

How to Evaluate (and perhaps sunset) A Research Center

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH

Context: good timing!

The President has requested via VPR Fred Cate an inventory of all research centers in the IU system and would like to put into place consistent policies for formation/approval, categorization, review, sunseting, etc.

OVR has been polling and requesting information on all of the campus and school/College Research Centers and Institutes.

(Name, Director, website, location, reviewed?, last reviewed, mission/goals, base funded?-how much; foundation?-how much; fee for service?-how much)

Scale	<i># of Centers</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
DEMA	1	0%
OVPR	14	100%
UITS	1	100%
KSOB	10	100%
MSOL	4	100%
SICE	9	100%
SoAD	4	100%
Media School	5	100%
SoO	1	100%
JSOM	4	75%
College	48	71%
SPH	15	67%
SPEA	2	50%
SOE	6	33%
SGIS	8	25%

Today

Not defining such policies here, but starting to take a look at best practices gleaned from:

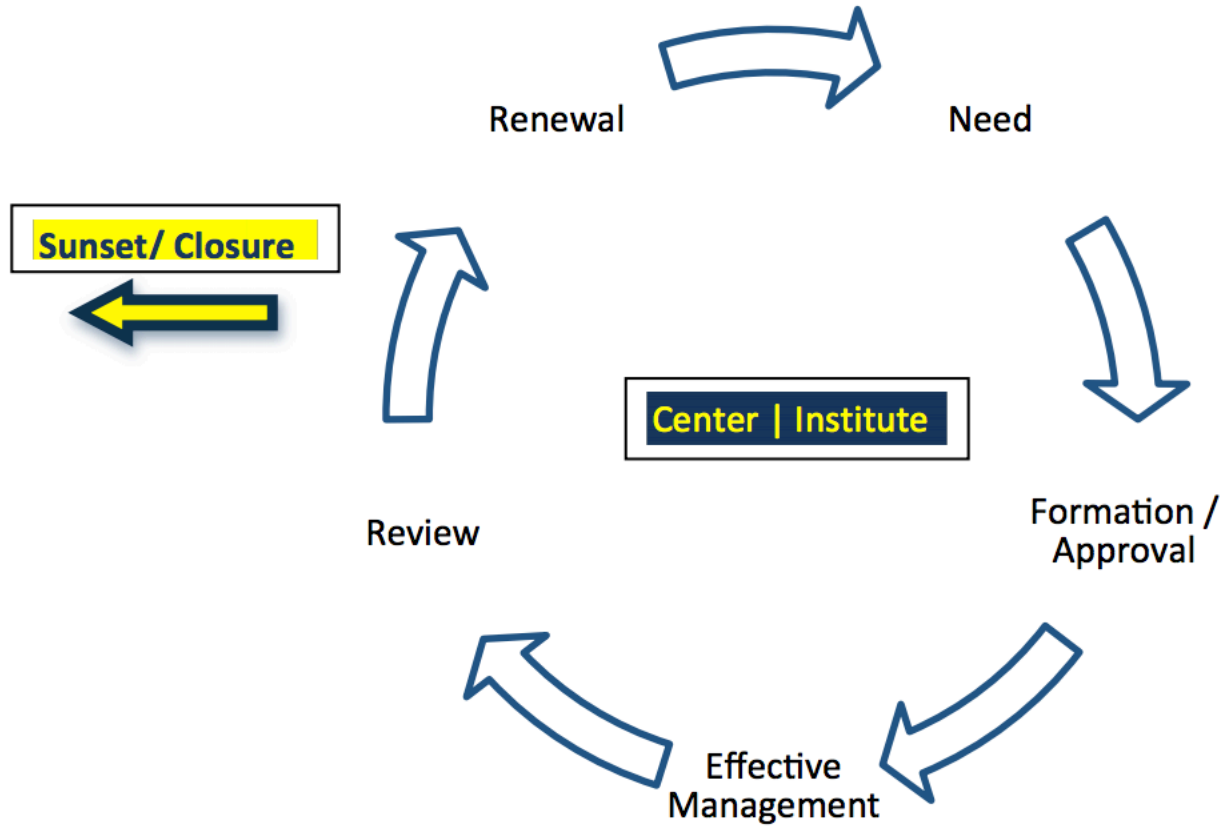
- Experiences at IU
- Best practices at some peer institutes (e.g., Michigan, Wisconsin)
- Best practices outlined in Education Advisory Board (EAB) report: *Competing in the Era of Big Bets: Achieving Scale in Multidisciplinary Research* (University Leadership Council, National Best Practice Report)

