

**Minutes**  
**COMMISSION ON RESEARCH**  
**3:30pm-5:00pm | September 8, 2022**  
**130 Burruss Hall and Zoom**

**Present:** Alexander Leonessa (presiding), Kayla Alward, Leanna Blevins, Cynthia Devers, Roseanne Foti, Ron Gibbons, Randy Heflin, Don Hempson, Ben Knapp, Leslie LaConte, Kathy Lu, Kevin McGuire, Luke Neurauter, Eric Newton, Jonathan Petters, Kevin Pitts, Alexandra Poetter, Ryan Stewart, Elizabeth White, Lijuan Yuan

**Absent with Notice:** Rob Gourdie, Steve Rideout, Lydia Patton, Chris Headley, Chloe Robertson, Dan Sui

**Guests:** Vince Baranauskas, April Myers, Melinda West

**Research and Innovation support:** Kim Borkowski, Laurel Miner

Alex Leonessa called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. A quorum was present.

**1. Adoption of Agenda**

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

**2. Presentation(s)**

Leonessa gave a presentation on the following topics ([attached](#)):

Introduction of the Chair and shared governance, including new governance structure, with reorientation of the Commission under Faculty Senate. Leonessa also introduced the new members of the Commission on Research.

Leonessa summarized the larger projects anticipated to be on the COR agenda for the 2022-23 academic year, including:

- Inclusion of research faculty in governance;
- Rank, structure, and employment policies for research faculty;
- Revision of policies governing centers (Policies 13005 and 3020); and
- Review of administrative burden and barriers for research, including software procurement, IRB compliance, and other topics.

Leonessa provided a short summary of the results of the COR 2021-22 working group effort regarding research faculty representation in governance. He suggested that the same group

that led the discussion the previous year, including Rob Gourdie, Chris Headley, Alexandra Poetter, Elizabeth White, Raj Bhagavathula, and Isabel Bradburn.

Laurel Miner, Assistant Vice President and Chief of Staff for the Office of Research and Innovation, gave a presentation on policies on centers at Virginia Tech ([attached](#)), and solicited membership from among COR members to join a working group to suggest revisions to the policies. Kathy Lu, Kevin McGuire, Leanna Blevins volunteered to represent the COR on the working group, joining several members from administrative offices.

Both working groups will plan to provide updates at the November COR meeting.

### **3. Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:17pm.



# Commission on Research Meeting September 8, 2022

**Alexander Leonessa, Ph.D.**

Director, Terrestrial Robotics Engineering & Controls Lab

Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Virginia Tech, 227 Goodwin Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Tel: 540-231-3268, Email: [leonessa@vt.edu](mailto:leonessa@vt.edu)



