

Center for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis (CRAEA)

FAQ's

1. What are Research Centers?

Research Centers are programs funded by external grants, contracts & donations. Centers have a research agenda driven by faculty specialties.

2. What are the potential benefits of a creating a Center at MSU?

- Magnify research strengths
- Create vibrant communities for students, faculty and staff
- Increase visibility for grant applications
- Enhance faculty recruitment and retention
- Can leverage resources across and between universities
- Provide expertise for mentoring and advising
- Invites collaboration

3. What Centers currently exist at MSU?

- 4-H Center for Youth Development (2002)
- Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity (CAIRHE) (2016)
- Agricultural Marketing Policy Center (2001)
- Burton K. Wheeler Center for the Study of Public Issues in Montana (1988)
- Center for Bilingual/Multicultural Education (1982)
- Center for Biofilm Engineering (1990)
- Center for the Communication of Science (2015)
- Center for Computational Biology (1999)
- Center for the Discovery of Bioactive Compounds (1999)
- Center for Health and Safety Culture (2016)
- Center for Interdisciplinary Health Workforce Studies (2016)
- Thermal Biology Institute (2000)
- Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery (2014)
- Center for Native Health Partnerships (2005)
- Center for Research on Chronic Health Conditions in Rural Dwellers (2013)
- Energy Research Institute (2002)
- eXTreme Gravity Institute (2016)
- Humanities Institute (2005)
- Local Government Center (1989)
- Montana Engineering Education Research Center (2017)
- Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (1989)
- Montana University System Water Resources Center (1985)
- Optical Technology Center (1985)
- Pollinator Health Center (2016)

- Center for Learning and Teaching in the West (2005)
- Spatial Sciences Center (1989)
- Spectral Information Technologies Laboratory (Spectrum Laboratory) (1999)
- The Center for Entrepreneurship for the New West (2001)
- Wildlife Health and Disease Ecology (1994)
- Western Transportation Institute for Advanced Rural Transportation, Technology, Research and Education (1994)
- Other MSU campuses have 12 Centers and Institutes

4. What are a few examples of successful Centers?

Montana Institute on Ecosystems (2011)

National Science Foundation EPSCoR RII award of \$20M over 5 years
Co-Directors: Dr. Maury Valett (UM) and Dr. Cathy Whitlock (MSU)

Center for Biofilm Engineering (1990s)

EPSCoR - generated funding >\$75M, > 1050 publications, awarded 235 graduate students with advanced degrees, and partnered with more than 100 companies.

The Energy Research Institute (2002)

Sustained funding of >\$75M with projects on fossil fuels, alternatives, smart grids and energy security.

The Western Transportation Institute

Designated a top 10 National University Transportation Center in the U.S. Expenditures are >\$6M yearly.

5. How are Research Centers reviewed and approved?

Step 1. Faculty develops a proposal

Step 2. Intent to Plan is submitted to OCHE

Board of Regents in the early stages of the program/center/institute development process, campuses must complete and submit an Intent to Plan.

Step 3. Conference call with campus chief academic officers and Deputy Commissioner Cech.

Step 4. Intent to Plan is posted on the OCHE website

Step 5. Included on BOR agenda as an informational item

Step 6. Campus discussion and possible endorsement.

MSU Faculty Senate, Dean's Council, and other councils.

Step 7. Agenda item for discussion and a vote by the BOR.

6. What is the history of the CRAEA proposal?

2016: Drs. Vince Smith and Wendy Stock, (Dept. of Ag Econ and Econ; DAEE) developed the CRAEA proposal after winning a \$5.76 M grant from the Koch Foundation. These two faculty currently serve as co-directors of the grant award and are nationally recognized for their work in the area of regulation and policy.

May 2017: The [Intent to Plan](#) was submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. The Intent to Plan was discussed with Deputy Commissioner Cech during a subsequent conference call with MUS campus Chief Academic Officers.

September 2017: Intent to Plan proposal was provided to the regents as an information item at the BOR meeting in Butte.

CURRENTLY: Colleagues are asking for an endorsement by MSU Faculty Senate, Dean's Council, and potentially other councils.

FUTURE: Agenda item for discussion and vote by the BOR.

