5.1 ORU Reference and Functions

5.1.1 The Phrase "organized research unit" (ORU) refers to a formally-organized, structured, and recognized research enterprise that typically contain the word "center", "institute", "laboratory", or "clinic", and which constitute a unique set of institutional expressions of faculty research interests and expertise.

5.1.2 The functions of an ORU are to:

1. Facilitate research and research collaborations;

2. Disseminate research results through conferences, meetings and other activities;

3. Strengthen graduate and undergraduate education by providing students with training opportunities and access to facilities;

4. Seek extramural research funds; and

5. Carry out university and public service programs related to the ORU's research expertise.

5.1.3 Four characteristics of ORU are that they:

1. Have a defined structure and at least an assigned part-time administrative staff;

2. Have a developed plan that advances the University's research strategy;

3. Have a strong student development component - they enhance the education and professional development of students by providing significant mission-related research experiences; and,

4. Provide value to the university - they accomplish objectives that could not be done by individual investigators working within the framework of academic departments.
5.2 Designation

ORUs normally carry one of the designations below. It is recognized that some long-established units have designations that do not conform to the definitions that follow; this policy does not require that they be renamed. However, insofar as possible, the naming of new units shall be taken from those defined below. It should also be noted that new non-ORU units that include the terms "institute," "center," "laboratory" or "clinic" in their title, should ensure that the purpose of the units conform to the descriptions below to compete more effectively for extramural support.

5.2.1 INSTITUTE: An institute is a major ORU established on a continuing basis primarily for the coordination and promotion of faculty and student research interests organized around a broad subject area. Institutes are, by virtue of their scope, University enterprises. Normally, the breadth of research projects and programs transcends department, school, college, or even campus boundaries, and application of research to meet societal needs is a part of an institute's mission. Public service activities and programs related to and arising from research conducted within an institute help advance institutional goals. An institute may serve as an umbrella organization that encompasses two or more other ORUs. Requests to designate a new institute require approval of the UTEP President.

5.2.2 CENTER: A center is:

1. analogous to an institute, but more limited in its designated research scope: it focuses departmental, college or university resources to address its mission and achieve its goals; it may be single-, multi-, trans-, or inter-disciplinary in nature; or

2. an organized research unit that serves a specific purpose within an institute; or

3. a unit that provides specialized capabilities to further research or enhance instruction.

5.2.3 LABORATORY: A laboratory is a specialized facility headed by a director with a research staff that may include non-faculty personnel. The laboratory represents a significant investment in equipment, facilities and expertise; it provides support research activities in several departments, colleges, schools, or other ORUs. A laboratory in which substantially all participating faculty members are from the same academic department is a departmental laboratory, and not an ORU.

5.2.4 CLINIC: A specialized unit that engages target groups in research or education or provides clinical services with a focus on specific health issues or risk factors.

5.2.5 Non-ORUs: These are typically informal or temporary organizations of limited scope, with comparatively little institutional resource support. They may be grant-funded enterprises. These organizations may be formally organized or ad hoc, and usually comprise a small collection of scholars within an ORU or a department. Historically, non-ORUs have included the terms institute, center, laboratory, clinic, group, or program in their titles. Henceforth, the use
5.3 Classification of ORU

The University recognizes two categories of ORU, with one subcategory each. To encourage growth of diverse organizations, the configuration allows an ORU to move from one category to another, as its funding and/or mission change.

5.3.1 Category I: College/School ORU

5.3.1.1 Category I ORUs represent initiatives that expand upon ongoing research, education, training, and service efforts in existing departments within a college or school. Although these ORUs may involve some interdisciplinary activity between colleges/schools, the degree of such activity is generally a small part of the unit's effort.

5.3.1.2 Category I ORUs will be housed within the appropriate college/school. The respective Dean(s) are responsible for deciding upon the viability of Category I organizations and for the oversight of their operations.

5.3.1.3 The final decision to create a Category I ORU is made by the respective Dean. Criteria for establishing this category or ORU are that they:

- Are compatible with the teaching, research, and service missions of a college/school; and
- Enhance quality and productivity of college/school faculties.

5.3.1.4 Requirements for the establishment of a new ORU are described in paragraph 5.4, below. Reporting and periodic evaluation are described in paragraph 5.8, below.

5.3.1.5 An existing unit in this category can be terminated by the pertinent dean for fiscal or other reasons, after consultations with the respective chairs and the Provost (or designee).

