

# **UC Merced Organized Research Unit Policy & Procedures**

University of California, Merced

Office of Research and Economic Development

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## **I. PURPOSE**

An Organized Research Unit (ORU) is an academic unit the University has established to provide a supportive infrastructure for interdisciplinary research that complements the academic goals of departments. Characteristically, ORUs cross significant intellectual boundaries between disciplines such as those assumed to exist between departments and Schools, or their equivalents. ORUs may also be established to serve a compelling campus research priority or need that has been identified through broad campus consultation or strategic planning. *If all members of an ORU belong to a single School, either at the time it is established, or during the course of a 5-year review, then a clear and compelling case must be made as to why the unit should be an ORU and not a unit within that School.*

ORUs serve to enable or facilitate interdisciplinary research and research collaborations; disseminate results through research conferences, workshops, meetings, performances and other creative activities; seek extramural research funds; and carry out university and public service programs related to the ORUs research expertise. ORUs can provide undergraduate and graduate student research and training opportunities and can contribute to the development of interdisciplinary academic programs and curricula that are established, overseen and supported by one or more Schools. An ORU may not, however, act as an academic home unit that offers degree programs or formal courses for credit to students of the University or to the public. In some instances, ORUs provide administrative oversight or services to interdisciplinary curriculum programs. It is critical in such cases that there be a separation of funding and reporting lines to the cognizant Vice Chancellor and School Dean(s) for each respective activity in order to keep them independent of one another.

The cognizant Vice Chancellors for ORUs are the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development (VCORED) and Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost (EVC). This policy describes general principles that extend to all academic units of the campus and implementation guidelines for ORUs on the General Campus.

## **II. DEFINITION**

The description of purpose above allows the following definition:

An ORU is a non-permanent academic unit established with the approval of the Chancellor or his/her designee. It provides a structure to support interdisciplinary research that complements the academic goals of departments and/or graduate programs. ORUs are subject to review every 5 years to reassess their goals and ensure a continuing and dynamic commitment to relevant interdisciplinary research.

### **Non-ORU Units**

It is important to distinguish between formally established ORUs and other units of a less formal character. Other units such as departmental laboratories and some centers, programs, and projects are not ORUs unless they have been officially approved as such, although they may resemble ORUs in some respects. In the solicitation of extramural funds for a research project by a unit that has not been granted ORU status, care should be taken not to use terminology nor make representations which suggest that the proposing unit is in fact a University-approved ORU. The designations in Section III shall not be used as formal labels for units that are not ORUs without the consent of the appropriate Vice Chancellor.

Non-ORU units administered within other academic units of the University, such as departments, divisions, or ORUs, may request appropriate recognition as a University unit from either the VCORED or EVC, as appropriate.

## **III. DESIGNATIONS**

Organized Research Units normally carry the designation "*Institute*", or "*Center*", but other titles may be employed in particular situations. An ORU that covers a broad research area may in turn contain other more specialized units; for instance, an Institute may comprise several Centers, or a Station may comprise several Facilities. It is recognized that some long-established units have designations that do not conform to the definitions that follow; however, insofar as possible, designations of units shall be taken from those defined below. It should also be noted that new non-ORU units may wish to use terms like those below to compete more effectively for extramural support.

**Institute:** a major unit that coordinates and promotes faculty and student research on a continuing basis over an area so wide that it extends across department, school or college, and perhaps even campus boundaries. The unit may also engage in public service activities stemming from its research program, within the limits of its stated objectives.

**Laboratory:** a non-departmental organization that establishes and maintains facilities for research in several departments. A laboratory in which substantially all participating faculty members are from the same academic department is a departmental laboratory and not an ORU.

**Center:** a unit, sometimes one of several forming an Institute, that furthers research in a designated field; or a unit engaged primarily in providing research facilities for other units and departments.

**Station:** a unit that provides physical facilities for interdepartmental research in a broad area (e.g., agriculture), sometimes housing other units and serving several campuses. The terms "*Facility*" or "*Observatory*" may be used to define units similar in function but with narrower interests.

**Multicampus Research Units (MRUs) and Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives (MRPIs):** MRUs and MRPIs provide stimulus and cohesion for thematic topics important to UC and California and serve as a resource for the UC system. Policies and procedures for MRUs, may be found at [http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru\\_rfp.html](http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru_rfp.html).

## IV. DIRECTORS, COMMITTEES, AND MEMBERSHIPS

### A. Director

ORU directors are valued members and leaders of the UC Merced research community. Each ORU is headed by a Director who will be a tenured member of the faculty and who shall receive an administrative stipend and/or instructional leave determined by the VCORED in addition to faculty salary. A faculty member who already earns such a stipend through another appointment (e.g., as Associate Dean or Department Chair) may not receive a second stipend. Such dual administrative responsibilities should be avoided where possible.

The Director of an ORU is appointed by the Chancellor, with input from the EVC, and reports to the VCORED. The founding Director of an ORU shall be specified in the proposal to establish the ORU upon the recommendation by EVC.