**VIRGINIA TECH™**

## Introduction of new members

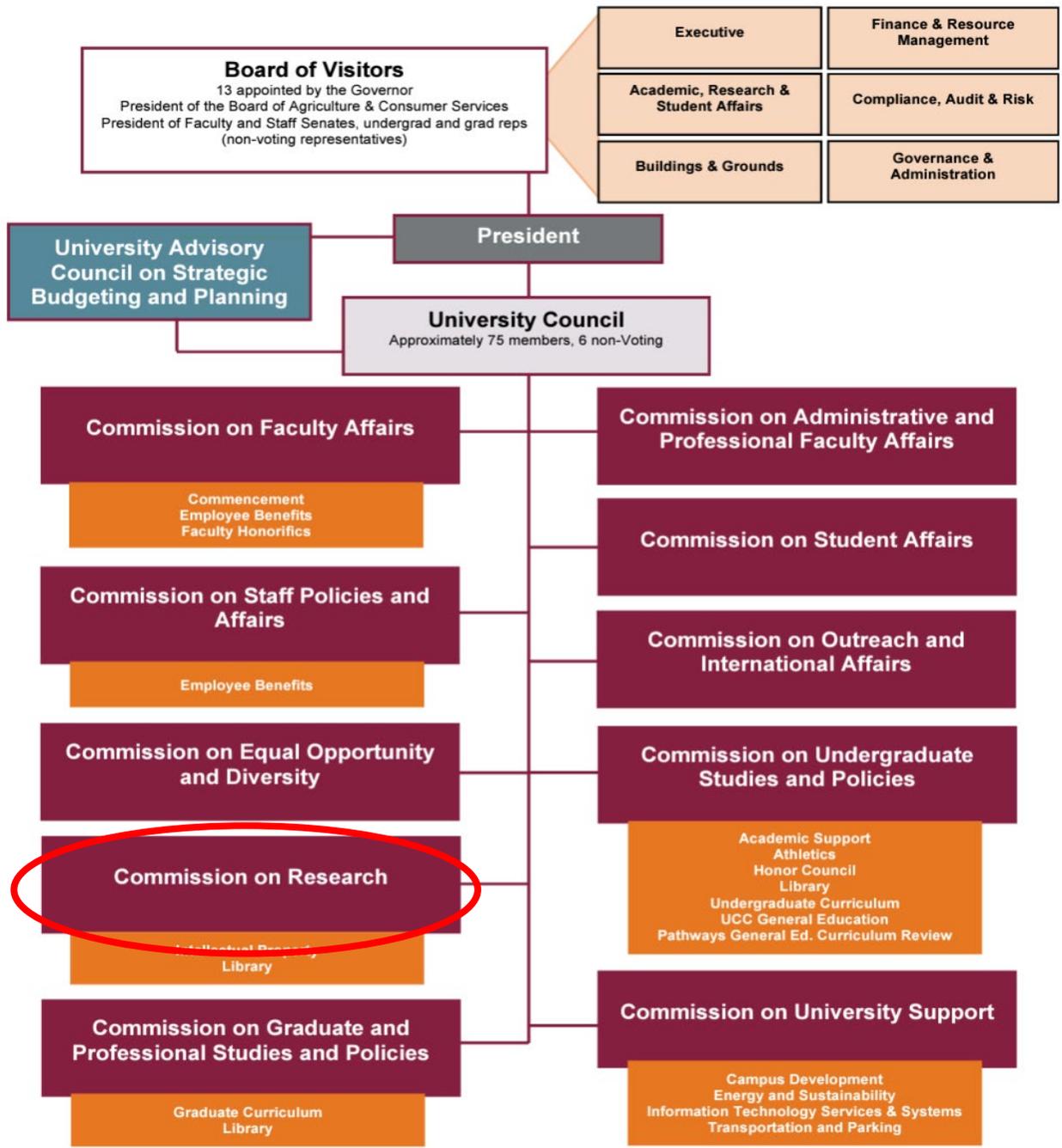
- Roseanne Foti Department of Psychology
- Benjamin Knapp Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology
- Kevin Pitts College of Science
- Steve Rideout School of Plant and Environmental Sciences
- Kathy Lu College of Engineering
- Ryan Stewart College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Cindy Devers College of Business
- Leanna Blevins Fralin Biomedical Research Institute
- Erin Newton Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance
- Kayla Alward Dairy Sciences
- Chloe Robertson Rhetoric and Writing