(Aside: other great stuff in that report)

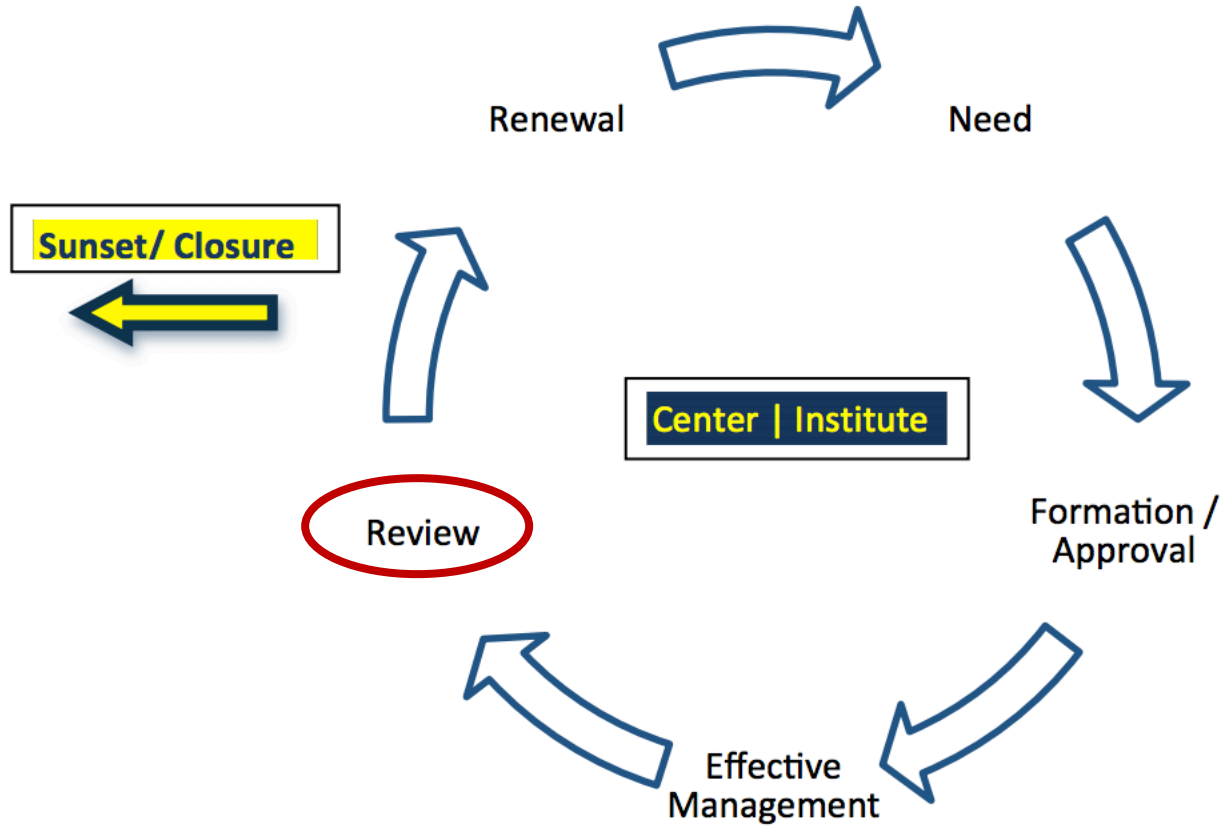
“Managing centers still a challenge despite decades of experience”

- How can we bring order to the clutter of centers and institutes already on campus?
- How do we design seed fund competitions to discover viable collaborations?
- What critical business and operations expertise do centers require?
- How can we improve the quality of administrative support across all of our centers?
- How can we create actionable, consistent metrics for multidisciplinary units?
- What organizational structures and funding policies foster objective sunseting?