When the appointment of a new Director is required for an existing ORU, the VCORED shall conduct a campus-wide search in consultation with the Standing Advisory Committee for the ORU, the Academic Senate, and the EVC. If as a result of consultation it is deemed appropriate, an external, nationwide search may be conducted for the ORU Director, the VCORED shall work with the EVC or their designee to carry out that search. Directors will be selected on the basis of their ability to foster multidisciplinary research and build leadership and world-class excellence in the supported areas of scholarship. If, at the conclusion of the search, a qualified Director cannot be identified, this may be regarded as sufficient reason to disestablish the

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ORU. In certain cases, particularly during leadership transition periods, an interim director or team of interim co-Directors may be named to lead an ORU by the chancellor.

At the suggestion of the ORU Director and in consultation with the ORUs standing Advisory Committee, the Chancellor or their designee may also name one or more Associate Directors (ADs).; An Associate Director may also receive a stipend, to be determined by the VCORED. Responsibilities of an Associate Director must be defined at the time of appointment, and must differ from the normal responsibilities of an ORU Director.

Directors of ORUs are normally appointed for five-year terms, the appointment period coinciding with the ORU review period. In case of the closure of the ORU, the appointment period may be adjusted to accommodate a phase-out period. While directors who have served for ten consecutive years could potentially continue to serve productively in this role, such a term extension should be carefully weighed against the advantage to the campus and the ORU of a change in leadership.

## **B. Advisory and Executive Committees**

The Director will work with an Executive Committee, chaired by a faculty member other than the Director that is composed of at least five senate faculty and senior researchers from the unit. It is expected that the ORU will work to identify committee members that span intellectual and divisional boundaries to ensure the continuing multidisciplinary nature of the ORU and its mission. The Executive Committee can also constitute the internal Advisory Committee required by the Systemwide Policies and Procedures for Organized Research Units or be a sunset of that Advisory Committee. The Executive Committee, along with the Director, forms the key decision-making body for the unit. The committee should meet at least quarterly and, together with the Director, establish the unit's goals, determine criteria for membership in the ORU, recommend changes in the unit's membership, advise the Director on major decisions affecting the unit (e.g., appointments and promotions of research scientists/scholars, and submission of major contract and grant proposals), and critically evaluate the unit's effectiveness on an ongoing basis. Major decisions of the Executive Committee should be reported by the Director in the unit's Annual Report. The Executive Committee should meet with the ORU review committee (see Section VII) and otherwise be available for consultation with five-year review committees during the course of the ORU's review.

Where possible, an ORU should also have an external Advisory Committee, comprised of individuals from other on-campus units and/or from outside the campus to provide perspective and to help identify new research and scholarly opportunities. The composition of this committee should be determined by the Director working with the Executive Committee and the VCORED. The Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee are formally appointed by the VCORED or his/her designee. This committee should review the activities and plans of the unit and provide written advice to the Director and Executive Committee on an annual basis. A summary of the Advisory Committee recommendations and findings shall be given in the unit's Annual Report.

## **C. Membership**

A diverse and vibrant ORU is dependent on its members to provide the multiple opportunities for interactions across the campus that lead to the creation of new, cross-disciplinary research. To maintain their vitality, ORUs must be accessible to and encouraging of new members who will bring fresh ideas to the ORUs research portfolio.

ORUs may have one or more of the following types of membership. Requirements and conditions for membership are specified in the ORUs Bylaws.

1. **Full members:** UC Merced faculty (including adjunct professors) and research and project scientists/scholars who are members of the ORU's leadership or who have research and/or other creative activities that are administered by the ORU. The ORU is expected to provide appropriate tangible support for the ORU-related research activities of these members, including administrative support and space.
2. **Associate members:** faculty and academic researchers from other universities, non-profit research institutes, and federal laboratories, for example, who are collaborators on research projects of the ORU.
3. **Academic affiliates:** researchers from UC Merced, other universities, non-profit research institutes, and federal laboratories, for example, who are interested in the activities of the ORU, but are not collaborating on the ORUs research projects.
4. **Industrial affiliates:** companies with an interest in the ORUs activities. Terms of membership in this category must be consistent with UC policies governing relationships between faculty and industry.

## V. BUDGET & PERSONNEL

Operating funds provided to an ORU from the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) are intended to support the core administrative needs of the ORU, including personnel such as a business manager, an executive director, personnel specialists, pre- and post-award staff, staff to support communications, convening, and other events, and external relationships that benefit the research of ORU members and the university. While this latter function is the responsibility of the ORU's Director, in larger ORUs it is normally supported by the Executive Director. Staffing that replicates services ORU members have access to through either their home departments, Schools or campus-wide offices should be considered with care, taking prevalent fiscal constraints into account. Operating funds are not to be used for the direct support of research activities within the unit. Given this expectation, the campus has a responsibility to provide funds sufficient to support the core administrative needs of both existing and newly established ORUs that it has approved, subject to the approval of the Chancellor or their designee, and availability of financial resources. Typically, appointments funded solely by ORU resources will be time limited to the life of an ORU, after which neither the ORU, nor ORED will be responsible for salary commitments for such appointments.

Any positions within an ORU—professional, technical, or administrative—may be established and filled, regardless of the funding source, only after specific review and authorization of the proposed positions and of the candidate selection in accordance with University policies and procedures. Positions that are supported by ORED funds are to be approved in consultation with the ORED prior to the beginning of the recruitment process.