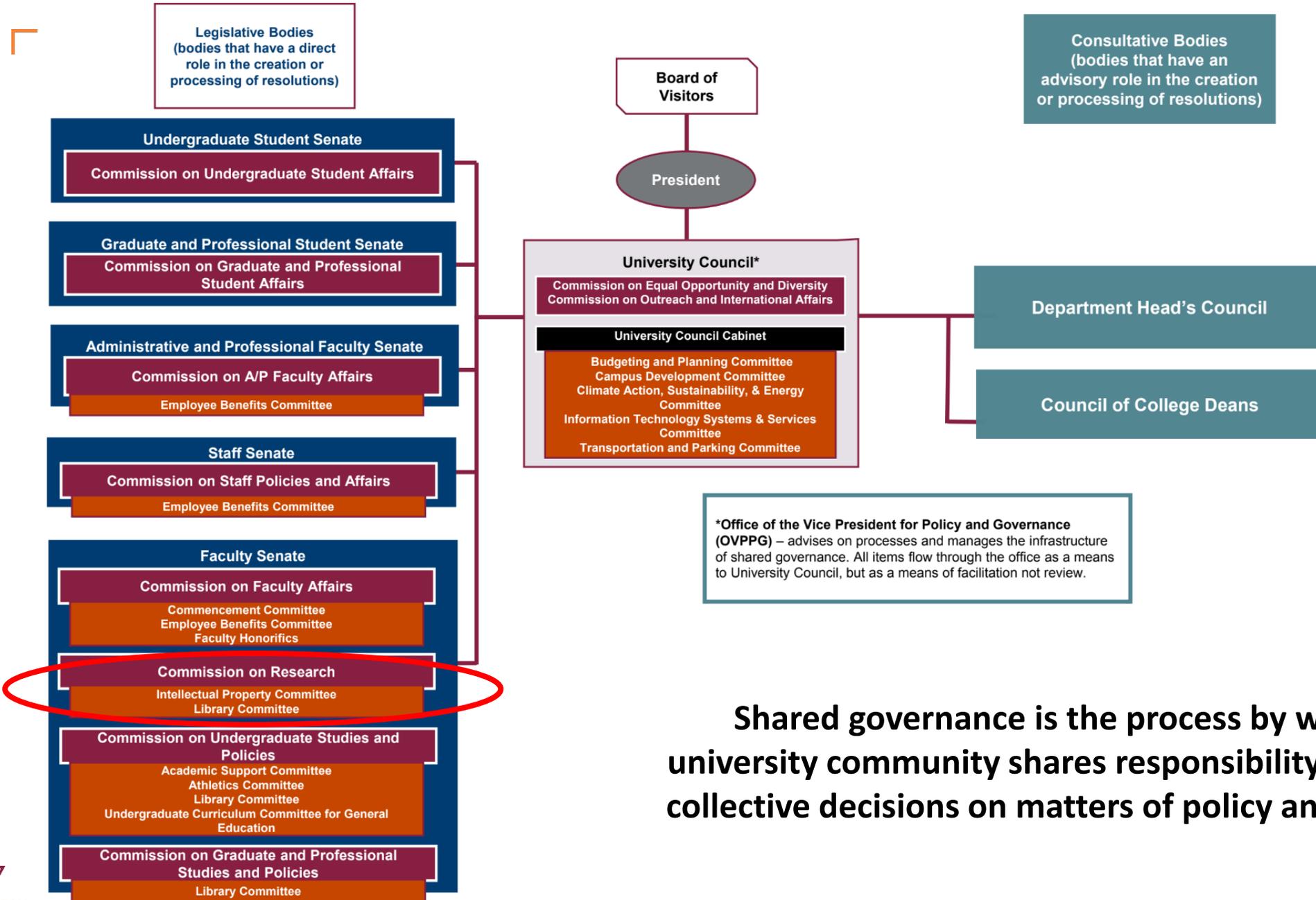
## Commission on Research Charge

To study, formulate, and recommend to **University Council** policies and procedures concerning research. Areas for consideration include:

- sponsored programs,
- core programs and interdisciplinary research;
- intellectual properties;
- animal care and human subjects;
- indirect costs and overhead;
- research facilities, centers and institutes, and library resources;
- liaison with affiliated corporations and institutes;
- and other matters that affect research.



# Governance Structure



**Shared governance is the process by which the university community shares responsibility for reaching collective decisions on matters of policy and procedure.**

# 2022-2023 CoR Meeting Schedule

2nd Thursday / Month

\*Exceptions to accommodate academic year events or breaks

Date	Time	Location
September 8	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall
October 13	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall
November 10	3:30 - 5:00 PM	118 Steger Hall
December 8	3:30 - 5:00 PM	118 Steger Hall
-- No Meeting in January --		
February 9	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall
*March 2	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall
April 13	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall
*May 4	3:30 - 5:00 PM	130 Burruss Hall

# CoR items that we will address in Fall 2022 (tentatively)

- “Out of unity” Research faculty representation in the University Governance.
- Revamping of policies on centers at Virginia Tech (13005 and 3020).
- Conflict of Commitment determination, reporting and approval.
- Research faculty track spans from BS to PhD: that does not seem equitable and there are no opportunity for career progression, no model for accommodating a 30 years career. We should have research positions for not “professing” individuals, that are founded on research, not a professorial track. Right now we have research associates with the exact same title and very different responsibilities, skills, and salaries.

