Engagement Center Mission

Engagement Centers at the University of Massachusetts Lowell further the mission of the University and advance the community objectives set forth in the strategic plan- UMass Lowell 2020. Engagement Centers differ from one another in focus, scope, and staffing, but each contribute in unique ways to the common goals of engagement with the community, nonprofit organizations, industry, business, and/or schools. These Centers have a positive impact on society by enriching the intellectual, personal and cultural development of our students and the community, and fostering economic development of the region and the state. Communities of faculty and staff in Engagement Centers provide a stimulating environment that encourages community-engaged scholarship that may involve corporate and community partnerships. Engagement Centers may also contribute to the role of innovation in community transformation. Interdisciplinary collaborations and community partnerships are promoted by Engagement Centers, both within the University and among institutions and agencies external to UMass Lowell.

Engagement Center Criteria

- Engagement Centers have a clear mission and goals that are aligned with the mission and goals of UMass Lowell and can identify strategies to advance the goals of the Engagement Center
- A new engagement center must add value to the University beyond what already exists
- Engagement Centers have the potential to elevate UMass Lowell as a leader in their specific engagement and scholarship areas among peer institutions and have the capacity to enhance the reputation of the University
- Engagement Centers strive for regional, national, and international recognition
- Engagement Centers serve as an umbrella for a critical mass of activity related to a particular area of scholarship and/or community engagement
- Engagement Centers show evidence of scholarly activity. All members of Center contribute to community engagement and/or scholarship of the Center
- Engagement Centers successfully generate external funding to further the mission of the Center
- Engagement Centers involve and benefit students by serving as a learning environment
- Engagement Centers report to the Academic Deans within the Colleges/Schools in which the Center is established to ensure integration with the academic mission and infrastructure.
**Guidelines for the Establishment of New Engagement Centers**

1. Organize a group of faculty who has expertise in the focus of the proposed Engagement Center. Each member should have a background that will further the mission of the Center and be able to demonstrate a history of scholarship, community engagement, funding, and/or publication in the focus of the Center. Engagement Centers that bring together scholars from several disciplines are preferred, as they have the capacity to enhance diversity and interdisciplinary opportunities. A Center Director and Co-Director (if appropriate) should be identified.

2. The Engagement Team should meet to establish the mission and goals for the Center, as well as determine space and administrative support needed to enhance sustainability.

3. A proposal for a new center must be submitted to the appropriate Academic Deans, Chairs, and the Vice Provost for Research prior to a meeting with the Vice Provost for Research. The proposal must include:
   - The name of the proposed Center
   - The faculty, University rank, Department and expected contribution to the Center of each member, including strengths that the faculty bring to the Center
   - Director or Co-Directors
   - The mission and goals of the proposed Engagement Center.
   - The need for the Engagement Center and an explanation of why a Center structure is required to complete the planned activities. Include a description of the strength that establishing a Center would bring to the University and the value that is added to the University by the Center.
   - Interdisciplinary activities that provide evidence of the potential for collaboration of faculty within the Engagement Center
   - A biographical sketch of each Center faculty member, not to exceed 4 pages per researcher.
   - A record of past funding and the potential for attracting external funding, including sources of potential funding to further the goals of the Center.
   - Resources that have been secured from external sources and a rationale for resources requested of UMass Lowell

4. The appropriate Chairs and Academic Deans should be engaged in discussion about the Center to seek support, including commitment regarding space, funding, and administrative support.

5. Following obtaining support from the appropriate Academic Dean(s), a meeting should be planned with the Vice Provost for Research to engage in a discussion related to the support required from administration, if the new center is approved.

6. Inform the University community about the proposed formation of the new center to encourage feedback and additional membership through web- based communications and by hosting a seminar for University faculty, administration, and staff related to the goals, proposed scholarship and/or community engagement, and plans to address the goals of the Engagement Center.
7. A decision about approval of the Center will be made by the Vice Provost for Research with input from an Engagement Center and Institute Advisory Committee. The 5-7 faculty member Engagement Center and Institute Advisory Committee will be appointed annually by the Vice Provost for Research upon recommendations of the Deans of the Colleges.

**Annual Engagement Center Report**

University Engagement Centers will be reviewed by the Engagement Center and Institute Advisory Committee every three years once the designation of Engagement Center is formally approved. New Centers may be asked to undergo full review in 1 or 2 years. Full reports are required for seed centers, proposals for new centers, and existing entities interested in being elevated to University Engagement Center status. Existing University engagement centers are encouraged to submit an annual report summarizing their activities and goals for purposes of University promotional activities.

The Annual Engagement Center Report should include the following using the Annual Report template:

- The Center Mission, noting any changes in mission, goals, or focus of activity that have occurred over the previous year
- Progress toward goals from the previous year
- Activities to forward Center goals that are proposed for the following year
- List of all faculty, community partners, and staff involved in the Center over the past year, including a summary of how each person contributed to the Center’s goals. Each Center member should describe contributions to the body of scholarship supported by the Center and benefits derived from the Center. List student involvement in the Center and community and industry partnerships.
- Publications and professional conference presentations that are a part of the Center’s programs for the previous year (please do not include articles or presentations prior to the past year). List articles that are published or in press only.
- A listing of new funding received, including source, amount, and title of project for the past year only.
- Total amount of current internal and external funding
- A listing of up to 10 highlights that reflect the accomplishments of the Center over the previous year that should be promoted by the University internally and externally

**Three-Year Review of Existing Engagement Centers**

All Engagement Centers will be reviewed by the Engagement Center and Institute Advisory Committee, Academic Dean(s), and the Vice Provost for Research every 3 years. Any annual reports from the previous three years will also be reviewed. A letter from the Director of the
Engagement Center to the Academic Dean(s) of the College and the Vice Provost for Research summarizing the accomplishments and work of the Center over the previous 3 years should be submitted with the Annual Report in the Center review year. The 3-year review will provide feedback on whether the Center continues to meet Engagement Center criteria. Those Centers who are no longer meeting Engagement Center criteria will be issued a warning letter from the Vice Provost for Research with recommendations for action to meet Engagement Center status. The Engagement Center with warning status will then undergo review in 1 year and action on continuation of Engagement Center status will be determined by the Vice Provost for Research, with recommendations from the Academic Dean(s) and the Engagement Center and Institute Advisory Committee.

The purposes of the Engagement Center 3-year review are:

- To provide feedback to Engagement Centers for self-evaluation
- To provide feedback to administration on the performance of Engagement Centers
- To recognize active Engagement Centers to justify future support or expansion
- To assess appropriate utilization of resources
- To assess inclusiveness of members across Departments and Colleges as appropriate, including new faculty involvement