Protocols for Academic Centers

The proliferation of units called “Centers” within the Division of Academic Affairs has created a need for protocols governing the formation, characteristics, and assessment of Academic Centers.

An Academic Center is an organization under the purview of Academic Affairs that is focused upon academic objectives whose pursuit involves faculty and staff from more than one discipline. The activities of an Academic Center may or may not require external support for direct costs beyond the scope of the normal support which RIT provides its faculty and staff for academic pursuits. Also an Academic Center may or may not include degree programs.

Because an Academic Center does not reside within a department, its creation and governance require special protocols. The following protocols for Centers apply solely to Centers within the Division of Academic Affairs.

I. Proposals to initiate an Academic Center must be submitted to the Provost and include:
   A. A statement of Purpose for the Center and detailed explanations as to how each of the criteria for “Established Academic Centers” (see below) will be met within five years.
   B. The rationale for designating the proposed unit a "Center."
   C. A 5-year projected plan approved by the provost with a projected budget that has been approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and that includes:
      1. Documentation of the resources necessary to support the Center during its start-up phase, including faculty, staff, space, and facilities.
      2. Anticipated sources of funding for the Center.

II. Established Academic Centers at RIT must fulfill the following criteria:
   A. The Center engages faculty from more than one discipline.
   B. The Center meets or enhances a strategic RIT need or goal as attested to by one or more college deans and the Provost.
   C. The Center has an established Advisory Board, which includes external members.
   D. If the Center involves incremental direct costs, it must support these on an on-going basis without long-term subsidy from RIT other than a possible initial investment lasting no more than five years.

III. Evaluation of Academic Centers:
   A. Every Center must submit an annual report on its activities and finances to the President, the Provost, and the appropriate deans. If the Center engages in externally funded research this report must also be submitted to the Vice President for Research and the Vice President of Finance and Administration.

   B. Every Center engaged in research will undergo a rigorous evaluation by the Vice
President for Research at least once every five years to see that it is continuing to meet the above criteria. Recommendations can be included in this five year evaluation for the Provost to consider expansion, reduction, restructuring, discontinuance, or normal continuance of the Center.

C. If the Center involves incremental direct costs, it must have a rolling five year projected business plan that has been endorsed by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and approved by the Provost.

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