PHYSICAL RESOURCES PLANNING

May 24, 2024

To: Sang-Hee Lee, Chair, Academic Senate
   Elizabeth Watkins. Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

From: Linda Walling, Physical Resources Planning Committee

Re: Operating Principles for Academic Research Centers

The Physical Planning Resources Committee reviewed the March 2024 Operating Principles for Academic Research Centers document that will guide the establishment, review and disestablishment of a new entity for the UCR campus – the Academic Research Center. We provide the following comments.

PRP applauds the Provost’s initiative to restructure the processes that guide center and institute establishment, review and disestablishment and make these processes transparent. This is long overdue. These processes have been largely neglected in recent years and this has led to the birth of ‘centers’ that have not gone through a Senate or campus approval process.

The lack of review and disestablishment processes has led to the persistence of obsolete centers that no longer serve the campus research needs, lack sufficient leadership, or are ‘one-person’ centers. In addition, PRP is aware of several groups of faculty who are anxious to establish new centers and this has been severely delayed to the lack of active and transparent policies. For example, all past guidelines and forms for the establishment of centers and institutes have been removed from the RED website (https://research.ucr.edu/vcr/centers).

In the past, UCR center and institute establishment and function was guided by two policy documents. These documents should be acknowledged in the 2024 Operating Principles document.

- the 2005 Operating Principles for Research Centers at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) document. This document was prepared by the UCR’s Office of Research and the office’s Vice-Chancellor Charles Louis. This over-arching document provided guidelines for all units that enable research on our campus including: Multicampus Research Centers (MRUs), Inter-campus Research Programs (IRPs), Organized Research
Centers (ORUs), Institutes, Centers, Laboratories/Facilities, Research Support Stations, and Administrative/Service stations.

- The 2014 Compendium: University-wide Review Processes for Academic Programs, Academic Units, & Research Units. This document provides the guidelines for internal and system-wide review of graduate programs and research units for the UC system.

The 2014 Compendium provides important dictates for the establishment and function of new ORUs and non-ORU Centers that to our knowledge have never been embraced by UCR. This document states that all ORUs and non-ORUs are “approved by the Chancellor after consultation with the divisional Academic Senate” (page 9 of the Compendium). For this reason, consultation with the Academic Senate is a critical step that must be integrated into the new Operating Principles protocols. The Senate can provide impartial decisions about the need for center establishment and provide an opinion on the need for external or internal reviews of UCR’s research entities. The appropriate Senate committee(s) for consultation need to be determined. Furthermore, Chancellor approval of all non-ORU Centers is required. If UCR delegates this to the Provost, which seems appropriate, this change in system-wide policy must be clearly iterated.

In comparing the 2024 Operating Principles document with the 2005 Operating Principles document many principles have been retained and others have been changed. For this reason, the PRP thinks the 2024 document needs to iterate the past processes that guided our campus’ centers and institutes and how the new policies have changed and the rationale for this change. PRP calls out two examples to emphasize this point.

1. IRUs are not present in the 2024 Operating Principles and the ARCs are new.
2. While guidelines for disestablishment of research centers are largely the same in the 2005 and 2024 documents, the entities that authorize disestablishment have changed.

Currently the 2024 Operating Principles document largely focuses on a proposed new research entity – the Academic Research Center (ARC). In principle, PRP supports the ARC concept. The nature of ARCs and the guidelines for ARC function are clearly defined within this document. Unfortunately, in reading the 2024 Operating Principles document, the language is not sufficiently inclusive to inform the reader that the proposed 2024 Operating Principles would guide all current and future research entities of the UCR campus. If the 2024 Operating Principles document is to only guide ARCs, additional explicit language for non-ARC centers and other research entities should be clearly iterated.

The RED website currently lists four research centers under the direction of their office. Some of these centers have been in place for decades and others have emerged recently. It is unclear if any of these centers went through the requisite Senate consultation and if reviews have been or will be performed in the near future.

- ALIANZA UCMX (an MRU)
- Center for Advanced Neuroimaging
• Central Facility for Advanced Microscopy and Microanalysis (CFAMM)
• High Performance Computing Center (HPCC)

PRP thinks that the campus needs to provide a clear statement about the evaluation and review process for all current research entities; transparency and equity will be critical to assure faculty engagement and satisfaction. For example, it is not clear if all current centers that are listed in Table 1 will be evaluated and placed under the ARC umbrella. No matter where the research entity resides (RED, college, department, etc.) Senate consultation and uniform guidelines for establishment, review and disestablishment should be used by the campus.

PRP would like some clarification about how centers that are formed and funded by external grants will be handled. Will a center that is created due to federal grant funding undergo a campus approval process and review? There was concern that imposing a campus approval and review on such a center would add an additional layer of administration and this might deter faculty being PIs for large center grants.

Finally, PRP notes two small elements that should be changed in the 2024 Operating Principles document.

- The names of directors for the last three centers on page 24 of 2024 Operating Principles document are incorrect.
- The last page of the document sent to the Senate for review appears to be a rogue page. It is not clear if this was part of the Provost’s 2024 Operating Principles document or just a misformatting of the Senate review document. The last page appears to be part of a memo that discussed the School of Business Center for Economic Forecasting Development (CEFD) and Beacon Economics, LLC (Beacon). The page should be moved to its appropriate position in this document or should be removed.

PRP looks forward to the establishment and implementation of clear guiding principles for all research units at UCR and Senate engagement in this process. The benign neglect by the campus has led to the current morass of research centers spanning the robust to the dysfunctional and prevented the establishment of new centers that can promote faculty research and visibility.