5.3.2 Category II: University ORU

5.3.2.1 There may be cases where planned research, education, training, and service activities span different units at the university, to the extent that the operation and administration of a research unit within a college or school would hamper its productivity. This category addresses such needs. Category II ORU directors report to an institute director, the Vice President for Research (VPR), or Provost with respect to operational and fiscal issues of their organizations. The participation of college/departmental faculty in Category II ORUs is contingent upon negotiated workload agreements between the respective faculty member(s) and his/her/their academic leadership.
5.3.2.2 Criteria for establishing ORU in this category are that they:

- Strengthen the overall ability of the University to accomplish its mission with respect to research, education, training, and service;
- Promote interaction of different units from several colleges/schools; that is, interaction that would not occur without a center/institute;
- Although not a required criterion, this category of centers/institutes may also enable the University to take advantage of opportunities announced by funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and National Aeronautics Space Administration.

5.3.2.3 ORUs in this category should be designed to be financially self-sustaining on a steady basis, following an initial start-up phase. "Self-sustaining" means that a unit can operate with resources it acquires or generates. There may be instances where this is not possible and additional resources of the University are necessary to subsidize selected ORUs. Final budgetary decisions are the responsibility of the VPR.

5.3.2.4 Establishment of a new category II ORUs will be in accordance with procedures in the paragraph 5.4, below. The final decision to create a Category II ORU is made by the President. Reporting and periodic evaluation are described in paragraph 5.8, below.

5.3.3 Subcategories IA and IIA:

These are special subsets of Category I and II, comprised of ORU with annual operating budgets (total funds available) of $3 million or more. The University must report these ORUs to The University of Texas System; such units must meet the requirements found in Regents' Rules and Regulations Series 40602. While oversight of Category IA ORUs remains with the respective Dean(s), the VPR is involved to meet university and UT System reporting and evaluation requirements.

- 5.3.3.1 Category IA and IIA ORUs must have an Advisory Committee or Council, approved in accordance with Regents' Rules and Regulations Series 60302. Named ORUs must be approved in accordance with Regents' Rules and Regulations Series 80307. The President of the University has the authority to approve advisory committees/councils and the limited authority to approve naming of "less prominent facilities and programs" consistent with guidelines provide by the Chancellor. Corporate naming must be approved by The University of Texas System Board of Regents.

5.4 Establishment of New ORU

Each research unit must demonstrate a clear need for some number of faculty members to work together in a single administrative structure that allows them to carry out a research program more effectively than they would be able to do working individually or in informal partnerships. Approval of a proposed for Category I ORU approval is delegated to the respective Dean(s), after consultation with the
Provost and Vice President for Research. Approval of a proposed Category II ORU is made by the President of the University on recommendation of the Provost and Vice President for Research.

5.4.1 Routing of a Proposal to establish a new ORU.

a. Category I: Proposals should be routed to the respective Dean(s).

b. Category II: Faculty or academic administrators seeking to establish a new Category II ORU should submit the request to the Vice President for Research. When preparing his/her recommendation, the VPR will seek input and advice from Deans, Department Chairs, Directors of other Category II ORUs, or other internal or external individuals/groups.

5.4.2 At a minimum, the following information should be included in the proposal:

a. purpose and need for the research unit, particularly the need for a number of faculty members to work together in a single administrative structure;

b. relevance of the unit to the University's strategic plan for research;

c. role of the unit in undergraduate and graduate education and interdisciplinary curriculum innovation;

d. proposed name (New Category I ORUs will very rarely be called "institutes");

e. proposed staffing;

f. organization and expectations of the scientific advisory board, if applicable. (Research units with annual operating budgets (funds available) of greater than $3 million must have an advisory committee/council established in accordance with Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 60302);

g. any proposals to name the research unit for an individual or an entity; (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 80307 governs such a naming);

h. five-year development plan for the unit, arranged as follows:

i. **Executive Summary:** Brief description of the research unit highlighting: its strategic relevance; the faculty members and other participants; the effective date; space requirements; other required resources; budget needs and source(s) of funding; key milestones for success (with dates); primary risks to the project's success with mitigating strategies; plan for sustainability; and exit strategy.
ii. **Project Plan**: Detailed project plan with an explanation of the strategic rationale; plan for fostering student involvement in research; key personnel; a timeline for development; and supporting analyses that form the basis for the proposal. The strategic rationale must be tied directly to the University's strategic plan for research and should set out the benefits the unit will provide to the University.

iii. **Analysis of the Opportunities for Extramural Funding**: A concise evaluation of the opportunities for seeking and obtaining extramural funding support should be discussed:

   i. A list of potential funding opportunities;

   ii. A list of submitted proposals; and

   iii. A list of awarded grants and/or contracts.

