

**Commission on Research  
Resolution to Increase University Institute Representation  
on the Commission on Research  
Resolution COR 2020-21C**

Approved, Commission on Research	February 11, 2021
Faculty Senate Review	January 25, 2021
Staff Senate Waived right to Comment	February 1, 2021
Graduate Student Assembly Waived right to Comment:	February 1, 2021
Student Government Association Waived right to Comment	February 1, 2021
First Reading, University Council	March 1, 2021
Approved, University Council	March 15, 2021
Approved, President	March 15, 2021
Effective	Upon Approval

**WHEREAS**, the benefits and value of a shared governance system encompass all major areas of the University and require an informed and knowledgeable citizenry; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission on Research is charged to study, formulate, and recommend to University Council policies and procedures concerning research including 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; and

**WHEREAS**, the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech, as designated by Policy 13005, enhance the university's ability to address complex and large-scale research opportunities by providing formal operational structures that cross traditional disciplinary and college lines; and

**WHEREAS**, the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech are identified as either (a) thematic institutes, which have a substantial number of research faculty and primarily generate their own sources of revenue in support of a focused research agenda that aligns with the University's vision and mission, or (b) investment institutes, which leverage university funds to support faculty across the University in order to enhance the breadth and depth of the University's sponsored research and scholarship; and

**WHEREAS**, the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech account for a substantial fraction of the university's extramural research awards and expenditures; and

**WHEREAS**, the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech currently do not have faculty (as defined in the Faculty Handbook, Section 2.1) representation on the Commission on Research;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the membership of the Commission on Research be increased to include (a) one faculty member representing each thematic institute, and (b) one faculty member representing the collective whole of all of the investment institutes. A faculty representative from each of the thematic institutes shall be appointed for a three-year term by the respective institute director. One faculty representative of the investment institutes shall be appointed for a three-year term by the investment institute directors. The method of selection is up to the institute directors. The selected faculty representative will represent the Institute on the Commission on Research regardless of other University appointments, effective as of the 2021-2022 academic year.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the following definitions for Thematic Institute and Investment Institute be added to Section 4.0 Definitions of Policy 13005 and Policy 3020:

An Investment Institute is a high level organization that leverages university funds to invest in targeted research areas with a particular emphasis on interdisciplinary programs. Such investments may include support for recruitment, retention and recognition of faculty, seed funds for new research projects, equipment purchases, support and management of core facilities, graduate student recruitment, undergraduate experiential learning/research opportunities, and research-related outreach activities. Programs and faculty receiving investment institute support are aligned with and in close partnership with associated academic units.

A Thematic Institute is a high level organization with unique research facilities, faculty, staff and student talent, usually having physical infrastructure that carries out leading-edge interdisciplinary research in a particular area that aligns with the University's vision and mission. In addition to receiving investments of university funds, thematic institutes also have deep relationships with sponsors and receive substantial extramural research grant and/or contract funding through them.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Article III, Section F of the University Council Bylaws be updated as follows:

#### F. Commission on Research

##### Membership\*:

- Vice President for Research and Innovation
- One representative from the Office of the Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs
- Associate Vice President for Research Programs
- One academic dean selected by the Council of College Deans
- One department- or division-level administrative representative appointed by the President
- One representative of research-related interdisciplinary programs, groups or centers appointed by the President

- One faculty representative from each of the University's thematic research institutes appointed by the respective institute director.
- One faculty representative of the University's research investment institutes appointed by the respective institute directors, collectively.
- Two Faculty Senators elected by the Faculty Senate
- One faculty representative from each of the academic colleges elected by the faculty in each of the colleges
- One representative from the Library Faculty Association elected by the Library Faculty Association
- One non-ex officio A/P faculty representative elected by CAPFA from: general administration, academic support, student affairs, or Extension
- One Representative in the Postdoctoral Associate rank elected by persons in that rank\*\*
- Two representatives working in research faculty appointments as defined in the Virginia Tech Faculty Handbook (excluding Postdoctoral Associates) elected by persons in those ranks\*\*
- One Staff Senator elected by the Staff Senate
- One representative of the Graduate Student Assembly elected by the Graduate Student Assembly
- One representative of the Student Government Association elected by the Student Government Association

\*The chair will be elected from among the non-administrative faculty and staff members of the commission by the commission membership.