Only the BOR has authority to grant the designation of "Center"

7. Statement of Purpose by Co-Directors

The CRAEA is not a political organization, and we explicitly communicate to all of the researchers supported by the grant that we do not support research that aims to produce findings that align with any particular political affiliation or ideology. Rather, we support high-quality, objective research that informs our understanding in ways that can improve social well-being.

Koch Foundation funding and MSU relationships

1. Are there policies in place to prevent the Koch Foundation from influencing the hiring of personnel or faculty associated with the grant project?

All searches for personnel on the project follow the standard MSU hiring processes. Drs. Stock and Smith (co-directors of the grant) approve the hiring of the administrative assistant/business manager and other staff. The Koch Foundation has no influence over these hires.

The grant includes funding for two faculty positions in the DAEE, one in financial economics (to support the fast-growing [Financial Engineering](#) major here at MSU) and another in health economics (a growing field in our discipline for which the DAEE does not have adequate teaching capacity). The searches for these positions are following the standard processes for all faculty search at MSU, and neither Drs. Smith nor Stock are members of the search committees for those positions. The Koch Foundation has no influence over these hires.

The grant provides funding to support research assistantships for students in the DAEE Masters of Science in Applied Economics program. [These assistantships are awarded by the DAEE Graduate Affairs Committee](#). Dr. Stock and Smith are not members of this committee. Representatives of the Koch Foundation has no influence on the committee, or the awarding of these assistantships.

The grant supports visiting scholars to come to MSU for short- and long-term visits to conduct research with MSU faculty and present academic research seminars. These are [selected via a committee](#), and last year supported [several visits by faculty from an array of academic institutions](#) and working in an array of areas, from investigations of the [impacts of expanding access to long-acting reversible contraception among teenagers](#) to the investigations of the health benefits of Medicare expenditures. The Koch Foundation has no influence over the selection of visiting scholar appointments.

The faculty research fellowships are solicited via a campus-wide request for proposals and awarded by a committee consisting of the co-directors of the grant's [Internal Advisory Board](#), which includes the Deans of the Colleges of Business and Agriculture, the Head of the DAEE, the Head of the Department of Political Science, and an elected member of the DAEE Advisory Committee. The faculty research grants are solicited similarly and awarded by a committee that consists of the grant co-directors and the grant research fellows. All research fellowship and grant proposals are scored by these committees using a version of the NIH scoring guide (the scoring mechanism that the NIH uses in awarding its research grants). This is also the scoring system used by the Montana INBRE program, another group here at MSU that awards research grants to MSU faculty and students. More information about the [research fellowships](#), [research grants](#) and the [grant award process, criteria, and expectations](#) are available on this website (www.montana.edu/regecon).

2. Are there practices in place to prevent the Koch Foundation from influencing the scholarship generated by faculty associated with CRAEA?

All of the researchers supported by the grant are expected to submit their research to high-quality peer-reviewed academic journals, and all research results and methods will be made publically accessible. There is no requirement by the Koch Foundation to review research that is submitted for publication. MSU prohibits any practice that is inconsistent with academic freedom.

3. Does MSU have an obligation to fund the CRAEA Center if external funding is no longer available?

No such obligation exists. MSU often receives governmental and non-governmental grants that are considered “startup” funding for the initial hire of faculty and staff. These grants are always time and dollar limited. MSU has seen every scenario play out over the decades including the university providing base funding to a program, departments “mortgaging” future faculty lines, programs continuing with new grant monies, or programs being discontinued.

Drs. Stock and Smith plan to continue seeking external grants to support the initiative. Both been awarded numerous research grants in the past to support their work in labor economics, agricultural policy, and other areas. These include grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the US Department of Agriculture, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Ford Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and several other granting agencies. In addition, all of the research fellows supported by the grant are required to apply for external funding to sustain their research programs, and all of the research grantees supported by the grant are encouraged to do the same.

4. Does OCHE, BOR, MSU administration, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, or Staff Senate have the authority to prevent faculty for engaging in an area of research or from soliciting external funding from relevant agencies?

The review of the legitimate academic pursuits of a faculty member, or solicitation for external funding to support such research by any of these entities would be inconsistent with academic freedom.

Projects involving human subjects, animals, or biohazardous materials are reviewed by various Montana State University committees that ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.