Usual Cycle

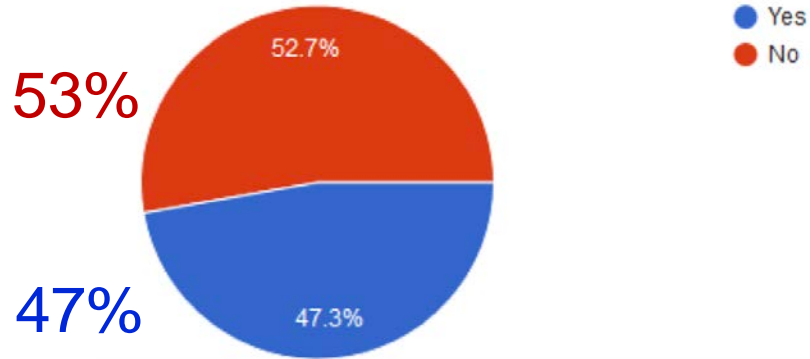


Usual Cycle

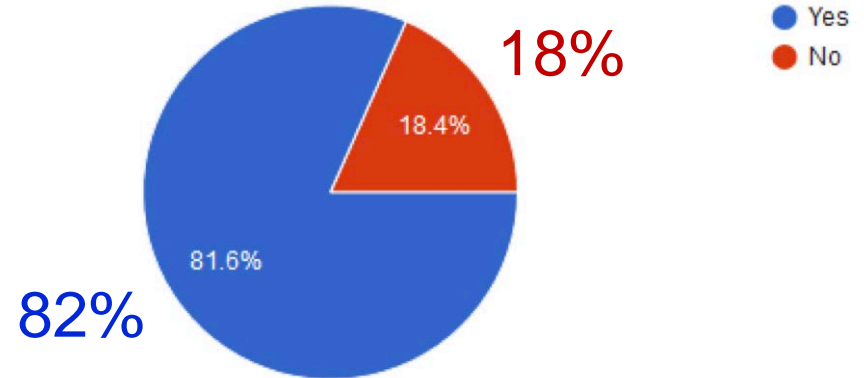


How are we doing on reviews? (N = 91)

Is there a policy that governs the review of a center/institute?



If yes, is the review procedure being followed?



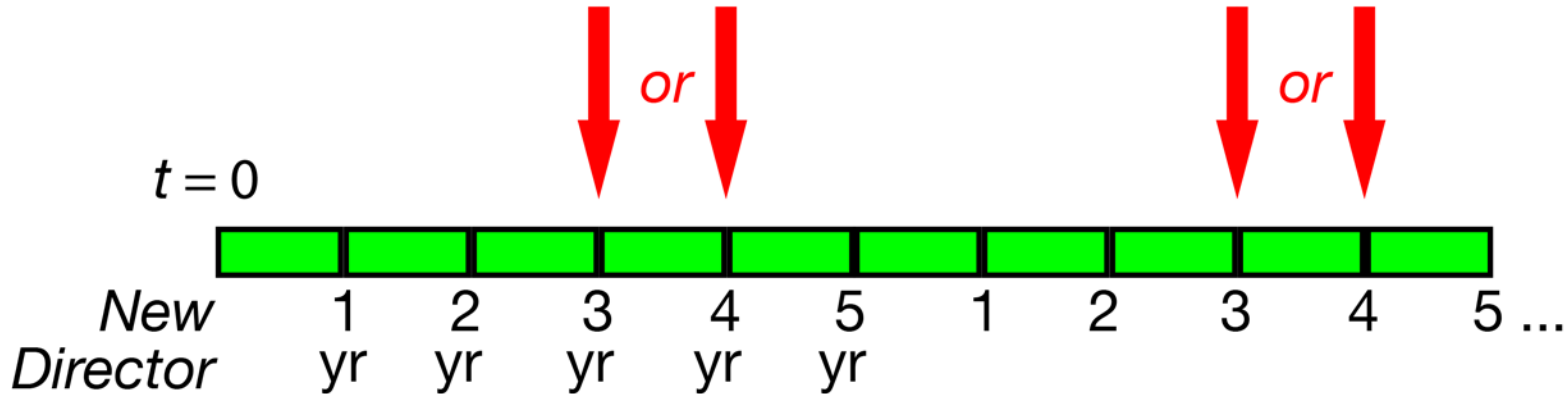
~39% are being reviewed following a policy

Does depend on category of center

- University or Campus Center
- School/College (Department) Center
- Faculty Member “filing cabinet” Center
- Sponsored Research Center
- “Fee for Service” / Administrative Center
- “Virtual” Center

