

OR/ORSO Guideline 20

Management of WSU Core Facilities

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Office of Research

Office of Research Support and Operations

March 2017

Introduction

This guideline provides a framework for the oversight of institutional shared research resources, referred to as “core facilities” or “cores,” at Washington State University. Cores provide resources, expertise, and state-of-the-art equipment and/or technology to researchers across the WSU system. The administration of institutional cores must be consistent to promote their accessibility and reliability, and to ensure their cost-effectiveness and sustainability, quality control, and compliance with federal and state regulations.

What are Institutional Core Facilities?

For the purpose of this guideline, institutional core facilities are units that provide user services that support research activity across a broad institutional user-base spanning multiple colleges and/or campuses. These services include access to technologies and specialized research instrumentation, as well as scientific consultation that enhances scientific interaction and productivity across WSU. Cores are not dedicated to the work of a single research group or department, but rather allow consistent and fair access to all investigators.

Institutional cores differ from multi-user facilities that are composed of shared instrumentation voluntarily shared by campuses, colleges, departments, or faculty members with other researchers in that they are open to users at all campuses as well as external users. Costs associated with operation of individual core facilities come from user fees generated from using core services, but are also generally subsidized by the campuses, colleges, or departments sponsoring the core facility.

A list of WSU core facilities can be found at <https://research.wsu.edu/centers-facilities-capabilities/>. As this guideline is implemented, this list may change or expand. These guidelines currently apply to institutional core facilities such as Franceschi Microscopy Imaging Center, the Center for Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy, the Biomolecular X-Ray Crystallography Center, the Molecular Biology and Genomics Core, the Stable Isotope Core, and the Tissue Imaging and Proteomics Laboratory, as well as all Spokane-based core facilities.

Operation of Institutional Cores

Cores generally have dedicated personnel, equipment, and space for operations. Core facilities recover their operating costs, or a portion of their operating costs, by charging user fees. Because of the widespread utility of such resources, the institution may directly support some of the core's operating expenses, allowing the development of new technology, purchase of high-end equipment, and retention and/or recruitment of technical personnel. Institutional support may only be provided after institutional review of the core and justification of utility and feasibility. Core services must be consistent with the mission of WSU and support the goals of the WSU Strategic Plan, which incorporates the 120-Day Study of the WSU research enterprise. A portion of the operating costs of institutional core facilities may also be included in the facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, consistent with applicable Federal cost principles, and ensuring that there is no duplication of cost recovery.

Oversight of Institutional Cores

While each core offers a unique profile of expertise, services and products, a common philosophy should guide the management of institutional cores. Thus, an institutional governance structure has been set to oversee core facilities.

Core Facility Advisory Committee (CFAC)

The Core Facility Advisory Committee (CFAC) makes recommendations regarding oversight of the institutional core facilities. The CFAC is the deliberative body that assists and advises the VP Research in the development of policies and priorities regarding WSU shared resources, and is the first step in establishing the university-wide committee recommended by the 120-Day Study that will help guide and evaluate investments in the research infrastructure of WSU.

The membership of the CFAC consists of the AVPR for Centers, Institutes, and Laboratories (CILs), the director for administrative services in the OR, and key faculty members representing a broad constituency across WSU who are users of core facilities. The duties of the CFAC include:

- Review and prioritize proposals that request institutional resources for new instrumentation, renovations, and personnel
- Review proposals for new institutional cores
- Advise on standards and requirements for institutional core designation
- Review annual reports of the Core Users Committee (CUC) and evaluate quality and financial stability of existing cores to ensure that they meet both scientific and fiscal expectations and continue to add value to the WSU community
- Recommend termination of core operations, in whole or in part, when necessary as usage declines or when the same high-quality service becomes available through commercial sources at lower costs
- Review proposals for shared instrumentation grants

Core User Groups and User Group Executive Committees

Each Core will have a User Group and/or a User Group Executive Committee. The User Group is open to all users, and typically includes faculty and staff users. A User Group or Core Director may select a subset of users as a User Group Executive Committee, which is the deliberative body that assists and advises the corresponding Core Facility Director in the development of needs justification, services, policies, and fees. The User Group Executive Committee in turn may designate an individual to serve as User Group Chair to work with the Core Facility Director, Executive Committee and User Group membership to:

- Review operations, use, fees, support, and instrumentation of the core and make recommendations for new equipment, technologies, and fee structures
- Conduct annual evaluations of the core facility
- Review the annual report submitted to the CFAC and the VPR
- Conduct annual evaluations of the core facility and review any user surveys regarding core usage, quality, etc. and implement responsive measures, if any

Core Facility Director

Each Core will have a faculty-level director responsible for setting strategic direction, overseeing core operations, although day-to-day oversight of the core and interaction with researchers may be delegated. Other responsibilities of the Director include:

- Managing facility staff
- Developing a business plan for the core facility and setting user fees and performance metrics, based on input from the Core User Group Executive Committee and other stakeholders
- Interacting with the User Group to as to optimize support of the user community
- Maintaining website for the core facility
- Overseeing billing and budgets
- Conducting an annual review to collect metrics of success; a wider review including review of business plan will occur every three years
- Preparing a short annual report to the VPR and cognizant Dean(s) as applicable
- Devising and implementing strategies for outreach and education
- Apply, on behalf of the facility, for internal and federal funds to upgrade the facility's instrument portfolio

Core Governance Structure Diagram

