



**University
Center/Institute
Closing Guidance**

Contents

Introduction	3
Definitions of University Centers and Institutes	3
Academic Centers and Institutes	3
Programmatic Centers and Institutes	4
Buildings and Instructional Sites	4
Procedures	4
Step 1: Document the Situation (the department).....	4
Step 2: Obtain Part 1 Approvals—University Centers and Institutes Closing Approval Form.....	5
Step 3: Report Impending Closure to the CHRO (vice president or dean).....	5
Step 4: Meet with OHR to Assess Closing Impact (the department).....	5
Step 5: Establish a Closing Plan (the department & OHR).....	6
Step 6: Secure Final Closing Approval.....	7
Step 7: Implement Closing	7
Step 8: End of Employment	8
Support Services	8
Job Search Assistance	8
Employee Assistance Program	8
Roles and Responsibilities.....	8
Related Resources.....	9

Introduction

While Clemson University strives to provide a stable and secure environment in which to work, budgetary and business needs occasionally necessitate the elimination of University centers and institutes. When a University center or institute closes, Clemson follows a course of action established to ensure fair, consistent and appropriate treatment of all affected employees of Clemson University, to include the following position types:

- Full-time and part-time regular FTE faculty and staff positions
- Full-time and part-time temporary faculty and staff positions

Generally, a center or institute closes for one or more of the following reasons, when there is no expectation that affected employees will be recalled:

- A budget reduction and/or funding changes
- Programmatic changes that result in the elimination of or decrease in services
- A reorganization that results in a shifting of responsibilities or elimination of certain tasks altogether
- Other organizational changes that necessitate an adjustment to staffing needs

This guidance document outlines the process by which positions are eliminated due to the closing of a University center or institute, including 1) assistance with placement of affected employees into new positions, 2) exploration of other personnel options, and 3) provision of timely written and verbal notice of the closing to affected employees.

Clemson University's [Policies and Procedures Manual](#) outlines general rules each staff and faculty member should understand and adhere to. Faculty are further governed by the rules outlined in the [Clemson University Faculty Manual](#).

Definitions of University Centers and Institutes

The following definitions apply to centers and institutes at Clemson University¹

Academic Centers and Institutes

By definition, academic centers and institutes are a means of organizing faculty to conduct and disseminate research and scholarship and contribute to the education of students, public service, and economic development as appropriate.

The success of a center or institute is measured by its ability to generate external funding [proposals submitted, awards received, expenditures], conduct research leading to innovation [disclosures, patents, licensures, start-ups], disseminate the research and scholarship [presentations, publications, citations], and provide opportunities for educational experiences [undergraduate student research,

¹ Definitions adopted by the Clemson University Board of Trustees on April 11, 2014.

creative inquiry, graduate assistantships], and public service [community involvement, outreach, service learning].

Programmatic Centers and Institutes

A formal program that may or may not be funded externally that exists for a specific purpose and is organized by a faculty member(s) within the college may be called a center or institute. For example, the Advanced Placement Summer Institute or the Clemson Thinks2 Faculty Institutes are programs with specific purposes that use the title of institute because of the length of time (more than a workshop or a conference) or formal structure (representing a national model). The Community University Service Alliance provides a structure that guides the University in its service learning initiatives.

Buildings and Instructional Sites

The terms centers and institutes also are used for identifying stand-alone buildings and instructional sites. For example, the Brooks Center for the Performing Arts, the Watt Innovation Center, the Clemson Architecture Center-Charleston, and the Equine Center are places on and off campus that are called centers. These are formal sites that provide a variety of services for students and faculty. A center or institute may host classes or offices, be a place for advising, or for innovative teaching. The Sullivan Center in the College of Health Education and Human Development provides health services to the campus and the community and serves as a place or site for experiential student learning and for faculty to conduct applied research.

For more definitions, please see the [OHR Glossary of Terms](#).

Procedures

When it becomes clear that it may be in the best interest of the department to close a center or institute, the department² should follow the steps outlined below. The positions and University areas associated with each step are noted in parentheses. For further step-by-step assistance with a closing, see the [University Center/Institute Closing Checklist](#).

Note: No steps toward closing—including notification of affected employees—should be taken until the vice president or dean of the affected area has consulted with the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) and a closing plan has been established and approved.

Step 1: Document the Situation (the department)

The first step in gaining approval to close a center or institute is to document the need to close using Part 1 of the [University Center/Institute Closing Approval form](#). In Part 1, the department will be asked to provide the following information:

- a. The name of the center/institute

² Typically, it is the dean, the department chair and/or the director of the center/institute who plans and implements the closing of a center or institute. As the positions involved vary by case, this document uses the term “the department” to refer to the individual or individuals managing a closing.