Typical Timeline

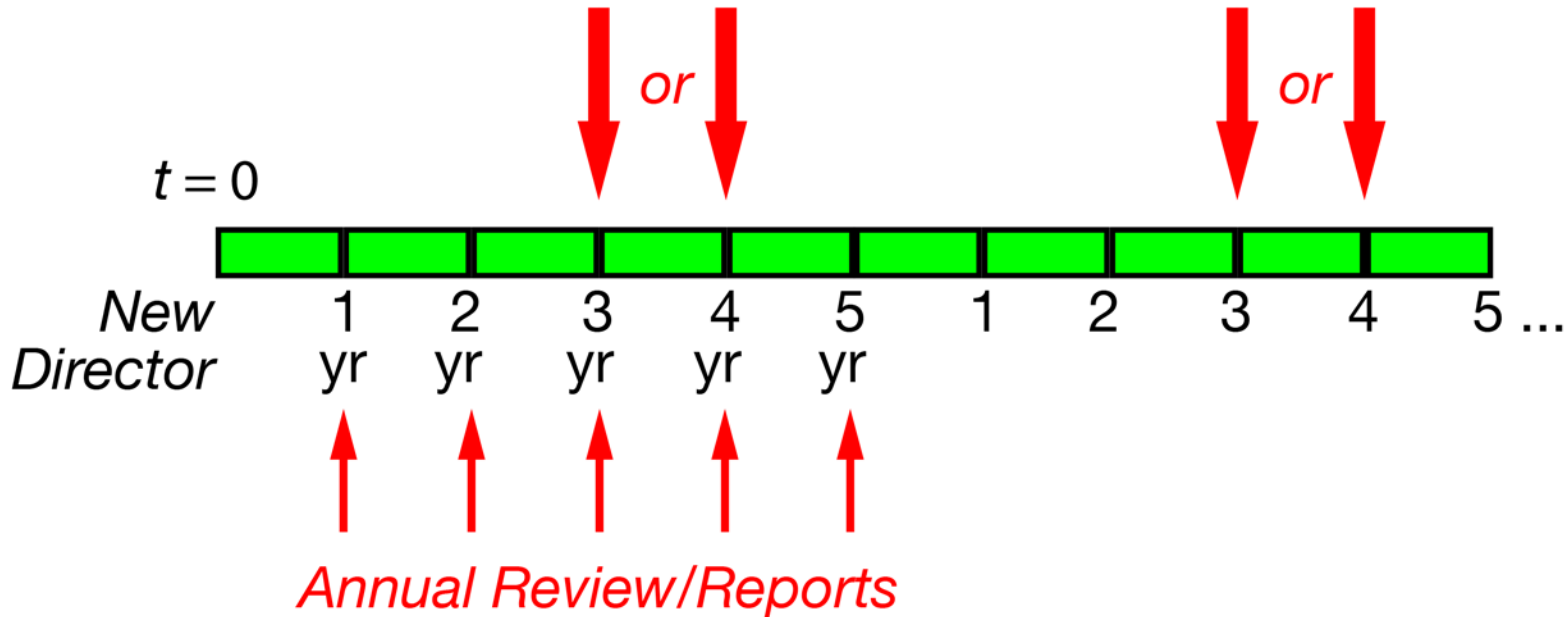
Review by Committee



- Typically every 5 years; phasing driven by allowing time for possible improvement
- (Case Study: UAB, all centers reviewed simultaneously every three years; large land grant univ. “center recertification inventory”)

