

Centers and Institutes Review

BACKGROUND

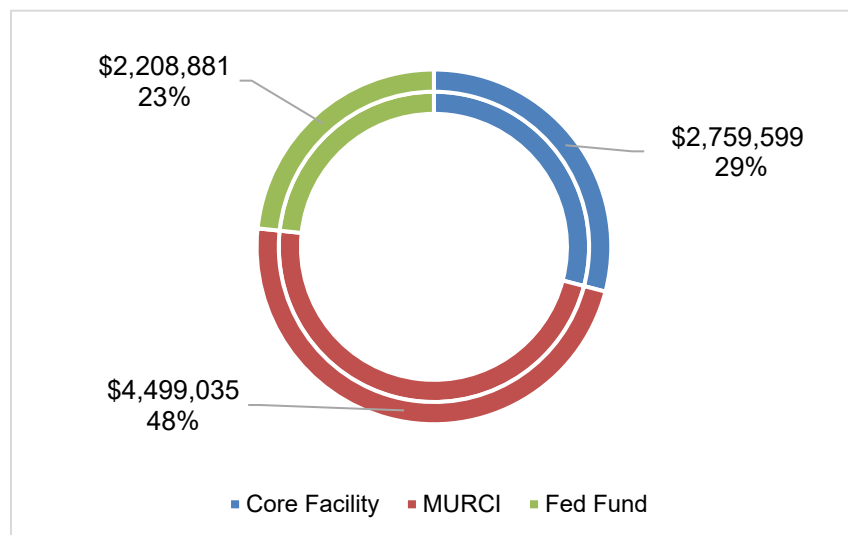
Oregon State’s research activity takes place in colleges, schools and departments, as well as centers and institutes. The Research Office (RO) provides oversight and/or centrally supports 21 university [centers, institutes, and core facilities](#). The centers and institutes are established to provide faculty and students with unique opportunities to build collaborations, conduct interdisciplinary research, and attract extramural support. Core facilities provide the spaces and labs to conduct specialized research and enable student and faculty success.

The support for the centers and institutes Education and General (E&G) budget (\$9,467,515) is allocated to Core Facilities, Major University Research Centers and Institutes (MURCIs), and federally funded research centers (Fed Fund). The distribution is shown in Figure 1. The majority of the support goes to MURCIs (48%). A core facility is a unit established on a continuing basis for the provision of strategically important services that are significantly beyond the budget or skill of a single investigator, or that are significantly more efficient if provided centrally. The services may be provided intramurally or extramurally with charges established in the fee book to recoup a significant fraction of the costs.

Until FY2019, centers and institutes had been reviewed only occasionally and intermittently. In FY2019, the RO, working with the colleges and other partners as appropriate, initiated a process to review centers, institutes, and core facilities to assess their impact, efficiency, sustainability,

and relevance to SP4.0 goals. To date, several of these units have undergone an extensive formal review, including what was previously named the Center for Lifelong STEM Learning, Oregon Sea Grant, and the Center for Genome Research and Biocomputing (CGRB). In addition, in FY2020, some significant changes were implemented in the Linus Pauling Institute (LPI) and the Cooperative Institute for Marine Resources Studies (CIMRS); and a new strategic plan was developed for the CGRB. Finally, a zero-based budgeting process was initiated in FY2020 to ensure financial sustainability and consolidate resources. For example, a zero-based budget analysis of the Hatfield Marine Science Center (HMSC) was conducted to establish its baseline needs as a center supporting research, education, and outreach; the Marine Studies Initiative (MSI); and federal partners. In addition, a zero-based budget analysis was conducted for LPI to determine the sources of the institute’s deficit and set a path forward to reach sustainability over the next three years. The goal of these strategic efforts is to maximize the value and impact of the centers and institutes as university assets benefitting many.