- b. The need and rationale for the closing
- c. Background—details specific to the closing
- d. The number of employees affected
- e. Information on affected employees, including:
 - i. Position type
 - ii. Name of employee
 - iii. Position title
 - iv. Employee ID
 - v. Years of service
- f. The positions affected
- g. The anticipated date of the closure
- h. The projected notice period (number of days between announcement and closing)
- i. Position openings (current and upcoming) within the college and/or division
- j. Any consideration of a voluntary incentive program
- k. Potential impact of closing on customers

Step 2: Obtain Part 1 Approvals—University Centers and Institutes Closing Approval Form

Part 1 is the initial closing approval, which certifies that the approver has reviewed the rationale for and anticipated impact of the closing and approves the closing **pending development of a closing plan**.

Required Part 1 approvals:

- for academic centers/institutes—the provost, the dean and the director of the center/institute
- for non-academic centers/institutes—the vice president and the director of the center/institute

Step 3: Report Impending Closure to the CHRO (vice president or dean)

Once the need to close a center or institute has been established, the impending closure should be reported to the CHRO without delay. The department is asked to communicate through the VP or the dean when apprising the CHRO of the need to close a center or institute.

The VP/dean should be prepared to provide the initial closing approvals and information relevant to the closing at this time by submitting Part 1 of the University Center/Institute Closing Approval Form.

Note: Departments should not communicate closures to employees at this early stage in the process. Consultation with OHR, as outlined below, is required prior to communication to ensure confidentiality, accuracy and care throughout the process of informing affected employees of a closure.

Step 4: Meet with OHR to Assess Closing Impact (the department)

Once apprised of the need to close, the CHRO designates an OHR representative to assist the department with developing a plan for the closure. The OHR representative initiates a meeting with the individual requesting the closure. OHR works closely with the department throughout the process to

ensure that the closing is administered in a manner that best meets the needs of both the University and the affected employees.

During the initial meeting between the department and OHR, OHR asks a number of questions designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the closing and gather information that will assist the department through the closing process. Much of the discussion will revolve around information listed in Step 1 above.

Impacted Position Types

It is important at this stage to evaluate the position types that may be affected by the closing in order to identify the appropriate procedure by which each employee will be reassigned, reemployed or terminated.

- Covered employees: the Reduction in Force Policy
- Temporary staff and post-docs: the Temporary Employee Separation Guidance
- Faculty/special faculty (excepting post-docs): the *Faculty Manual*

Step 5: Establish a Closing Plan (the department & OHR)

After the initial meeting, OHR continues to work with the department to explore the available closing options and support resourced and establish a closing plan that meets the needs of the department and the employees affected by the closing.

Voluntary Incentive Programs

If the department is interested in implementing a voluntary incentive program, OHR's Benefits unit will help the department establish criteria and eligibility.

There are two incentive options—the Retirement Incentive Plan (RIP) and the Voluntary Separation Program (VSP). The RIP allows Clemson to purchase service credit on behalf of employees who are currently eligible to retire or purchase the amount of time necessary to make employees eligible to retire. The VSP offers a financial incentive to eligible employees, allowing them to voluntarily separate from the University and receive a separation payment of one year's base salary.

As with other closing details, departments should not communicate incentive programs without prior consultation with and program approval from the Office of Human Resources.

Communication Plan

All individuals affected by a closing must be notified. OHR assists with the preparation of a communication plan, which should include verbal and written notice to affected employees and convey the following information:

- The reason for the center and/or institute closing
- The effective date
- Contacts and resources within OHR for the purpose of obtaining benefits information and employment assistance, including:
 - Assistance through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
 - Information on and assistance with the termination, transfer or continuation of benefits.

- Assistance with answering job application questions, as well as applying for open positions. Please note that assistance from OHR's Recruitment unit *does not* guarantee job placement.

Written Notice

Written notice in the form of a personal letter is recommended for all Clemson University employees affected by the closing, including temporary and regular FTE positions. The letter should include the information outlined above along with any other key information related to the closing. The department chair/director should submit the letter to OHR for approval, which includes review by the CHRO, legal counsel and the vice president or dean of the area.