## CoR items that we will address in Spring 2023 (tentatively)

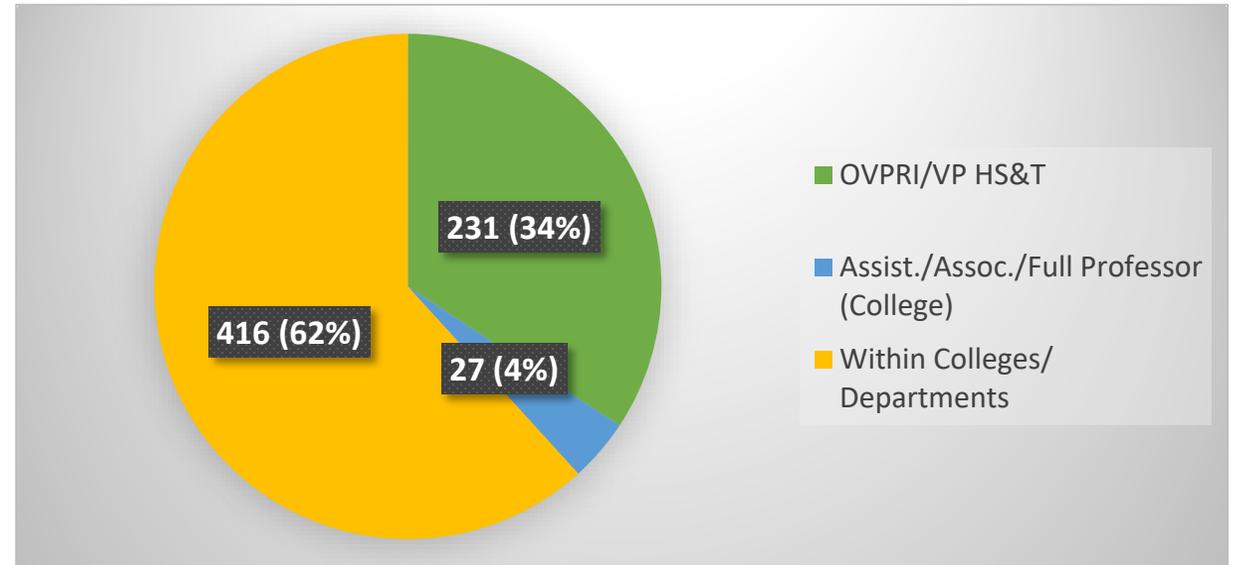
- Continuing investigating the impact of COVID on our faculty, from a research impact point of view, but also with an eye to caregiving needs.
- Research on controversial topics, race, religion, etc.. We need to be attentive on how scholars are viewed within the University. We don't want them be treated differently.
  - More general topic of **Ethics in Research**
- General evaluation of the administrative burden on researchers, and the various administrative and operational hurdles that limit research productivity.
  - Human subjects research and the institutional review board
  - Engagement of the controllers' office in paying human subjects research participants
- Software procurement, which continues to be a considerable hurdle for all aspects of the university's mission, but especially for research.

# Background

## Topic Initiation

- **Lack of research faculty representation in the Faculty Senate [Governance]**
- Discussion in the COR meeting, 9/9/2021
- The topic is shared with the Faculty Senate Cabinet meetings since 9/10 and has been discussed informally. The importance has been recognized. No conclusion has been made.

## Data and Facts: 674 research faculty (July 2021)



## Progress and Analysis

- The what-if analysis indicates minimal impact to the number of Faculty Senators in Colleges and Departments. (172 research faculty members are included in the academic departments.)
- The representation for research faculty unaffiliated with departments remains an open issue.
- The funding of research faculty to have “release time” for governance tasks should be identified.

# Update (December 2021)

## Background

- **Objective: To create research faculty representation in the Faculty Senate**
- COR meetings on 9/9, 10/14
- Workgroup meetings on 11/30, 12/7, 12/8
- Communication with Faculty Senate officers on 11/30 and 12/7

## Members

- Jeff Alwang, Raj Bhagavathula, Isabel Bradburn, Sandra Burks, Linda Collins, Rob Gourdie, William Headley, Miner Laurel, Alexandra Poetter, Elizabeth White
- Draft resolution preparation by Raj, Isabel, and Ran

## Resolution Ideas

- A draft resolution will be prepared. Next meeting time: 1/7/22
- Separate election: Research faculty affiliated with a department will join the senator election within the department (2022 election); other research faculty members will have a separate election (2023 election).
- Two models: “Two senator seats” Vs “Three senator seats”
- Timeline and process: (1) draft preparation, (2) feedback collection (all stakeholders, e.g., “release time”), (3) resolution approval process in COR, (4) resolution approval process in Faculty Senate (perhaps CFA).

