FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

Division of Research

SUBJECT:	Effective Date:	Policy Number:
Research Core Policy	04-05-2017	10.8.1
	Supersedes:	Page 1 Of 3
	Responsible Authorities: Division of Research Director, Core Facilities	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- facilitate consistent administrative oversight, business planning, and accounting practices for all research cores at Florida Atlantic University (FAU)
- ensure compliance with federal regulations and FAU policy
- facilitate efficient research resource use and availability
- facilitate access to external users and non-FAU core resources

II. DEFINITIONS

Research Core: *Recharge center with special federal compliance requirements.*

Research Cores facilitate cutting-edge research to stimulate and increase research productivity. They provide access to technology, equipment, services, and training that are not typically affordable by a single researcher and are valuable to multiple investigators. Research Cores are defined by operational and financial independence, specifically:

- a group of research resources, often with dedicated personnel and space, available through a cost recovery model to FAU investigators
- provides access to equipment, reagents, services, technologies, consultation and/or special products used to conduct research
- is separately budgeted and accounted for, and adheres to government regulatory costing principles
- can be available to external users
- should facilitate cost recovery for equipment maintenance, replacement, and upgrade, as well as personnel training to ensure availability of state-of-the-art expertise

Non-Core Common Research Resources:

- equipment, reagents, services, technologies, consultation and/or special products *available to a select group of FAU investigators*, without a formal cost recovery model and typically lacks a dedicated organizational support structure
- may not directly charge sponsored projects for access or use of resources, and may be unavailable to others within FAU's research community or external users

This policy is only concerned with operations, oversight and reporting of Research Cores.

III. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In general, Research Cores should be concerned with the following:

a. Visibility & Vision
   - visibility of available resources (e.g. website, handouts)
   - equal availability of resources and explanation of how to access them (e.g., to junior researchers)
   - core procedures, policies (e.g., for prioritizing use)
   - compatibility and alignment with user needs
   - document grant resources for proposals

b. Operations & Management
   - developing and updating business model
   - rate calculations based on actual costs, market comparisons, and return on investment (ROI)
   - predicting, enhancing, and tracking demand
   - fee structure
   - billing
   - defining access to facility/services (e.g. scheduling, physical access)
   - service contracts and other maintenance needs

c. Review
   - evaluation metrics and analysis
   - sustainability planning
   - compliance review
   - sharing "best practices" among facilities

d. Decision-making & Investment
   - operational & governance structure (e.g., dedicated steering committee)
   - communication channels
   - models for new equipment funding and upgrades
   - practices relating to institutional matching funds (or in-kind services)

IV. GOVERNANCE

Formal oversight of Research Cores lies within the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Research Core Oversight Committee:

The Research Core Oversight Committee consists of up to 15 members, comprising representatives from all relevant campuses, including core users, core directors and administrators. The committee is chaired by the Associate Vice President (or designee) in the Division of Research (DOR). The Oversight Committee develops and manages the infrastructure necessary for the research cores to operate, including operational guidelines, financial mechanisms and other relevant guidelines.

The committee advises the VPR on the following:

- review and approval of new core applications
- standards and requirements for core designation, operations, consolidation, and termination
- annual review and approval of rate structure
- review of annual reports, and changes to or termination of core operations
- internal selection process for limited submission equipment grant programs

The Research Core Oversight Committee meets quarterly, or as needed.

Core Director Council:

The Core Director Council consists of core directors representing the individual cores at all campuses of the University. The Council will meet quarterly, or more often, as needed, to discuss core operations and share best practices. The Council is convened by the DOR.

V. FINANCING OF CORES AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Cores must develop a sustainable business plan. A balanced budget can be achieved through, for example, fees-for-service, support from grants (e.g. NIH infrastructure support grants, P30), institute funds, departmental funds, or special agreements (where applicable).

In some cases, institutional funds may be required to support a research core. User affiliations will determine the institutional unit providing support. As such, a research core that is routinely used by faculty from more than one unit may be subsidized/supported by the central administration. Research cores that serve faculty from a single college or department may be supported by the corresponding unit.

In order to receive institutional support for operations (“subsidy”), a research core must at least demonstrate the presence of:

- an appropriate mission
- a sound business/operational plan
- a scientific advisory committee; structure and composition of this committee to be determined by the individual core
- favorable review of annual report by Oversight committee

VI. PROCEDURE TO ESTABLISH A NEW RESEARCH CORE

The steps to establish a research core are:

1. Prepare a mission statement (purpose of the research core, and how it aligns with the University's academic and research missions)
2. Establish an Advisory Committee, including at least one member outside of the department/institute, and including the core director
3. Prepare an annual operational budget, including space requirements, salaries, operating costs, depreciation of equipment (see Appendix 2 and template)
4. Estimate the number of users and/or units of service to be provided in a fiscal year
5. Develop a rate per unit of service, following this model:
   Rate/Unit Service = Annual Budget/Estimated Annual Units Service
   Also, include difference in internal rate vs. external rate (see Appendix 2 and template)
6. Prepare a market analysis, i.e. compare research core rates to other vendors
7. Prepare a business plan and request to establish a new core and forward to DOR for approval by the Oversight Committee and Budget & Auxiliary Committee (see Appendix 1 and 2; rate template)

Appeal process

In the event that a proposed research core is denied approval, an appeal may be made, within 30 days, to the VPR. Appeals should include the letter indicating a denial.

VII. EXTERNAL USAGE

Sharing of available research resources among institutions, including research cores, is encouraged by federal funding agencies. Charges to external users must be reasonable and appropriately established in compliance with federal regulations. Proposed rates for external users are to be included with new research core business plan and application.