ORU resources and administration are managed by the VCORED in consultation with the ORU. At the launch of an ORU, funds from the ORED will generally be committed for up to a 5-year period, with review at three years to consider the need for adjusting the level of support. At the VCORED's discretion, however, ongoing ORU budgets may be reviewed and adjusted annually.

## **VI. PROCEDURE for ESTABLISHMENT**

An ORU is established by the Chancellor, or his/her designee, acting upon the recommendation of the EVC and the VCORED, who, in turn, seek the advice of the Academic Senate and appropriate Dean/s, Department Chairs, and others.

### **A. Call for Proposals**

To ensure that the campus provides new opportunities for interdisciplinary ORU-based research, the VCORED may issue an annual request for proposals (RFP) to establish new ORUs subject to the availability of financial and space resources. This RFP shall be provided to all faculty with sufficient lead time to allow faculty to develop their ideas. Faculty are encouraged to consult with the VCORED and his/her staff early in the proposal preparation process. Proposals will be reviewed extensively by the ORED and the Senate, initially for their intellectual merit and quality of proposed interdisciplinary research, education, public service, and commitment to campus diversity goals. Only proposals that are favorably reviewed in this first round by the ORED and the Academic Senate will then be evaluated through a second review of the resource requirements and commitments necessary to ensure the success of the ORU. At each stage, the ORU proposal is thoroughly evaluated in consultation with the EVC, relevant Deans, and the Academic Senate.

### **B. Establishment Review Process**

#### **1. Intellectual Merit Review**

Proposals submitted to the VCORED in response to this call should, at a minimum, address the list below. Proposers should consider their stated goals with particular care, as their ORU will be reviewed in large measure based on the extent to which they meet their goals.

- a) Research, education, public service, and diversity goals and objectives of the ORU.
- b) Name of the proposed director, who will be a tenured faculty member;
- c) Names of any co-Director or Associate Director, if any, should be identified, as well. Co-Director and Associate Directors should also be tenured faculty. In exceptional circumstances an untenured faculty member might be considered. Such consideration should be carefully weighted with respect to the workload for the junior faculty member.
- d) Duties of the Director and any co-Director or Associate Director.
- e) Proposed membership of the Advisory and Executive Committees for the first year of the ORUs existence.
- f) Experience of the core faculty in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research collaborations.
- g) A discussion of the added value and capabilities that will be brought by the new ORU and an explanation of why they cannot be achieved within existing campus academic units.
- h) Strategic plan for the first year of operations and projections for the four years following.
- i) Statement about anticipated benefits of the proposed ORU to the teaching programs of the participating faculty members' departments or other existing academic units and programs.
- j) Names of faculty members who have agreed in writing to participate in the unit's activities and supporting letters from the divisional Deans associated with these faculty members.

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- k) Projections of numbers of faculty members and students, professional research appointees, and other personnel for the specified periods.
- l) A preliminary estimate of the resource needs and anticipated sources of funding for the first five years.

The proposal should also list similar units that exist elsewhere, describe the relation of the proposed unit to similar units at other campuses of the University of California, and describe the contributions to the field that the proposed unit may be anticipated to make that are not made by existing units.

If the proposal receives favorable administrative review, the VCORED will submit the proposal to the Chair of the Academic Senate, requesting the Senate's assessment. On the basis of the administrative and Senate reviews, the VCORED may either decline to continue consideration of the proposal, or recommend the proposal move to a second-round review to determine resource commitments.

## **2. Resource Review**

During the second stage of the review, authors of first-round proposals receiving a favorable recommendation will work with ORED to secure the necessary campus resource commitments. To this end, a supplemental proposal must provide:

- a) Budget estimates for the first year of operation, projections for the four years following, and anticipated sources of funding.
- b) A statement of immediate space needs and how they will be met for the first year; and realistic projections of future space needs.
- c) A realistic plan to seek and obtain the necessary extramural funding needed to launch the strategic plan of the ORU.

The ORED will work with the proposers to secure written financial commitments from all parties providing support for the ORU, including an agreement to allocate space for the new ORU. All necessary startup requirements must be agreed to in writing to ensure the adequacy of the overall support and space allocation to the unit. This second-stage proposal is then reviewed in the manner discussed in VI.B.1.

Should the Academic Senate recommend approval, then, with the agreement of the EVC, the VCORED shall recommend the establishment of the ORU to the Chancellor.

## **VII. ANNUAL REPORTS**

Each ORU will submit annually a report on the ORUs activities for the prior fiscal year to the VCORED in a uniform format that is based on a template provided by ORED. The Annual Report shall be presented to the ORU Advisory and Executive Committees for their review and concurrence prior to submission to the VCORED. Receipt of the annual report by ORED is required prior to disbursement of the next year of funding for the ORU. The report is to include the following:

- 1. Brief summary of major activities during the past year, including a discussion of how the prior year's goals have been met.
- 2. Names of persons serving on the unit's Executive Committee, Advisory Committee and other committees.