(Jan. – May, 2022)

## Research Faculty Update – 2021-2022 Minutes

- **May 5, 2022** - Continued efforts to ensure representation of Research Faculty ranks in governance. While recent changes ensured research faculty associated with academic colleges would be represented, additional attention is needed to allow research faculty in the institutes to be represented.
- **April 14, 2022** - Ran Jin updated the Commission on the status of the research faculty representation project. The **working group has developed a draft proposal**, which will soon be shared with research faculty on campus for feedback. It is expected that this work will continue in the 2021-2022 academic year.
- **February 10, 2022** - Ran Jin, Associate Professor, Industrial and Systems Engineering, and CoR co-chair, provided an update on the activity of the research faculty working group. The working group has developed **a proposal for two faculty senate seats**, and is soliciting feedback from key stakeholders. The resolution will be coming to the Commission on Research when it is ready.

# Charge (1)

- The overall task of the **Working Group for Research Faculty Professional Development Support** is to investigate and provide recommendations for the status, structure, and resources for professional development and career advancement for research faculty on the Virginia Tech campus. This may include:
  - structure of research faculty ranks and opportunities for career advancement within and among those ranks;
  - resources for involvement in programs and activities outside of sponsored work; and
  - the status of research faculty representation in the shared governance.
- To complete the task, the subcommittee will develop procedures to gather relevant information, solicit feedback from administrators, faculty, and explore the possibilities and recommend viable approaches.

# Charge (2)

Specific Objectives related to Research Faculty in the Governance Representation

1. Examine and propose changes in the constitution and bylaws regarding eligibility of faculty (to vote for and stand as candidates);
2. Examine state of representation of research faculty within the various institutes who do not have a departmental affiliation. If they have a departmental affiliation, the change proposed in (1) should be sufficient and wording such as “affiliate faculty who are housed in a university-recognized institution will also be eligible”; and
3. The funding of research faculty and examine changes (and where they have to occur) necessary for them to have “release time” for senate-like and other governance tasks.



- Revamping of policies on centers at Virginia Tech (13005 and 3020).



# Policies on Centers

13005 and 3020

## Commission on Research

### 2021-2022 Members

**CHARGE:** To study, formulate, and recommend to University Council policies and procedures concerning research. Areas for consideration include: sponsored programs, core programs and interdisciplinary research; intellectual properties; animal care and human subjects; indirect costs and overhead; research facilities, centers and institutes, and library resources; liaison with affiliated corporations and institutes; and other matters that affect research.

# Relevant Policies

## Policy 13005 – Typically through COR



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

### Centers and Institutes: Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight

**No. 13005**

**Policy Effective Date:**  
12/12/1990

**Last Revision Date:**  
8/27/2020

**Policy Owner:**  
Don Taylor

**Policy Author:**  
(Contact Person)  
Laurel Miner

**Affected Parties:**  
Undergraduate  
Graduate  
Faculty  
Staff  
Other

**1.0 Purpose**  
The university has found establishment of dedicated organizational entities (Centers, Institutes, etc.) to be a proven, effective means of supporting complex academic activities, particularly interdisciplinary research, instruction, and outreach. Over the years, these focused *centers*<sup>1</sup> have served the faculty and the university well. They allow faculty and their associates from varied backgrounds and expertise to come together to solve common problems that cannot otherwise be addressed, be formally recognized as an operational entity within the university, and they provide substantial growth in support for faculty, students, and facilities across the university.

Beginning in the late 1990s the university began to establish University Institutes for the purpose of providing a more coordinated and structured means of supporting large, complex interdisciplinary research endeavors across certain strategic focus areas. These University Institutes have enhanced certain recognized research and discovery strengths of the university while also allowing for growth and development into key strategic areas such as the life and health sciences. Substantial funding has been allocated by the university to these University Institutes as an important investment towards our collective future.

This policy document provides guidance regarding the establishment, governance and programmatic functions and responsibilities related to research, instruction and outreach performed in these *centers*.

**2.0 Policy**  
The university encourages the formation of *centers* for the purpose of enhancing the achievement of its instructional, research, and outreach missions. This document sets forth the rules by which these entities are established, governed, and overseen from a programmatic standpoint.