VIII. ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Each research core must complete and send an annual report for the preceding fiscal year (July 1 through June 30) by August 31 to DOR. Annual reports will be reviewed by the Core Oversight Committee and DOR.

POLICY APPROVAL

Initiating Authority

Signature: _____ Date: 4/5/2017

Daniel Flynn, Vice President for Research

Appendix 1:

ESTABLISHING A NEW CORE

This template is for requesting new research cores or recognizing an existing resource as a "core". The request will be considered by the Research Core Oversight Committee.

CORE TITLE:
CORE DIRECTOR:
DATE:

CORE SUMMARY: (1 pg)
Provide a short summary of the core, including

- name
- organizational structure
- need for the core
- proposed services
- proposed fee structure
- space/financial needs

STRATEGIC NEED AND MARKET ASSESSMENT
Demonstrate the need for this research core, focusing on (1) commercial competition, (2) capacity & access, (3) importance for research, (4) scientific impact. Results of a market analysis should be described, including information on services provided elsewhere (internally and externally). Outline the rationale for the core and why its services are best provided within a core structure.

OPERATIONAL PLAN
The plan should cover the first 5 years of operation.

Provide

- implementation plan (what are the steps to complete before the core goes "live")
- organizational outline: leadership and staffing, with detailed role descriptions
- space planning
- financial information: estimated rates and financial justification, personnel, subsidy support mechanism

MARKETING PLAN (1-2 paragraphs)
Outline how the research core will be advertised within the university and to the scientific community at large (if applicable).

SUPPORTING DATA
This section should include prospective user information, any available statistical data, and financial metrics, including:

- user base, including departmental information
- utilization projections
- financial assumptions
- metrics to track usage and impact, including customer satisfaction, collaborative impact, and peer-reviewed outcomes
- equipment needs, justification, plans for acquisition

Provide any supporting documentation that demonstrates need.

Approval:

Department Chair/Institute Director

_____ _____

Signature Date

Research Core Oversight Committee (Chair or Designee)

_____ _____

Signature Date

Vice President for Research

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix 2:

DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS PLAN

CORE TITLE:
CORE DIRECTOR:
DATE:

A new research core should develop the following information:

1. Mission Statement
2. Market Analysis (our capacity, turn-around time, price, quality, expertise compared to other sources), need, fit into institutional strategic plan
3. User base & associated funding sources (if known)
4. Services to be offered
5. Operations, including software
    - Servicing which campuses, departments etc
    - Prioritization of service
    - Intake form - create template (including training, compliance)
    - Annual reporting requirements
6. Administrative/Technical structure (responsibilities)
    - Core Director & Manager
    - Internal advisory committee
7. Marketing Plan
8. 5-year budget strategy - based on Cost Study

Budget:

1. Perform **Cost Study**:
    - Estimate the core's expenses and number of users to determine rates (cost-based).
    - Select service prices charged to FAU users and external customers.

Information needed for Cost Study:

General Information

- Name of recharge center (fiscal entity established by the FAU Budget and Auxiliary Committee).
- Estimated start date for recharge activities.
- Name of each service item that will be offered.
- Product measure for each service line (for example, in hours, units, runs, etc.).

Staff and Effort Information

- Name and title of each faculty member, research appointment, and employee whose effort will be charged to the recharge center.
- For each member, estimated time spent providing service(s) annually (service hours)
- For each member, estimated annual time spent maintaining instruments, attending conferences, administrative tasks, etc. (non-service hours)
- For each member, estimated percent effort that will be charged to each service line annually (some service lines may include 0% person effort).
- For each member, total estimated percent effort that will be charged to the recharge center annually.

Non-Labor Expenses
Estimated expenses for each service line (some expenses may be evenly distributed across all service lines). Expenses can include, for example:

- Equipment < $5K
- Service agreements for non-capital equipment (including the annual renewal dates)
- Supplies
- Services
- Repair expenses
- Printing costs (including brochures and posters)
- Website design
- Travel

Capital Equipment Expenses
For each instrument with value greater than $5K used to provide services, the following information is needed:

- Name of instrument
- Manufacturer
- Purchase date
- Original Tag or Index used for purchase
- Total amount of purchase (for capital equipment alone)
- Amount of purchase supported by a sponsored award, federal and non-federal
- Estimated life (in years)
- Annual contract expense for service agreements (including the contract renewal dates)
- Maintenance & Depreciation (included in IDC rate)

Rates and Projected Utilization

- Estimated units of internal FAU “sales” (for example, in hours, units, runs, etc.) for each service line.
- Estimated units of external academic "sales" for each service line.
- Estimated number of other external “sales” for each service line.
- Preferred billing rate for internal FAU users for each service line. (Rate only, no F&A)
- Preferred billing rate for external academic users for each service line. (Rate + F&A)
- Preferred billing rate for external users for each service line. (Industry rate + F&A)
- Identify what funds will be used if costs are not recovered
- Specific request for subsidy (if applicable), include source

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- All rates should be developed to comply with all university, state, and federal guidelines

Direct Costs

- Costs for activities or services that benefit specific projects, e.g., salaries for project staff and materials required for a particular project.
- Because these activities are easily traced to projects, their costs are usually charged to projects on an item-by-item basis.

Indirect Costs (F&A)

- Costs for activities or services that benefit more than one project.
- Their precise benefits to a specific project are often difficult or impossible to trace.
- Indirect costs do not vary substantially within certain production volumes or other indicators of activity, and so are considered to be fixed costs.