3. Dates of Executive and Advisory Committee meetings.
4. Summary of key Executive Committee and Advisory Committee actions and recommendations.
5. Names of faculty members actively engaged in the unit's research and their supervision of staff and students.
6. Names of undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral scholars directly contributing to the unit who (a) are on the unit's payroll; (b) participate in the ORU's scholarly work through assistantships, fellowships, or traineeships; or (c) are otherwise involved in the unit's work.
7. Extent of student and faculty participation from other academic institutions.
8. Numbers and FTE of academic research personnel, technical staff, and administrative personnel who are paid through the unit's accounts.
9. Efforts to contribute to the campus's diversity goals. Contributions to diversity and equal opportunity can take a variety of forms, including efforts to advance equitable access to education, public service that addresses the needs of California's diverse population, or research in a scholar's area of expertise that highlights inequities.
10. List of publications, issued by ORU members that are relevant to the mission of the ORU, including books, journal articles, and reports and reprints, showing author, title, and press run; or other evidence of creative scholarship, such as colloquia, conferences, workshops, performances, and exhibitions. ORUs should encourage their members to acknowledge the ORU in their publications/creative scholarly activities. The list of publications should indicate whether or not a publication/creative scholarly activity acknowledged the ORU.
11. Sources and amounts (on an annual basis) of income, including contracts and grants, gifts, University support, service agreements, and income from the sale of publications and from services.
12. Expenditures from all sources of support funds, distinguishing use of funds for administrative support, direct research, and other specified uses.
13. Metrics on proposals submitted through the ORU.
14. Activities and events sponsored or supported for ORU members and the campus.
15. Description and amount of space currently occupied.
16. Summary of ORU goals for the coming year.

## VIII. REVIEW of ORUs

ORUs contribute substantially to UC's outstanding research reputation. In order to maintain an exceptional ORU portfolio at UC Merced, it is important to periodically assess the performance of existing ORUs. The review process provides ORUs with a mechanism for in-depth, peer-reviewed evaluation of programs and goals, and provides the administration with a means of ensuring that research being conducted is of the highest quality and justifies the space and support received from the University.

**Each ORU will be reviewed at intervals of five years**, with the first five-year review taking place during the fifth year after the establishment of the ORU. No ORU may be continued without such a review. Leadership changes in an ORU should not delay, extend, or otherwise cause the review cycle to be altered. In exceptional circumstances, the VCORED acting in consultation with the Senate may form an ad hoc review committee to review an ORU outside of the normal five-year review cycle. ORUs approaching the end of the second five-year period since their establishment date will be carefully examined to ensure the goals and

measures for success, agreed upon by the Director and the VCORED at the time of establishment or last review, have been met.

**Particular attention will be paid to the research productivity of the ORU and its members.** The review will attempt to identify the extent to which the level of research activity is enhanced by the existence of the ORU. Given that the metrics for research productivity vary among research fields, the ORU will suggest appropriate metrics during its self-study. These metrics may also include contributions of research training to the research productivity of the ORU.

**Every review should address the ORUs original purpose, current goals and objectives,** and its operations and scholarly **accomplishments in light of the current and emerging needs and opportunities** within the intellectual domain of the ORU. The **financial sustainability** of the ORU should be considered in the context of its total potential revenue stream. Particular attention should be paid to anticipated expenditures during the next five-year period. In addition, working in consultation with the VCORED, the ORU should define suitable measures of success that will then be used in the subsequent review of the organization. Likewise, the effectiveness of the ORU Director is reviewed at the same time as the ORU. Review of the ORU Director will be in accord with the [APM 241](#) and [MAPP 5014](#). All ORUs must establish a rationale for continuance, in terms of scholarly merit and campus priorities.

#### **A. The Review Process**

The VCORED has been delegated responsibility for the review of ORUs on the Merced Campus.

1. To ensure adequate time for the preparation of a proposal for continuance, notification of review will be sent by the **ORED to an ORU** no later than January 15 of the Academic Year preceding the Academic Year in which the review is to be conducted. For example, if a review is to take place in Fall 2025 or Spring 2026, the ORU should be notified by January 15<sup>th</sup> 2025. The notification of review should inform the ORU on the format for the review materials to be submitted
2. The ORED will arrange a meeting of the VCORED with the ORU Director soon after notification to describe the review process.
3. The ORU Director will prepare a **self-assessment** covering the ORUs mission, history, resources, and accomplishments, as outlined in Section B. The material will be presented in accordance with the format provided by the ORED. After review by the Advisory Committee, materials will be submitted to the VCORED by October 1 of the Academic Year of the review, or a later date determined by the VCORED and CoR.
4. **The VCORED will appoint a review committee** from a slate nominated after consultation with the Committee on Research. Names should be solicited from the ORU Director and the ORU Advisory Committee(s). The review committee will be comprised of one ladder-rank faculty member in the Professor series, from each School whose faculty participate in the ORU. Only faculty who are not members of the ORU in question will be eligible to serve on the review committee. The VCORED will also appoint at least one committee member from outside UC Merced who has expertise in the field of study. Nominations for the external member will be solicited from the ORU Director. The UC Merced Senate Committee on Research will identify a lead discussant for the review.
5. The VCORED will meet with the review committee to provide explicit instructions prior to the beginning of the review.
6. The review committee will interview the ORU Director, Advisory and Executive Committee members, associated faculty, school Dean/s, if appropriate, and other individuals deemed pertinent to the review, including non-UC Merced researchers in the field; and tour the ORUs physical facilities.
7. The review committee will prepare a draft report of its findings in accordance with the review criteria listed in Appendix A below. **The draft report will be submitted to the VCORED** to ensure the review has been thorough and in accordance with the review criteria. If satisfied, the VCORED requests the review committee submit a final version of the report.