Typical Timeline

Review by Committee



- Annual reviews are a best practice; reports to Chair / Dean / Vice Provost

Annual Reviews

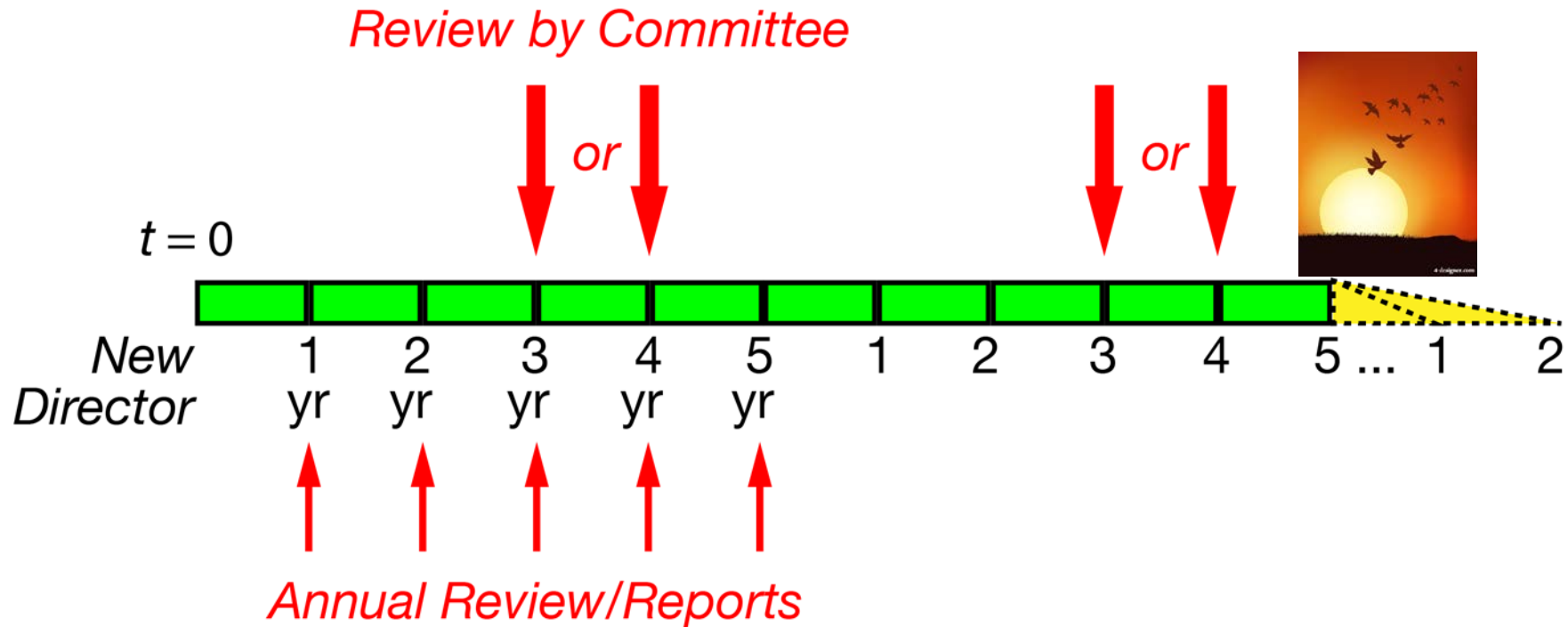
Review the management and performance as part of the annual budget conference

- Brief assessment of year's successes and challenges.
- Unit fulfilling mission for which it was established?
Following their strategic plan?
- Current budget (total GF, Research, Service, Endowment)
- Metrics past year; goals next two or three years
- Center grant and other external / internal funding sources
- Current unit space occupancy (square footage).
- Org. chart
- Staffing FTE
- Faculty and researchers participating
- Publications, honors/awards past year



Typical Timeline

12:38



- Ramp of “sunset” depends on size/complexity; ramp over two years seems like max.

