

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
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ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1996-97: Attachment A

Guidelines for the Establishment and Review of Centers at Stanford University

Background

Centers proliferate at Stanford, and, indeed, are signs of the entrepreneurial spirit of the faculty of this University. The establishment of centers may take place for different reasons and bring different benefits. For example, many centers are focal points for interaction with industry, and are the source of the many benefits, financial and non-financial, that such interaction brings. The existence of other centers, particularly those involving several faculty members or even several institutions, may serve as focal points for interchange between Stanford faculty from different disciplines. Some centers also strengthen Stanford's position in bids for federal funding of research in broad areas of combined faculty expertise.

Our free and unfettered approach to the establishment of centers has brought many benefits, but it also exposes us to some dangers. When a faculty member who is a director of a center speaks, the outside world may attribute more authority to that voice than might be attributed to the faculty member without the title of "center director." The outside world may assume that Stanford as an institution has established this center to represent Stanford's expertise in the focus area of the center. An undesignated faculty member may gain the appearance of greater authority simply by declaring himself or herself to be the director of a one-person center, and might be perceived to speak with some authority for the institution as a whole.

Centers typically amplify the perceived importance of the activities and individuals with which their name is associated. For the great majority of centers such amplification is either beneficial or harmless to the University because it increases the visibility and influence of associated faculty. However, in those rare instances where misconduct by members of a center occurs, the potential for harm to the institution is also amplified, such that relatively minor instances of unprofessional or even ill-advised conduct may result in significant potential harm or liability to the University. An example of abuse of the center privilege could include the assertion, either explicit or implied, that a particular opinion, endorsement, or criticism expressed by the center represents in some way an official position of the University.

While cases of abuse of the center-establishment privilege are rare, nonetheless it would seem wise for the University to adopt guidelines for the establishment of new centers and indeed for the continuance of those that already exist. These guidelines are provided so that the legitimate benefits that accrue from centers are not impaired, but also so that when problems are identified, the center's activities can be reviewed, and in some cases, perhaps, curtailed. In addition, the following guidelines will allow the University to be aware of the many centers in which Stanford faculty participate.

A basic philosophical viewpoint underlying these guidelines is that the University as a whole, rather than individual faculty members, is responsible for the establishment of departments, schools, and other major components of the University's administrative structure. For more minor, but still not trivial, organizations such as centers, substantially more faculty autonomy is appropriate, but the University should at a minimum be informed concerning

such centers, and should maintain the ability to intervene in situations where problems may arise.

Definitions and Applicability

These guidelines apply to "Centers", "Laboratories", and "Institutes"^{1,2}, and to any other organizations outside of the normal Stanford University academic and administrative structure, which:

- a) operate within or on any academic premises of Stanford University, or operate outside Stanford University but with substantial use of University resources or substantial involvement of Stanford faculty or staff members' professional time; and
- b) have an apparent association with Stanford University combined with substantial activities or visibility outside of the University.

These guidelines are not intended to apply: to organizations or facilities whose functions, operation, and impact are primarily internal to the university, such as departmental service centers; to student organizations which operate under separate policies governing student organizations at Stanford; or to primarily avocational or personal activities carried on by faculty or staff members outside their Stanford professional responsibilities and with no use of University resources. (Please refer to Chapter 4 of the Research Policy Handbook, which discusses conflicts of commitment and interest and outside consulting activities.)

Examples of situations that may satisfy subparagraph b) above would include appearance of the organization's name or title as a separate organization in official University bulletins or directories, on letterheads, on web pages, and especially on external reports, brochures, journal articles or other professional publications, or external policy statements or news releases.

These guidelines are applicable independent of whether the name "Stanford" appears in the name or title of the organization, especially if the words "Stanford" or "Stanford University" are used in the address of the organization. (In regard to the use of the name "Stanford," faculty are reminded of the need to comply with the terms of Administrative Guide Memo 15.5, "Ownership and Use of the Stanford Name.")

Guidelines for Establishment and Review of Centers

The primary reason for the establishment of a center is to encourage interactions in a particular area of research, scholarship, or faculty interest. Therefore it is expected that more than one faculty member will normally be involved in the center. In the rare circumstance that an individual faculty member can make a compelling case to be the only faculty member associated with the center, the department chair and school dean may authorize an exception.

The primary guideline is that faculty who propose to start a new center should notify their appropriate department chair(s) (or dean(s) in schools where there are no departments) with a brief memorandum that describes the purpose of the center. The department chair(s) or dean(s) may be interested in the following details about the new center: its focus area, the membership, a justification for its existence, its relevance to the department, the extent of student involvement, its financial support, and its resource needs. Additionally, if researchers from outside Stanford are expected to participate in an on-going way, the department chair(s) or dean(s) may want to understand their role, their use of University resources, and their likely contribution to the center. If any aspect of the center will involve administrative costs for the department, school, or university, these must be approved in advance by the chair/dean/Dean of Research (as appropriate).

In the unusual situation in which problems may be anticipated if a center is established, the department chair or dean may request further details from the faculty members, and may choose to set up a small review committee to provide guidance. Faculty members should refer to the Research Policy Handbook, Section 2.2, "Rights and Responsibilities in the Conduct of Research", for overall guidance since these policies apply both to individual and group research efforts.

If problems should arise during the operation of a center, the department chair or dean also has the discretion to review the center, and to take appropriate actions, including closing the center if warranted. This process would be carried out after consultation with the center faculty, and may, at the discretion of the department chair (or dean, as above) involve an ad hoc faculty committee. Decisions made by the department chair may be appealed to the school dean.

Individual schools may have more, but not less, restrictive internal policies than those set forth by these guidelines. Decisions made by the school dean can be appealed to the Vice Provost and Dean of Research and Graduate Policy, whose decision shall be final.

Authority

The Vice Provost and Dean of Research and Graduate Policy is responsible for these guidelines and their implementation, and is the point of contact for further information.

1 Reporting directly to the Dean of Research, the Independent Laboratories, Centers, and Institutes are formally established entities within Stanford's academic and administrative structure. Specific guidance regarding their establishment, review, and dissolution is found in the Research Policy Handbook, Section 2.9.

2 The determination of what constitutes a policy center or institute rests with the Provost, with advice from the Advisory Board of the Academic Council...As of September 1, 1997, only the Institute for International Studies, the Center for Economic Policy Research (including the Center for Research on Economic Development and Policy Reform) are designated policy centers or institutes. Further information can be found in the Faculty Handbook, Section IIE.