8. **The VCORED forwards the final report** to the Director, the EVC, the Academic Senate Committee on Research's Lead Discussant (COR-LD), and the cognizant school Dean/s, requesting comments on the review report.
9. The Director distributes the report to and consults with members of the ORU and the ORU Executive and Advisory Committee. S/he uses this input to prepare a **written response to the review** report for submission to the VCORED and the COR.
10. The review committee then meets with the VCORED and the COR-LD for the review.
11. The Director then meets with the VCORED and the COR-LD for the review.
12. The VCORED forwards the ORUs most recent 5-year report, the report of the review committee, the Director's response, and other comments to the report from other sources to the Academic Senate.
13. **The Academic Senate reviews the report and the Director's response and makes recommendations** to the VCORED on both the continuation of the ORU and reappointment of its Director, along with any other issues it deems appropriate.
14. In consultation with the EVC and the Deans of the cognizant Divisions, the VCORED prepares a summary letter for the ORU, identifying recommendations regarding continuation, the directorship, and other issues raised in the review and requesting specific actions as appropriate.
15. Presuming that the ORU is continued, then after not more than one year, **the ORU submits a formal report to the VCORED, documenting the ORUs progress** on key recommendations from the recent review.

## **B. The ORU Self-Assessment**

To begin a review, an ORU develops a formal proposal for continuation of ORU status, and requests supporting funds and space in the context of current campus and University needs and resources. **The review proposal should include the following** (The VCORED may modify these requirements to reflect constraints on the ready availability of information, or staff resources):

1. The goals **and objectives of the ORU** should be listed, detailing any projected changes to the mission and objectives of the ORU if it is continued. If an ORU proposes to change its name as the result of new research directions or the addition of new fields of research to the unit's mission, the Director will describe the rationale for requesting a new name as part of the review process.
2. **Evidence of accomplishments** should be provided, focusing primarily on the preceding five years. The unit's success in meeting the mission and goals previously identified and agreed to by the ORU and ORED should be evaluated. Key elements of this discussion include:

**Research**: The relevant discussion here should address metrics of output, outcome and impact, and may include:

- comments on the quality and significance of completed and ongoing research;
- significant trends within disciplines represented and their relationship to current research specialties in the ORU;
- added value and capabilities the ORU has brought to the campus, which would have been difficult to achieve within other campus structures;
- continuing productivity and influence of ORU participants, locally as well as nationally and internationally;
- evidence of prominence in the fields represented in the ORU;
- Listing of all research proposals, research awards, research publications and other scholarly works that have appeared under the auspices of the ORU.
- a description of the ORUs collaborative interdisciplinary work and the quality and impact of the work on other research efforts across campus;

- comments on ORU effectiveness in promoting interdisciplinary collaboration across campus and/or among other research partners;
- degree of postdoctoral scholar training within the ORU;
- importance of the ORU to Visiting Scholars (including how many visiting scholars were hosted);
- contributions to professional development of the ORUs professional staff and faculty; and
- descriptions of possible sources and availability of extramural funds to support the ORUs research.

A list of papers published by or grants awarded to affiliated members during the review period should be included as part of the evidence of research productivity.

**Graduate and Undergraduate Research Training:** Relevant issues to consider include:

What are the contributions made by the ORU toward research training? This may include students funded by ORU money or advised by ORU members, as well as training workshops held by the unit. Details including the type of contribution, the number of students or postdocs involved, and placement of these individuals in careers or further graduate study should be included.

What is the ORUs impact on existing academic programs and units, including the benefits to the teaching programs of the participating faculty members' departments? This may include courses taught by ORU members who are not ladder-ranked faculty.

**Diversity Goals:** How has the ORU contributed to campus diversity goals? How have these efforts contributed to the ORU's research output and research training? Contributions to diversity and equal opportunity can take a variety of forms, including efforts to advance equitable access to education, public service that addresses the needs of California's diverse population, or research in a scholar's area of expertise that highlights inequities.

**Relationships to Other Academic Units:** Questions to address may include: How does the unit interact with other similar units in other research centers or institutions? Are there additional relationships the unit could be exploring that are not currently being pursued? If so, what are the impediments?

**Public Service and Outreach:** How has the ORU made significant contributions to the public and the community beyond UC Merced? Measures of success can include, for example, intellectual property that is brought to market; research that improves the quality of life for citizens; and events hosted by the ORU that engage the public's interest. What are the measures of success for the unit's future activities?

**Administration and Governance:** Describe the ORUs Advisory and Executive Committees. What are their roles, how often do they meet, and how well do they function? Are any changes needed to the Advisory Executive, or other governance committees? Is there adequate and planned turnover of Advisory Committee members to ensure that new ideas and perspectives will be presented over time?