Typical Metrics

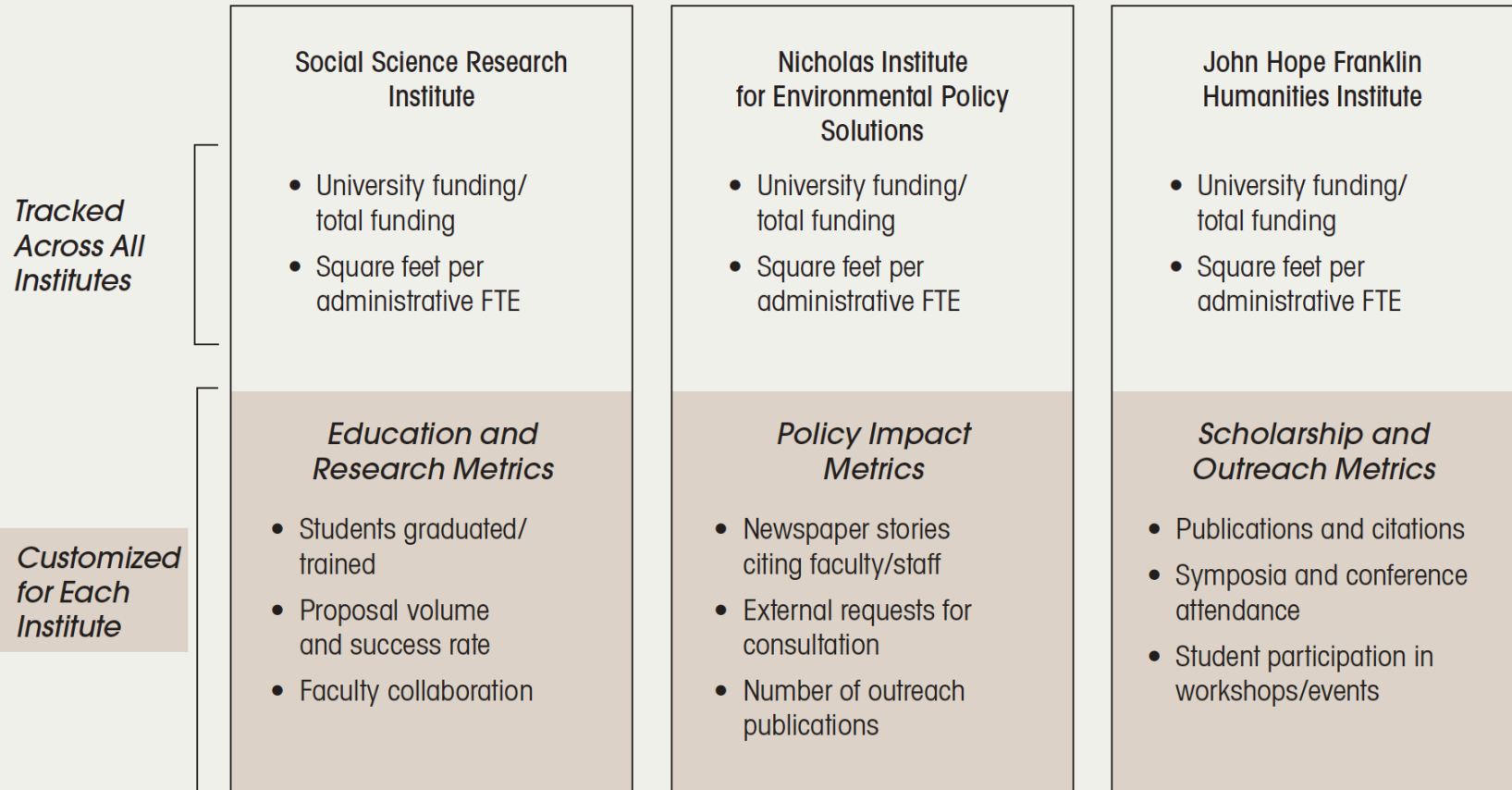
- **Funding:** ICR, ICR/grant expenditures, ICR/GF, Revenue raised/Admin cost, GF budget, total space, infrastructure & equipment (invested capital)
- **Operational Effectiveness:** total FTEs, staff FTEs, admin costs/total costs, faculty workload, admin audit
- **Research Effectiveness:** Grants submitted and awarded, publications, faculty tenure, creative activity
- **Visibility & Impact:** Media hits, faculty recruitment, program ranking, number of units participating...

Pick from a menu of metrics/measures:

Duke's University Institutes' Scorecards (Illustrative)

Fig. 5.2

“Center Scorecard Configurator”



Comprehensive Review: Objectives

- Has Center met the mandate for which it /was established?
- Is Center relevant to the mission of School, College, campus?
- Has Center been a good steward of its resources?
- Does the current format of the Center need to change, stay the same or change directions, and if so, what would be the future direction?
- How is the current leadership performing?

Typical inputs: self-study, survey, annual reviews

“Zombie” Centers

Typical University Problem:

Too Many Underperforming Centers Are Allowed to Persist

While centers are never intended to be permanent, universities rarely have objective and effective metrics to determine when a center has come to the end of its useful life. Underperforming centers linger on, underutilizing human, financial, and physical resources that could be better deployed for other uses. Sunsetting decisions become highly politicized, limiting the university’s ability to change course or explore new avenues of research.

– Competing in the Era of Big Bets

Sunsetting / Closing / Transitioning

Why?

- Can't sustain itself financially, either by internal or external funds
- Scholarly quality of work falls below threshold
- Original reason for center disappeared, no longer novel, absorbed into mainstream
- Unable to attract new faculty, students, dedicated leaders



Sunsetting / Closing / Transitioning

How?

- Liquidation of resources, return of assets to original stakeholders
- Redistribution of center resources
- Spin-off as separate entity
- Transform into an academic unit (now mainstream)

Sunsetting / Closing / Transitioning

Keep in mind:

- Completion of remaining grant / contract obligations
- Bridge support/relocation for students, staff, researchers
- Decommissioning facilities, particularly labs
- Transferring facilities and space to original stakeholders

Organizational Structure allowing for easier sunseting

Virtual Center

- Made clear that all resources are on loan
- Reviewed every three years; default is *not* to be renewed unless strongly justified
- Examples: UAB; Discovery Park at Purdue

Questions?



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