\*\*The nomination and election process for these positions will be conducted by the Office of Research and Innovation, which will report election results to the Secretary of University Council.

**Resolution to Increase University Institute Representation  
on the Commission for Research  
FAQs**

**1. Why and when were the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech first established?**

The concept of the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech was brought forth in 2000 by then Virginia Tech President Charles Steger as a means of raising Virginia Tech into the ranks of the nation's foremost universities by leveraging the university's existing strengths and building on synergies between talented faculty. In 2000, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) was elevated from a university center to a university-level thematic institute. In accordance with Policy 13005, another thematic institute, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute (FBRI), was established in 2010. During the mid-2000s, three research investment institutes were established – Fralin Life Sciences Institute (FLSI), Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science (ICTAS), and Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE). A fourth investment institute, Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT) was launched in 2011.

<b>Thematic Research Institutes</b>	<b>Research Investment Institutes</b>
Fralin Biomedical Research Institute (FBRI)	Fralin Life Sciences Institute (FLSI)
Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI)	Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT)
	Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science (ICTAS)
	Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE)

**2. Will the implementation of this resolution cause continuous change and growth to the membership of the COR?**

While the implementation of the resolution will initially increase membership on COR by 4 members, it is anticipated that the number of representatives of the Research Institutes of Virginia Tech will remain stable or increase only slightly over time. According to Policy 13005, "Requests to establish a new university Institute are expected to occur infrequently and only after careful, deliberative consideration." A proposal for a new thematic research institute, the National Security Institute (NSI), is currently under consideration. If approved, it will be the first newly created thematic institute in the last ten years.

### **3. How many research faculty are employed by the institutes?**

While the research investment institutes support faculty from across the university, they typically do not have their own faculty. Conversely, the thematic research institutes hire their own faculty, either independently or in partnership with a particular college/department (i.e., joint T&R faculty appointments). In addition to T&R faculty, staff, graduate students, and wage employees (e.g., sporadic hire, P14, student wage, non-student staff), VTTI employs approximately 104 research faculty and FBRI has approximately 173 research faculty.

### **4. What is the rationale for including Research Institute representation on the Commission on Research?**

The university-level research institutes contribute significantly to Virginia Tech's research enterprise, including to its extramural funding portfolio. The Commission on Research is intended "To study, formulate, and recommend to University Council policies and procedures concerning research." Since substantial research takes place in the University Institutes, it is appropriate for faculty from the Institutes to have representation on the Commission and to weigh in on policies and procedures concerning research.

### **5. Are the representatives of the Institute faculty members?**

The Institute representative may come from any faculty category. According to the faculty [handbook](#) (Section 2.1) college faculty include tenure track, as well as collegiate, instructor, clinical, and professors of practice, university libraries faculty, extension faculty, administrative and professional faculty, and research faculty. Given the nature of the work of the Institutes, it is highly likely that faculty representatives will be research faculty, administrative and professional faculty, and to a lesser tenured/tenure-track college faculty. The numbers of faculty in non-tenured positions are growing quickly and are extremely important to the success of the university's research enterprise.

January 25, 2021

The Faculty Senate reviewed several documents related to the Commission on Research (COR) *Resolution 2020-21C: Resolution to Increase University Institute Representation*. Faculty Senators had the opportunity to surface questions and considerations.

We believe that cooperation between institutes and colleges will strengthen our research position, that communication with faculty about initiatives that institutes are pursuing is critical in this integration process, and that one measure of success will be an increase in research that is shared between institutes and colleges.

While faculty are generally supportive of COR Resolution 2020-21C, some questions remain about how the proposed changes could have unintended shifts in the overall make-up of the commission. For example, while the FAQs document provided with the resolution highlights the importance involving institute faculty in the COR, some related correspondence suggests the institutes may identify staff members to represent the institutes, rather than faculty. If the University adds more thematic institutes in coming years, COR membership would grow, and the result of the resolution could be a diluted faculty perspective within the Commission. The Faculty Senate believes it is important to prioritize non-administrative faculty involvement in the COR. There may be value in identifying limits or targets in the representation ratios for various constituent groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,



Eric K. Kaufman, President  
Virginia Tech Faculty Senate