criteria by which the director's performance should be evaluated?