Step 6: Secure Final Closing Approval

Before announcing the closing or notifying any impacted employees, the department must first obtain final approval for the closing from divisional leadership and the CHRO. As listed above, approvals include: the vice president; the dean or, for non-academic closings, the director of the center or institute; and finally the CHRO. Each approver reviews components relative to their area, considering both the rationale for and the impact of the closure (financial, personnel, legal), as well as the proposed timeline and communication of the closure. The [University Center/Institute Closing Approval form](#) is available for use in obtaining approval.

Step 7: Implement Closing

Employee Notification

Before a center or institute closes but after receiving OHR's approval to implement the closing, the dean, department chair or designee should meet with affected employees to notify them of the closure. Written notice should be given as soon as possible in advance of the separation date in order to better assist the affected employees. While OHR recommends a minimum of 14 calendar days' notice, the exact date is determined by the VP in consultation with OHR.

If the impacted employees make up a large group, OHR may advise the department to make an announcement to the large group, while having an OHR representative available to answer questions and meet with individuals on a one-on-one basis. If fewer than five employees are impacted, it may be easier for the department chair to meet with each employee individually; however, OHR highly recommends including an OHR representative in these meetings.

After verbally notifying employees of a closure, departments should follow up with written notice as outlined in step 4 above.

OHR Support Services

Once the department has notified affected employees of the impending closing, OHR meets with the employees to discuss the resources and support services available through the University and outside resources. OHR works with employees to evaluate their skills and qualifications in order to assist them finding other employment. (See the Support Services section below).

Step 8: End of Employment

The employment relationship ends either on the last day of the notification period or as a result of the employee otherwise separating from employment or accepting another position with the University, whichever occurs first.

Support Services

Job Search Assistance

It is advantageous for the employee to begin the process of searching for a new job immediately after notification of the center or institute closing. Employees are encouraged to meet with an employment recruiter in OHR’s Recruitment unit to discuss employment options and learn details about the search process. The employment recruiter assists the employee with application completion, resume development, interviewing techniques, job search techniques, upcoming job openings and networking. Job search assistance does not guarantee placement.

Employee Assistance Program

Recognizing the dignity, value, and contributions of each member of the faculty and staff, Clemson provides support through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for any employee experiencing personal difficulties. Clemson’s Employee Assistance Program is provided through Deer Oaks EAP, an outside resource. Available to Clemson University employees and their dependents/household members, the program provides a variety of health and wellness, counseling, referral and consultation services. The resources are completely confidential, and there is no cost for most services. EAP programs can be accessed through the toll-free Helpline at 1-866-327-2400.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsible Party	List of Responsibilities
Deans & department chairs (or designees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When contemplating a closing, determine the impact by gathering the information listed in Step 1 of the Procedures section above.
Human Resources (HR) Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help facilitate understanding of the closure process • Ensure the appropriate individuals (HR Partners, Employee and Faculty Relations) are aware of the closure
Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review requests to close centers and institutes and provide initial guidance • Designate an OHR representative to assist the department chair through the closure process • Review all documentation prepared for the impacted employees
OHR Employee / Faculty Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with department chair/center head, develop the closing plan • Provide guidance to employees in positions affected by the closing • Provide overall guidance for the communication of the closing to the impacted employee, including preparation of written notice • Attend closing meetings and work closely with employees to explore employment options

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact directors of related academic programs when faculty positions are impacted
OHR Employee Retention and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For individuals separating from employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate offboarding, including all tasks on the employee’s Separation from Employment Checklist and the supervisor’s Separation Processing Checklist ○ Schedule and conduct exit interviews
OHR Recruitment Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist employees impacted by closure with employment options and job search as outlined in the Support Services section of this document.
Benefits Manager (OHR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance on voluntary incentive program options • Determine criteria and eligibility requirements for voluntary incentive programs • Provide benefits counseling for impacted employees as needed
Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve closing of a center or institute • In consultation with OHR, determine the closing date • Review and approve written notice to affected employees

Related Resources

<p>University Policies and Documents</p> <p>Grievance Policy Separation from Employment Policy (pending) Guidelines for Separating from Employment (pending) CU Retirement Guidelines (pending) OHR Glossary of Terms</p>
<p>University Forms and Systems</p> <p>University Center/Institute Closing Approval form University Center/Institute Closing Checklist</p>

THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED AS GUIDANCE TO ASSIST IN THE CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR EMPLOYEES. THE GUIDE DOES NOT CREATE A CONTRACT, IMPLIED OR EXPRESSED, WITH ANY CLEMSON UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES, WHO ARE EMPLOYEES AT WILL. CLEMSON UNIVERSITY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THIS GUIDE IN WHOLE OR IN PART, AT ANY TIME, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE UNIVERSITY.