**Problems and Needs:** Describe any constraints which prevent the ORU from functioning at an optimal level, including inadequate space, staffing, or other resources.

**Justification for Continuance:** Describe the ORUs plans for the next five years. It should be made clear to reviewers how the ORUs plans will evolve from the situation presented in the self-assessment. Plans for external fundraising should be addressed.

3. In consultation with the ORED, **clearly define measures of success appropriate for the research focus of the ORU over the next review period.** These measures will then be used in subsequent review of the ORU to determine the degree of the unit's success.

4. **Campus Information** including:

a. **Unit Profile**

i. Names of (Co-) Directors, Acting Directors, and Associate Directors, and tenure of appointments.

ii. Members of Executive and Advisory Committees, including members' titles, affiliations, and dates and terms of membership.

iii. Names of UC Merced faculty who were/are members of the ORU, including their departments, graduate groups and dates of affiliation.

iv. Names of faculty who have agreed to participate in the ORUs activities over the next five years.

v. Names of UC Merced professional researchers who have appointments in the ORU, including appointment dates.

vi. Names, home universities, and dates at UC Merced of all visitors who have conducted research as visiting researchers or visiting graduate students during the last five years, including source of support.

vii. Names of undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, their advisors, dates of association with the ORU, and, for graduate students, their department, graduate group and Masters degree and/or PhD degree conferral date.

viii. Description of any university-industry and university-government activities.

ix. Description of seminar, lecture, and conference programs organized by or supported by ORU staff.

b. **Physical Facilities and Space:** Description and adequacy of the physical facilities housing the ORU, including:

i. type of space (laboratories, studios, seminar rooms, professional research staff offices, administrative offices, etc.)

ii. assignable square footage

iii. location.

c. **Financial Data**

i. All income received by the ORU for each fiscal year since it was last reviewed from:

- Federal, state, local, and international grants and contracts;
- Foundations and private gifts;
- Industrial grants
- UC Merced and other UC-derived funds.
- Recharge income if applicable

Fundraising efforts overall, even if unsuccessful, should also be described.

ii. Expenditures for personnel in both FTE and dollars for each fiscal year since the last review:

- Research and student personnel listed by title (Professor, Postdoctoral Scholar, Associate Research Physicist, Specialists, Graduate and Undergraduate students, etc.);
- Technical staff by title (Development Engineer, Staff Research Associate, Computer Programmer, etc.);
- Administrative staff by title (MSO, Accountant, Secretary, etc.);
- Equipment purchases;
- Supplies and expenses.

### **C. Life Span**

All ORUs must establish a rationale for continuance, in terms of scholarly or scientific merit and campus priorities, at fifteen year intervals (sunset reviews). The fifteen-year reviews are to be carried out in place of regularly scheduled five-year reviews or at other times established by the Chancellor or Chancellor's designee, in consultation with the Academic Senate. For example, the campus may choose to carry out simultaneous or collective fifteen-year reviews of all ORUs in the same broad disciplinary area. To begin a fifteen-year review, an ORU should develop a formal proposal for continued ORU status, support funds, and space in the context of current campus and University needs and resources. The proposal should state a persuasive rationale for the unit's continuation and should include all of the information required of proposals for ORU establishment (see Section VI). In addition, the proposal should describe the ORUs achievements over the past 15 years, the contributions the ORU has made to research, graduate and undergraduate education and public service, and the consequences if the ORU were not continued. The proposal and submitting unit are reviewed by an ad hoc Fifteen-Year Review committee established by the Chancellor or the VCORED after consultation with appropriate divisional Academic Senate committees. It is recommended that at least one member from outside the campus sit on the Fifteen-Year Review Committee. The report of the Fifteen-Year Review Committee is reviewed by appropriate campus senate committees and administrative officials. The decision to approve the disestablishment of the ORU is made by the Chancellor. The Chancellor informs the VCORED of the action.

### **D. The Report of the Review Committee**

The criteria for preparing the review report are outlined in Appendix A. Justification for continuation of an ORU must be carefully documented. Review committees shall consider and make specific recommendations on the following range of alternatives to the status quo: a change in the mission of the unit; a merger of the unit with one or more academic units on the same or another campus; discontinuance of the unit; a change in funding sources; a change in other resources (such as FTE, space, etc.); a transformation into a different academic entity (such as a core facility, a multi campus research unit, a School, etc.); or any other changes for improvement of the ORU.

Directors of ORUs are normally appointed for five year terms, the appointment period coinciding with the ORU review period. As noted in Section IV.A, extending a director's term of service beyond ten consecutive years is generally not recommended, and any proposal to do so should be carefully weighed against the advantage to the campus and the ORU of a change in leadership. The review committee should look carefully at the Director's stewardship of the organization and comment on its quality. The committee may recommend that the present director be reappointed or recommend a change in leadership.

The review committee may also, if it thinks appropriate, prepare a confidential statement to the VCORED. It may also provide the VCORED with confidential letters received from individuals during the review process.

