

**503. Academic, Research, Service, and Administrative Units**

**I. Policy Statements**

- A. The establishment of new academic, research, service, and administrative units, including but not limited to, departments, divisions, schools, colleges, centers, and institutes, must be submitted for review and approval to the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees.
- B. The institutions of The University of Alabama System are required to submit requests for new academic, research, service, and administrative units to the Chancellor for review and approval. Upon the recommendation of the Chancellor, the new academic, research, service, and administrative units request will be submitted to The Board of Trustees for final approval.
- C. The institution must notify the Board, as an approval item, of any internal changes that are reasonable extensions or alterations of existing academic, research, service, and administrative units including organizational changes.

**II. Guidelines for Establishing a New Center or Institute**

**A. Definition**

A center or institute focuses and concentrates efforts, usually multidisciplinary in nature, toward meeting a specialized need or dealing with a current issue. Most centers and institutes provide an umbrella organization for efforts directed toward a common goal. Some provide a central, visible focal point to enable individuals from the state and community to take advantage of the research and service opportunities of the University.

**B. Types of Centers or Institutes**

A center or institute falls into one of the following two categories based on the primary purpose of its program:

- 1. Instruction or research centers and institutes have, as a major focus, activities related to the instruction of students or the conduct of research.
- 2. Service centers and institutes have a major focus on activities related to the dissemination of information or the provision of service to the community.

**C. Criteria**

A proposed center or institute must meet the following three criteria and would be submitted to the President, to the Chancellor, and then to the Board of Trustees.

1. Purpose  
A clearly defined purpose directly related to the role and scope and the instructional, research, and/or service programs of the campus.
2. Resources  
An annual budget showing source of funds along with an indication that there are sufficient human and physical resources to achieve the center's or institute's purpose.
3. Organization  
The proposed center or institute must identify a director, show the internal reporting relationship, and have a structure that enables the center to apply for, and receive, external funding such as grants and contracts.

D. Steps for Obtaining Approval

1. Development of a written proposal based on the criteria in this guideline.
2. Review and approval at the campus level through a process approved by the President.
3. Review and approval by the Chancellor.
4. Review and approval by the Board of Trustees.
5. Each center and institute must be reviewed periodically. The campus will establish the schedule and parameters of the reviews and submit them to the System's Office of Academic Affairs.

- E. Annually a list will be submitted to each campus by the System's Office of Academic Affairs for verification of each center's or institute's status and leadership.

III. Guidelines for Establishing a New Academic Unit

A. Definition

New academic units include, but are not limited to, departments, divisions, schools, and colleges.

B. Types of Academic Units

An academic unit falls into one of the following:

1. Department

An instructional unit encompassing a discrete branch of study; usually located within a division and/or a school or college. The department is usually a less inclusive unit than a division, although this is not always the case.

2. Division  
An instructional unit which usually includes two or more academic departments representing allied fields of study. (For example, a Division of Natural Sciences might include departments of biology, chemistry, physics and geology). Usually, but not always, a division is a more prominent entity than a department. (Some institutions identify the department as the more inclusive unit. In such cases, the department might include several divisions.)
3. School  
An instructional unit within an institution of higher education which usually encompasses a professional discipline such as medicine, engineering, education, etc. and which often includes several academic divisions and/or departments. A school is usually under the administration of a dean or director. Often, though not always, a school is less inclusive than a college.
4. College  
An instructional unit within a university that usually includes several academic divisions and/or departments and is usually administered by a dean. Often, though not always, a college is a more prominent or inclusive unit than a school. As used here, the term “college” does not pertain to separate institutions known as colleges, such as junior college, community college, technical college, or Athens State College.

C. Criteria

A proposed new academic unit must meet the following three criteria and would be submitted to the President, to the Chancellor, and then to the Board of Trustees.

1. Purpose  
A clearly defined purpose directly related to the role and scope and the instructional, research, and/or service programs of the campus.
2. Resources  
An annual budget showing source of funds along with an indication that there are sufficient human and physical resources to achieve the academic unit’s purpose.
3. Organization  
The proposed academic unit must identify an administrative head, show the internal reporting relationship, and have a structure that enables the unit to effectively achieve its purpose.

D. Steps for Obtaining Approval

1. Development of a written proposal based on the criteria in this guideline.
2. Review and approval at the campus level through a process approved by the President.
3. Review and approval by the Chancellor.
4. Review and approval by the Board of Trustees.
5. Each academic unit must be reviewed periodically. The campus will establish the schedule and parameters of the reviews and submit them to the System's Office of Academic Affairs.

IV. Guidelines for Changes to Existing Academic, Research, Service, & Administrative Units

- A. When an extension, expansion, or other substantial alteration or termination, closure, or deletion of an existing unit (academic, research, service, and administrative, including departments, divisions, schools, colleges, centers, and institutes) is proposed, the president of the institution shall notify the Chancellor before the action is taken.
- B. The notification of the termination, deletion, or closure of a unit shall include the following information in its supporting materials:
  1. The purpose of the unit.
  2. The reasons for termination, closure, or deletion.
  3. A description of all funding for, property of, and individuals employed in the unit and the proposed disposition of the funding, property, and employees.
- C. The Chancellor shall recommend to The Board of Trustees the disposition of the proposed action.

(Adopted June 17, 1987 as Board Rule 517; amended and renumbered December 5, 1997; amended May 7, 1999; November 19, 1999.)