



## School of Medicine Research Institutes and Centers

**Policy Type:** Administrative  
**Responsible Office:** SOM Dean  
**Initial Policy Approved:** November 22,2024  
**Current Revision Approved:** November 22, 2024

### Policy Statement and Purpose

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Research Institutes and Centers (RICs) promote the vision, mission and research priorities of, and add value to, VCU and the VCU School of Medicine (SoM). Each RIC has a mission to promote *interdisciplinary* research in a specific area not covered by individual departments or existing RICs. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework that enables the oversight, creation, establishment, evaluation, modification, and discontinuation of RICs in a consistent manner. This policy aims to promote visibility, transparency, and accountability across RICs. This policy applies to all SOM-affiliated RICs.

### Consequence of noncompliance:

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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## Who Should Know This Policy

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SoM faculty members associated with RICs, RIC directors and administrators, and members of the SoM Dean's Office involved in RIC management, and faculty members interested in initiating a new RIC are responsible for knowing contents and provisions of this policy.

## Definitions

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### Research-related Institute or Center (RIC)

An organizational unit comprised of a group of multidisciplinary researchers across multiple departments/units focused on solving a critical societal problem(s) that is consistent with the VCU strategic plan. The mission of RICs will emphasize research, but may include training and service. RICs are classified into two types: university-level and unit-level. University-level RICs are governed by VCU policy.

### SoM-affiliated RICs

SoM-affiliated RICs are those in which the director and the majority of their members have their primary faculty appointments in the SoM. SoM-affiliated RICs include University-level RICs and RICs that lack that designation. Regardless of whether they are University-level, SoM-affiliated RICs are governed by this document.

### RIC Director

The individual responsible for ensuring the RIC is effectively and efficiently managed and able to meet its goals and objectives.

## Contacts

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The Office of the Dean School of Medicine officially interprets this policy.

The Office of the Dean School of Medicine is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures* through the appropriate governance structures.

Please direct policy questions to the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training in the Dean's Office.

## Policy Specifics and Procedures

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### 1. Establishing a new SoM RIC

- The SoM does not have separate definitions for institute and center. One or the other is chosen simply for euphony.
- The proposed RIC must have a mission, vision, and priorities that are aligned with the SoM strategic plan and the [One VCU Strategic Research Priorities Plan](#), but not covered by individual departments or existing RICs
- The proposed RIC must have clear, quantifiable and achievable goals
- The proposed RIC must have a financial plan that describes how SoM financial support will be utilized, why and for how long it is needed, and how and when financial independence will be achieved.

- The scope of research for the proposed RIC should have minimal overlap with the research conducted in any existing VCU RIC or other individual administrative structure.
- RICs must have substantial representation in more than one SoM department (required) and VCU school or college (preferred). Faculty members should have unique and complementary expertise that addresses the RIC-scientific theme. Criteria and process for evaluating membership in the RIC must be specified.
- Externally funded multi-investigator awards, such as P/U series NIH awards, are expected of all RICs once established. Internal multi-investigator awards, such as the VCU Breakthrough awards, or multi-investigator R01 proposals, are preferred prior to establishment of a new RIC.
- Potential directors and administrators for new RICs should schedule a meeting with the Dean of the School of Medicine and the Senior Associate Deans for Administration and Finance and for Research and Research Training once they have developed the plans outlined above.
- Establishment of a new SoM-affiliated RIC is the sole prerogative of the SoM Dean. The Dean may consult SoM RIC review committee (see below) prior to deciding whether to establish a new RIC.

## **2. Financial Support and Evaluation of Existing SoM RICs**

The SoM may provide financial resources to establish a RIC, support its operations, achieve its strategic goals, and secure external funding. The SoM highly values RICs that conduct multidisciplinary research and promote its strategic priorities. The following policies are designed to clarify expectations, achieve operational consistency and compliance, standardize the process of evaluation, and assess the impact of and return on investment for each RIC.

- Financial support from the SoM is limited and contingent upon RIC performance. RICs may apply for the following types of support:
  - Support of a small portion of the director's salary and fringe, if such support is not available from RIC grants or other sources.
  - Support of a portion of an administrator's salary and fringe, if such support is not available from RIC grants or other sources.
  - Limited support for other costs that are essential for the mission of the RIC, if such support is not available from RIC grants or other sources
  - One-time support for a new initiative, such as preparation of a large grant.
- Each RIC must complete an annual self-evaluation, reexamine its goals, modify them as needed, and assess progress and impact. This material will be reviewed and assessed by a committee convened by the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training. RICs are required to fully comply with the requirements of the assessment, implement recommendations of the committee, and provide in their next annual self-evaluation a description of changes implemented in response to recommendations of the committee.
- Each RIC is expected to apply for, secure, and maintain program project or center awards (e.g., NIH P and U series grants or comparable awards), and other forms of multi-investigator external funding.
- The RIC should deliver additional value to VCU and SoM by providing its members with a platform to collaborate, share resources and expertise, and make an impact that demonstrably exceeds what can be achieved through independent work or other existing administrative structures such as departments.
- Benchmarks for success include, but are not limited to, large center or program grants, multi-

investigator R01 or similar collaborative grants, T32 or similar training grants; substantial training/mentoring activities that advance the careers of VCU students and early stage investigators (if education and training is part of their mission); and directing substantial community or public service activities that enhance the impact and/or profile of VCU and the SoM (if service is part of their mission).

- The annual report should include information on membership, specifying how each member has engaged in collaborative research with other members over the past three years.
- The SoM may adjust financial support, merge or retire a RIC because of a shift in strategic priorities, RIC performance or other reasons.

### **3. Applying for VCU Research-related Institute and Center (RIC) status:**

- Policies governing University-level RICs are found at the following website:  
<https://research.vcu.edu/resources/institutes-and-centers/>
- The units (schools/colleges, departments, etc.) involved in all VCU RICs are expected to invest in the work of the RIC. A five-year funding plan is required as part of the VCU RIC application process.
  - SoM requires an MOU to be created for any RIC requesting university-level status that clearly outlines SoM school and department level investments as well as investments from other collaborating units.
  - SoM Dean or Dean designee approval is required prior to applying through the Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) process to document overall financial and operating commitments and ensure responsibilities are agreed upon by all units investing in the success of the RIC.
- Shared governance:
  - VCU RICs must follow procedures for establishment and ongoing support from the VPRI or designee as outlined in the VPRI policy.
  - SoM retains administrative responsibility including financial management, human resource functions, research administration, and space, for all VCU RICs that are primarily associated with SoM.
  - VCU RICs must follow the policies described herein, policies of other schools/units that are part of the RICS and university-wide policies on RICs.

### **4. Retiring SoM affiliated RICs**

- If the SoM RIC committee determines that a RIC has made insufficient progress toward financial or strategic goals, they may recommend to the dean that the RIC be retired. Ordinarily, this determination would take place after several years of inadequate progress.
- A final decision regarding retiring a RIC will be made by SoM Dean after consulting with the SoM RIC review committee.

### **Related Documents**

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1. [VCU Research Related Institutes and Centers](#)
2. Compliance Notice [“Procedures for the Establishment, Operations, and Evaluation of Research-related Institutes and Centers.”](#)

### **Revision History**

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