## **IX. PROCEDURE for CLOSURE**

Review committees may recommend continuation or closure of an ORU. In exceptional circumstances, an ORU director with approval of the ORUs Advisory Committee may recommend closure during the period

between reviews. In this circumstance, should the EVC and the cognizant Dean(s) agree with the recommendation, the VCORED will notify the Academic Senate of the closure and reason for the decision. As with all ORU-related processes, the closure process for an ORU shall be conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

1. A recommendation to disestablish as part of the review process receives careful consideration by the ORU director and Executive and Advisory Committees, the Academic Senate, chairs of departments, graduate groups and directors of other ORUs that would be affected by the closure, relevant Deans, the EVC, and the VCORED.
2. After reviewing comments from all of the committees and individuals listed in IX.1. above and if the VCORED determines that closure is the best course of action, then the VCORED recommends such closure to the Chancellor via the EVC. The EVC formally closes the ORU.
3. The VCORED sends formal notification to the Academic Senate.
4. The Chancellor, or his/her designee, issues a letter formally disestablishing the ORU.
5. A phase-out period lasting from four months up to one year from the time at which a decision to dissolve the unit is made is provided to permit orderly transfer or termination of non-faculty personnel, grants, financial accounts, and programs. If necessary due to contractual obligations an extra transitional year may be requested. ORED will work to ensure research space for existing grants is preserved, and to facilitate the transfer of these grants to other academic units or ORUs for administration on a case-by-case basis.
6. At the time an ORU receives notification it is to close, the ORU Principal Investigator(s), with the assistance of ORED (if necessary) will make reasonable efforts to find all ORU academic appointees a new home department to transfer their existing academic appointment to, provided there is remaining work and grant funding. Reappointment of academic research personnel will be consistent with current campus academic advancement and reappointment policies. If a layoff must be initiated, the ORU must follow [APM 145](#), including providing appropriate notice to the appointee.
7. For research scientist appointments in an ORU that is to close, if the ORU PI is unable to identify a new home department, the ORED will assume primary responsibility for working with the Director, the faculty who have collaborated with these individuals, the Divisions, and the EVC to assure appropriate reasonable efforts are made to find these appointees a new home department for the remainder of their current appointment period.
8. ORED will provide assistance to non-academic staff in identifying new positions as the result of a closure recommendation.
9. University funding for the ORU reverts to the VCORED and/or EVC to fund needs and opportunities for ORUs, including new ORU proposals. Space assigned to the ORU reverts to the space bank of the EVC. Within a month of notification by ORED that an ORU will be disestablished, the ORU Director, in consultation with the VCORED and EVC, must develop a plan for the return of space during the phase-out period.

## **Appendix A: Review Criteria**

In conducting a review of an ORU and preparing its report, the committee should keep in mind specific questions enumerated in the Charge to the Review Committee provided by the VCORED, which usually deal with particular unique aspects of the ORU under review. General questions that are common to all ORU reviews are summarized below. Review committees are asked to directly respond to these questions in order to ensure completeness of the review report:

1. Introduction and Executive Summary.
  - a. Mission. A concise statement detailing any projected changes to the mission and objectives of the ORU if it is continued.
  - b. An evaluation of the overall scholarly quality of the ORU.
  - c. Evaluation of the ORUs self-assessment. Specifically, does it accurately reflect the ORUs current stated objectives and activities? Its strengths and weaknesses?
  - d. Assessment of the ORU Director's performance.
  
2. Evidence of Accomplishment. What are the ORUs major accomplishments over the preceding five-year period in the following areas?
  - a. Research. What is the committee's evaluation of the quality and productivity of research? Is there compelling evidence the ORU has contributed to outstanding research in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas in which it specializes? If appropriate, to what extent is the ORU attracting graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and/or faculty to UCM? Are the ORUs participants sufficiently active in the pursuit of available extramural funds? How does the extent of annual extramural research funding compare with similar units nationwide? What international connections have been established? Overall, how is the ORU adding research value to the campus?
  - b. Undergraduate and Graduate Research Training. What is the committee's assessment of the direct and indirect contributions of the ORU to graduate and undergraduate research training at UCM? What contributions does the ORU make to enhance undergraduate and graduate research training associated with the teaching programs of academic departments and programs? What evidence is there that the ORU is attracting graduate students to UCM? For ORUs that provide administrative services to interdisciplinary curriculum programs, has the ORU maintained appropriate separation of funding and reporting for these activities?
  - c. Recognition for Excellence beyond UCM. Does the unit have a national and international reputation for excellence? Are there national and international collaborations that have been established?
  - d. Diversity. How has the ORU contributed to the campus's diversity goals? Contributions to diversity and equal opportunity can take a variety of forms, including efforts to advance equitable access to education, public service that addresses the needs of California's diverse population, or research in a scholar's area of expertise that highlights inequities.
  - e. Public Service and Outreach. Has the ORU made significant contributions to the public and the community beyond UCM? Have there been benefits to the citizens of California? Measures of success can include, for example, intellectual property that is brought to market; research that improves the quality of life for citizens; and events hosted by the ORU that engage the public's interest. Does the ORU have clearly defined measures of success that



are aligned with the unit's research focus? To what degree have these measures been satisfied? What are the measures of success for the unit's future operations?