Figure 1. Research Office E&G Allocation by C&I type



PROPOSED CHANGES TO MURCIS

In 2016, the Academic Strategies Committee updated its committee charter to clarify its oversight role of centers and institutes. The committee identified eight MURCIs, which are a subset of university research centers or institutes that are designated and overseen by the Board of Trustees, are funded and report centrally, and are established on a continuing basis for the coordination, promotion, and funding of strategic university interests that transcend college and disciplinary boundaries¹:

- Center for Genome Research and Biocomputing
- Center for Latin@ Studies and Engagement
- Center for the Humanities
- Center for Lifelong STEM Learning (now STEM Research Center)
- Hatfield Marine Science Center
- Institute for Natural Resources
- Institute for Water and Watersheds
- Linus Pauling Institute

Reviews, strategic evaluations, and conversations with college partners over the last two years have informed a number of proposed changes to MURCIs, two of which are presented for consideration by the Board:

The Center for the Humanities supports the scholarly and creative work of OSU faculty and students in the humanities, arts, and interpretive social sciences, offering a space for discussing enduring human questions and timely critical issues. An assessment of the center's activities have illustrated that the faculty who receive direct support from the center have been almost entirely within the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), and that the center has not engaged in scholarship that transcends college boundaries across the university, which is expected of MURCIs. In addition, in re-envisioning the strategic role of the center, there is an opportunity to better align the center's mission and activities with the College of Liberal Arts' programs while also ensuring alignment with the vision for the Arts and Education Complex currently in the planning stages.

For these reasons, the RO and the Office of the Provost, with support from the provost and executive vice president, recommend a reporting line change for the center director to report to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, while still maintaining a university-wide mission. This change will ensure alignment with the college, while also allowing better access to college resources and more synergy with its schools and researchers. In the new model, the funding and programming will be guided by a memorandum of understanding between the Office of the Provost and the College of Liberal Arts, but the center will be managed by the college. With this proposed change in reporting line, oversight would shift to the college and would not be reported to the Academic Strategies Committee and Board.

The Center for Latin@ Studies and Engagement was established to promote engaged research and outreach devoted to advancing knowledge and understanding of Latin@ life chances and the issues shaping their lived experiences. The center's efforts to attract extramural funding — a central part of its development plan and mission —

¹ For more information visit: https://policy.oregonstate.edu/UPSM/06-010_research_centers_institutes

were unsuccessful over its initial four-year period, despite receiving a significant flow of core E&G support. In 2018, then Vice President for Research Cindy Sagers paused the center and encouraged associated faculty to develop a plan to pursue extramural funding opportunities and strengthen the rationale for continuing. This was not accomplished, so the RO, with support from the provost and executive vice president, recommend a formal sunseting of this inactive center. While the original concept of establishing a university-level center to attract significant extramural funding was not successful, this area of scholarship will continue to be important for OSU.

As well, the review and strategic planning process resulted in name changes for two MURCIs. While these do not require formal Board action they are shared for informational purposes. The name of the **Center for Lifelong STEM Learning** was renamed STEM Research Center to better reflect the center's research. The STEM Research Center enhances understanding of how individuals with diverse life circumstances and identities become lifelong learners, practitioners, and researchers in STEM. **The Center for Genome Research and Biocomputing** will be renamed in order better reflect the emphasis area of life sciences. The proposed name is Center for Quantitative Life Sciences. Currently, CGRB facilitates genome-enabled and data-driven research in the life and environmental sciences at OSU and across the state. In addition, a new operational structure is proposed to expand its capacity to better serve the university by adding an operations director and well-defined teams with staff responsibilities aligned with center strategic goals and regular, transparent pathways of communication.

Future changes might be proposed to the Board following a planned zero-based budgeting process for CGRB and a strategic planning process for HMSC in FY2021 and FY2022.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff propose that the Academic Strategies Committee recommend to the Board closure of the Center for Latin@ Studies and Engagement and transfer of oversight of the Center for the Humanities to the College of Liberal Arts.