iv. **Risk Analysis**: A concise evaluation of the potential risks associated with the development and implementation of the proposed unit:

   i. Cost risks (e.g. equipment acquisitions; salaries; laboratory operations);

   ii. Regulatory risks;

   iii. Environmental risks;

   iv. Legal risks; and

   v. Governance Issues.

v. **Success Criteria**: Explicitly define the criteria (measure and timing) that will indicate the unit is achieving success.

vi. **Sustainability and Exit Strategies**: Identify the plan for making the unit self-supporting and describe the key indicators that will be monitored as "triggers" for implementing exit strategies. Discuss the implications of the proposed exit strategies that will be employed should they become necessary (e.g. the economic impact of the exit strategy scenarios).

vii. **Appendices**: Any necessary data or supporting documents relevant to the other sections of the proposal; including documentation from appropriate UTEP officials that confirms the commitment of any space and funds required by the center or institute.
5.5 Approval of ORU

5.5.1 Category I. Approval of new Category 1 ORUs is delegated to the respective Dean(s) for Category I centers and laboratories, after consultation with the Provost and the Vice President for Research (VPR). Deans will provide a copy of the proposal package and documentation of the approval to the VPR. New Category I ORUs will rarely be called “institutes,” such designation requires the approval of the President of the University.

5.5.2 Category II. Approval of new Category II ORU is made by the President of the University. Proposals are submitted to the VPR and routed through the Provost. In preparing their recommendations, the Provost and VPR may consult with Deans, as appropriate. Copies of the proposal package and approval documentation will be maintained by the VPR.

The mere fact that a research unit was proposed in a successful application for grant funding does not constitute designation as an ORU. A proposal for establishment as an ORU must be submitted for approval in accordance with this Chapter of the Handbook of Operating Procedures.

5.6 Documentation of Existing ORU

The Vice President for Research (VPR) will maintain the following information pertinent to ORUs:

1. ORU Name;
2. ORU Vision;
3. Mission;
4. Goals;
5. An explanation of how these goals align with the Research Priorities and Cross-Cutting Research Themes described in Section II of the University's Strategic Plan for Research;
6. ORU resources: funding; personnel; space and equipment;
7. A current five-year Business Plan, including a discussion of: risk analysis; success criteria; sustainability; and exit strategy; and.
8. Information about the unit's advisory council or committee, if applicable: membership/composition; frequency of meetings; budget, if any; records of periodic meetings; and reports or recommendations from those meetings.

ORU Directors are responsible to maintain their organization's current information in the University's Office of Research and Sponsored (ORSP) Expertise Website.
5.7 Advancing Category I and II ORUs to Categories IA and IIA

5.7.1 Category I. The respective Dean(s) will monitor the financial growth of the Category I ORUs within the College/School. When the annual operating budget (funds available) of a Category I ORU is greater than $3 million, the unit will be designated Category IA and the VPR will be advised. If the unit does not have an advisory committee or council, actions will be initiated to constitute one in accordance with Regents' Rules and Regulations Series 60302.

5.7.2 Category II. The VPR will monitor the financial growth of Category II ORUs. When the annual operating budget (funds available) of a Category II ORU is greater than $3 million, the unit will be designated Category IIA. If the unit does not have an advisory committee or council, actions will be initiated to constitute one in accordance with Regents' Rules and Regulations Series 60302.

5.8 Reporting and Evaluation

5.8.1 Reporting. ORUs will submit annual reports at the end of each fiscal year to the VPR. (Category I and IA ORUs will route their reports through their Deans.) The format will be prescribed by the VPR.

5.8.2 Evaluation. ORUs will be formally evaluated on a periodic basis, but no less often than six years. Evaluation criteria and methods may vary from unit to unit.

5.8.2.1 Category I. Respective Dean(s) are responsible to evaluate their Category I ORUs and will provide a file copy of the evaluations to the VPR.

5.8.2.2 Category IA, II and IIA. The VPR will prescribe the evaluations for Category IA, II, and IIA ORUs. An ad hoc committee (may be comprised of internal and external individuals/groups) will be formed to assess at a minimum the ORU's original goals and objectives, its present functioning, recent accomplishments, future plan, adequacy of space and budget allocations, and future prospects to contribute to the University's vision and mission. The ad hoc committee's report will be forwarded to the President of the University, who, in consultation with others will determine whether the ORU should continue, be phased out, or be discontinued. The President will forward the recommendation and the ad hoc committee's report to Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or Health Affairs, as appropriate. File copies of the evaluations and ad hoc committee reports will be maintained by the VPR.