All matters relating to research, instruction and outreach at Virginia Tech, including the entities described herein, fall under the jurisdiction and purview of the Executive Vice President and Provost (“Provost”) as Chief Academic Officer of the university. The Provost may in turn engage other university leadership in an oversight role for these entities that align with their respective domain areas. A related policy, [Policy 3020](#) (Centers and University Institutes Financial and Administrative Policies and Procedures), outlines the policies and procedures necessary for the effective operation of centers in regard to their financial and administrative affairs, including necessary controls that are in place through the establishment and governance of these organizations.

This policy does not apply to Cultural or Community Centers.

**1.0 Purpose**  
Virginia Tech Centers and University Institutes, duly authorized and established according to the policies and procedures contained in this document and the companion Policy 13005, Centers and University Institutes Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight (<http://policies.vt.edu/13005.pdf>), are part of the structure of the university; i.e., they are approved organizational units of the university. As such, it is imperative that appropriate policies and procedures are in place that will govern the authorization, recognition, registration, fiscal accountability and stewardship, and programmatic oversight of Centers and University Institutes. The purpose of this policy is to outline the fiscal and related operational processes related to Centers and University Institutes. These policies and procedures are designed to facilitate the future success of Centers and University Institutes at Virginia Tech.

**2.0 Policy**  
This document sets forth the fiscal and operational policies and procedures by which Centers and University Institutes must be organized and operated. These policies and procedures are in satisfaction of the oversight requirements of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, and are applicable to all existing and future Centers and University Institutes. The University’s Vice President for Finance is responsible for establishing policies and procedures governing all financial and related operational matters of Centers and University Institutes.

All matters relating to research, instruction and outreach at Virginia Tech fall under the jurisdiction of the Executive Vice President and Provost as Chief Academic Officer of the university, and as such, the organization and operation of Centers and University Institutes, in accordance with university policies and procedures, are the purview of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Center Directors and Administrators, along with the Stakeholders Committees (as defined in section 4.0 of this document), are responsible for ensuring compliance with these financial and administrative policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures related to the establishment, governance, and programmatic functions and responsibilities related to research, instruction and outreach performed in Centers and University Institutes are addressed with Policy 13005, Centers and University Institutes: Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight (<http://www.policies.vt.edu/13005.pdf>).

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<sup>1</sup> In order to consolidate discussion throughout this policy, the italicized term *center* shall be used to generically describe the collection of Centers, Institutes, and/or similar entities. Clarification shall be provided when relevant distinctions exist between these entities and additional details of these definitions are provided in Section 4.

