Guidelines to Establish, Manage, and Close Small Centers in CAFNR

Since centers are being established with increasing frequency, blurring traditional organizational lines, it is appropriate to have guidelines that govern their establishment, organization, management and closing. Centers should exist to enhance the capability of CAFNR to perform its mission.

Center Establishment, Organization and Management
The following principles will guide the establishment, organization and management of centers within CAFNR:

- A center will be established when there is faculty expertise and leadership to address significant issues or to solve problems. CAFNR will approve a center to facilitate and support faculty-based scholarly activity that has potential for enhancement, thereby increasing the college’s responsiveness and visibility to important research and educational issues. The establishment of a center within CAFNR requires appropriate faculty review and approval by the Vice Chancellor and Dean.

- A center’s “brand name” should not take precedence over that of MU, CAFNR or the Unit to which the center is assigned. Centers are expected to follow all MU policies regarding printing of letterhead, business cards, and publications. Promotional and other marketing materials should make clear that the center is part of MU and CAFNR.

- Because the primary focus of a center is problem-solving, it is expected that many centers will work with input from external advisory committees.

- In cases where centers involve faculty from Departments in different Units the reporting line of the center director (coordinator) will be negotiated at the time the center is initiated.

- The participating faculty and the appropriate administrator(s) (including the Unit Leader(s) from which participating faculty are drawn) are jointly responsible for periodically reviewing and reaffirming the “membership” of affiliated faculty.

- Other guidelines and operating principles for a center, including issues such as criteria for faculty “membership,” will be the responsibility of the participating faculty, subject to review and approval by the administrator to whom the director reports.

- A CAFNR center will be neither a physical nor a tenure home for participating faculty; rather it is an umbrella to draw upon faculty expertise in CAFNR and, where appropriate, beyond CAFNR.

- AES and/or CES resources may be allocated to a center to support its research and extension education programs. It will be the responsibility of the Unit Leader(s) or administration to allocate these resources from their budgets to projects and activities of the highest priority and quality within the center’s mission.

Center Lifespan/Closing
A center is not intended to have the institutional lifespan/permanency of an academic department. It should be oriented to solving problems and should then go out of business when it has solved the problems (or because it is not able to do so). The following guidelines are to ensure that a center does not outlive its useful purpose:

- A center must undergo a review by a team with at least one external member on a five-year cycle synchronized with the CSREES reviews of the units. The review report must include a recommendation about whether to continue or disband the center. This recommendation will be acted on by the Vice Chancellor and Dean. Subsequent reviews will take place on at least five-year cycles.

- A center will exist only as long as it is deemed to be performing the function for which it was established. A center may be disbanded at any time when it ceases to accomplish its objectives, it has fulfilled its objectives, or the objectives can be met more appropriately and effectively in some other way.

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