3. Budget. Does the ORU make cost-effective use of UCM funds? Has the unit been successful in obtaining extramural funds to augment UCM funding? If additional UCM funding were to be provided, what needs are regarded as most critical?
4. Space and Resources. Is the space assigned adequate, appropriate and reasonable? What specific changes, if any, are recommended?
5. Governance and Administration. Does the administrative structure meet the needs of the ORU? The report should separately address the following administrative issues:
  - a. Governance. Comment on the ORUs governance, its structure and effectiveness, including the leadership qualities of the Director and the ability of the Advisory and Executive Committees to provide guidance to the Director. Is there evidence of succession planning?
  - b. Faculty Participation. Is there adequate participation of faculty from diverse disciplines in the ORU? Is there evidence that the ORU is a factor in attracting faculty to UCM and retaining them?
  - c. Comparisons with Other Units. What are the ORUs unique contributions to the University that distinguish it from other similar academic entities at UCM? Is the unit's continuance as a separate entity justified? What would be lost if the unit did not exist? Are there effects of the ORU on campus departments and/or graduate programs?
6. Five-Year Projections. Provide critical commentary on the Director's research budget and plan for the next five years.
7. Conclusion and Recommendations. The committee should summarize its recommendations for the future of the ORU, including, but not limited to, a recommendation about its continuance, directorship, and any changes involving administration, governance and funding. In making its recommendations, the committee should particularly consider whether the current ORU structure will continue to advance the goals of the University.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Revised May 8, 2020

### UC Merced

### Organized Research Unit

### Policy & Procedures

**Q:** What are the criteria for “membership” in an ORU?

**A:** Membership categories are defined in section IV.C. It is up to the individual ORU to establish additional criteria for membership. These additional criteria should be justified in context of the research mission of the ORU.

**Q:** What are the criteria to assess active participation of the membership?

**A:** The ORUs are advised to specify the level expected active participation of their members as part of the ORUs bylaws and the annual report (e.g., under items 5. or 16. of the annual report).

**Q:** Why does the policy not list specific duties of the ORU director?

**A:** It is anticipated that ORUs will form in and across different disciplines with (vastly) different scopes and needs. In order to provide ORUs the flexibility to address their unique situations the proposers of an ORU are asked to define adequate duties of the leadership.

**Q:** Where does the Director of an ORU rank in terms of decision making at the university?

**A:** This aspect is ultimate to be decided by the Chancellor and the EVC/Provost. However, two aspects stated in the policy may provide some guidance on where the ORU director ranks in terms of decision making at the university:

- a) The ORU director reports to the VCORED.
- b) ORUs are not bylaw 55 units or schools/departments.

**Q:** Should ORUs provide undergraduate and graduate student research and training opportunities?

**A:** ORUs are encouraged to provide research and training opportunities to undergraduate and/or graduate students if it is beneficial to the ORU’s research mission. ORUs may do so either via ORU-administered programs or by encouraging/incentivizing the ORU members to engage in such activities.

**Q:** Can an ORU serve as a bylaw 55 unit?

**A:** The intent of an ORU is to foster interdisciplinary research expertise that crosses department and/or school boundaries. ORUs cannot serve as a bylaw 55 unit. However, as a research area addressed by an ORU matures it may be advisable for an ORU to transition into a regular department or even a school.

**Q:** The policy states: *“It is recognized that some long-established units have designations that do not conform to the definitions that follow; however, insofar as possible, designations of new units shall be taken from those defined below.”* Why shouldn’t existing ORUs be held to these principles?

**A:** In some cases, such as where an ORU’s name has attained “brand-recognition” within the broader research community, changing the ORUs name to conform with the definitions might have an adverse/disruptive effect on the ORU, e.g. in term of attracting graduate students.

**Q:** A stipend implies that the Director is not full-time. Is that what is intended?

**A:** The intent is for the Director to be a prominent scholar in the area of research of the ORU, who lends gravity to the ORU through their research and their reputation. These positions may even be considered as a means to attract outstanding scholars to join the faculty at UC Merced. To what extent the Director's duty rest with the ORU vs. other activities is subject to negotiation with the VCORED and EVC/Provost prior to the appointment of the ORU director.

**Q:** Why are ORUs asked to indicate if publications/creative scholarly activities by their members acknowledged the ORU?

**A:** Asking members for this information when compiling the annual reports may encourage members to do so. Acknowledgement of the ORU, may that be as affiliation or a simple acknowledgement, can help increase the name recognition of the ORU, which in turn may help increase external funding for the ORU.

**Q:** Is an ORU required to have an external Advisory Committee?

**A:** No. However, where possible ORUs are encouraged to have an external advisory committee, in order to benefit from external, independent advice and to gain more recognition outside the unit and/or the campus.

**Q:** How frequently does an ORU have to provide reports on its activities?

**A:** An ORU has to provide reports annually. Every fifth report is a more comprehensive report, summarizing the activities and accomplishments of the ORU since the previous 5-year review. All other reports are annual reports, summarizing the activities of the ORU over the past year. The executive and advisory committees only review the reports and may provide recommendations and guidance.