CENTERS AND INSTITUTES: ESTABLISHMENT, GOVERNANCE AND PROGRAMMATIC OVERSIGHT |

## Policy 3020 – Owned by VP Finance



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

### Centers and University Institutes: Financial and Administrative Policy and Procedures

**No. 3020**

**Policy Effective Date:**  
1/25/1999

**Last Revision Date:**  
11/21/2019

**Policy Owner:**  
Ken Miller

**Policy Author:** (Contact Person)  
Nancy Meacham

**Affected Parties:**  
Faculty  
Staff

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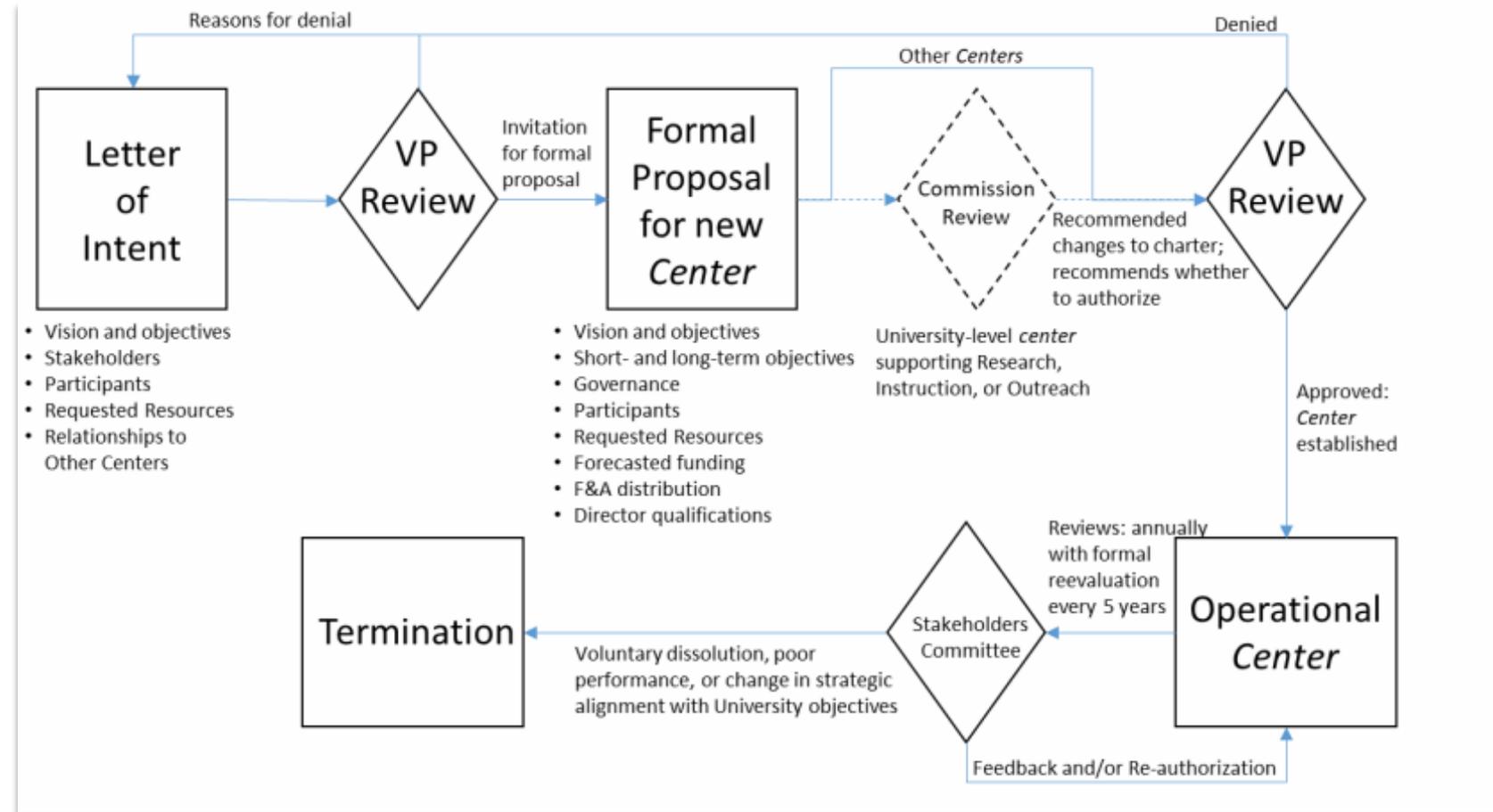
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Centers and University Institutes: Financial and Administrative Policy and Procedures - No. 3020 - Page 1

# Policy 13005 revision history

- Established in 1996
- Major revision in 2011
  - Clarified variety of missions
  - Differentiated institutes
  - Required reviews of all centers
- Last revision in 2020



# Center and Institute Taxonomy

## Administrative home

- University
- Institute
- College
- Department

## Mission area

- Research
- Outreach
- Education (graduate or undergraduate)

Centers have different levels of risk, different business models

# Inconsistencies and need for clarity

- Administrative responsibility
  - Vice President approves center, Provost keeps list, Controller's office receives annual reports
- Role of governance
  - Only university-level are brought before the COR, though all centers are put on agenda
  - Does role change with governance change?
- Responsibility of Director, Administrator, Stakeholders Committee

## Potential gaps

- Timed sunseting or consequences of not adhering to policy
- Definition of minimum activity or size of centers, or of expected qualifications of leaders
- Ability to establish a center based on sponsor desire
- Reasons to approve or decline a center

# Duplication or overly detailed

- Much of 3020 is established in other fiscal policies or in 13005
- Instructions for reviews are more detailed than similar analogs
- Who keeps list of centers? Who is on stakeholders committee?



# Working Group

- Administrative representatives
  - Vice Presidents/Provosts for center mission areas
  - Provost's office
  - Vice President for Finance
  - Vice President for Policy and Governance
- Commission on Research