

CONSTITUTION:

VISION SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER

of

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Original version approved 1993; Revised 2021

Preamble: The UAB Vision Science Research Center (VSRC) was initiated as a departmental center in 1978 by the UAB School of Optometry. In 1996, the VSRC was one of 10 UAB centers selected as an inaugural University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Center (UWIRC). Throughout its history, the VSRC has shown consistent growth, faculty involvement, and extramural funding. As of 2021, the number of UAB faculty involved in vision research had increased to nearly 100 members drawn from 15 different academic departments and 5 schools/colleges. This updated Constitution is intended to promote the orderly development and continued expansion of this outstanding program.

Mission: The mission of the VSRC is to support the research programs of its members through the maintenance of shared facilities, to foster interdisciplinary collaboration in vision research, and to serve the university, community, state and region through education and outreach to promote vision health and the value of vision research.

Vision: The VSRC will provide leadership in research in all areas of vision research. The Center will strive to improve the competitiveness of its members through the support of shared facilities and educational programs and will support research and community outreach.

VSRC CONSTITUTION

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the “UAB Vision Science Research Center (VSRC) of The University of Alabama at Birmingham”, and as such participates in the non-profit tax status of the University.

Article II. Location

The principal address of the Center shall be the principal campus address of the VSRC Director at The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama 35294. Activities of the VSRC may be in other facilities on the UAB campus, elsewhere in Birmingham, the State of Alabama, the United States or abroad as needed. Such off-campus sites of activity will be considered temporary extensions of the VSRC.

Article III. Purpose

The purpose of the VSRC is to promote vision science research, facilitate collaborative research, and add to the scientific knowledge of the eye and central visual pathways leading to improved diagnosis, treatment and prevention of all disorders affecting the visual system.

Specific Aims

The specific scientific aims of the VSRC are:

1. to create a center of excellence in vision science that, through its research and related activities, will constitute a major resource for the generation of new knowledge and the training of new vision scientists,
2. to increase the efficiency and productivity of research conducted by individual member investigators, and
3. to foster collaborative research projects which are beyond the scope of

individual laboratories.

The specific administrative aims of the VSRC are:

1. to provide investigators with research support services,
2. to facilitate the dissemination of research results and ideas, and
3. to develop public and private sources of support and philanthropy.

Article IV. Membership

All vision researchers at The University of Alabama at Birmingham who meet the regular membership criteria as defined in the BY-LAWS are eligible to become VSRC members and have voting rights and access to the programs and resources of the VSRC as laid out in the BY-LAWS.

Article V. Organization

1. **The Director** of the VSRC will be appointed by and reports to the UAB Vice President for Research.
2. **The Director** of the VSRC will be responsible for:
 1. coordinating the activities of the VSRC,
 2. chairing meetings of the VSRC Executive Committee,
 3. organizing and submitting applications for VSRC support,
 4. working closely with the VSRC Executive Committee to effectively administer and manage the allocation of funds and to determine priorities for the VSRC.

If necessary, the UAB Vice President for Research will appoint an Acting or Interim Director to serve in the absence or incapacity of the Director.

3. **The VSRC Executive Committee** is chaired by the VSRC Director, and

composed of all NEI P30 Core Directors including the Administrative Core Director, and two at-large members who will serve a term of 5 years. New at large members, or reappointments will be determined by the VSRC Executive Committee during the 5th year of service of the current at large members, with their input. The VSRC Executive Committee participates in policy decisions, and planning for changes in priorities and directions. The Executive Committee will work with the Director on the priorities listed in **Article V. 2.**

Article VI. Relationship of the VSRC to other Vision Research-Related Activities at UAB

An integral part of the VSRC concept is the fostering of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration in research activities, outreach, and where applicable, patient care. It is not the intent of the VSRC to govern all vision research- or clinically-related activities at UAB.

Article VII. Action Statement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We will follow the guidelines of the UAB Strategic Diversity Plan (<https://www.uab.edu/dei/about/strategic-diversity-plan>). The VSRC celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusiveness. We embrace these pillars of excellence as crucial to healthy people and healthy communities.

We believe that:

- Our core values are strengthened when all members have a voice and are encouraged to contribute.
- Every member of humanity has a contribution to make to the whole. It is our duty to encourage and promote that contribution.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are an active process that requires continuous commitment to promote healthy people, healthy communities and the overall success of present and future generations.

Our values are realized through actions by:

- Fostering a culture of open-mindedness, compassion, and inclusiveness among individuals and groups.
- Actively building a community whose members have diverse cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences.
- Providing effective leadership in the development, coordination, implementation and assessment of a comprehensive array of programs and services to promote diversity and understanding of differences.
- Creating and maintaining opportunities for engagement, education, and discourse related to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Identifying competencies that are essential to creating environments enriched with diverse views and people.
- Providing educational opportunities toward the development of socially responsible leaders who are willing to engage in the courageous and critical discourse and decision-making that can lead to transformational change toward learning, achievement, healthy people and healthy communities.
- Honoring freedom of expression, ideals of citizenry, and civility of discourse as fundamental to personal, professional, and organizational growth.
- Challenging and dismantling systemic oppression.
- Reaching beyond the VSRC to establish beneficial relationships with individual, institutional and community partners who share mutual goals and interests.

Article VIII. Amendments to the Constitution

Proposed amendments, additions or alterations to this Constitution may be initiated from the VSRC Executive Committee or may be proposed by any five (5) regular members (as

defined in the BY-LAWS) who present their proposed change at a meeting of the Executive Committee. Requests to present proposed changes must be made at least 3 days prior to the date of the scheduled meeting. After the meeting, within three (3) days, the proposed changes will be distributed to all members for consideration and to provide feedback. Within 30 days after the distribution, regular members will cast a vote. A quorum of the regular membership is required for the vote to be valid and a 2/3 majority of these members is required for the vote to pass. The changes officially become a part of the Constitution when the VSRC Director and the UAB Vice President for Research approves the proposed changes by signing the approval page.

VSRC BY-LAWS

I. General:

The VSRC Executive Committee may establish any committees and task forces necessary to carry out its duties, as well as define the responsibilities of those entities. There will be three permanent committees established to govern the Vision Science Research Center:

(1) The VSRC Executive Committee as defined in the constitution (**Article V. 2.**). This committee will meet at least 6 times per calendar year, will be provided an agenda in advance of the meeting that includes input from the VSRC membership, will keep and distribute minutes of the meeting to all VSRC members, and will establish a day and time for a regular bi-monthly meeting; (2) The VSRC Internal Advisory Committee (IAC) consisting of the VSRC Director and the Deans of the Schools of Optometry and Medicine or their designee(s), and the Chairs of the Departments of Optometry and Vision Science, and Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences; and (3) The VSRC External Advisory Committee (EAC) will consist of three distinguished, internationally recognized faculty actively involved in vision research at other institutions. The EAC members should represent diverse topical areas of vision science research. The EAC membership will be determined by a nomination process open to all VSRC Regular members, followed by a vote of the Executive Committee with input from the VSRC Internal Advisory Committee. The VSRC Director will contact each potential EAC member beginning with the highest vote count and proceeding to the lowest vote count until the three positions are filled. The highest-ranking candidate will be the committee chair. The VSRC Director will act as the liaison to the EAC and the EAC will report to the EC. The members of the EAC will receive honoraria, as determined by the EC, for their participation and the preparation of a written summary and report of findings. The EAC will also keep minutes of its activity and distribute a

summary report to the VSRC Director, who will then make the report available to the VSRC Executive Committee and Internal Advisory Committee. New EAC reviews will be done at the request of the EC after consultation and approval of the IAC. It is expected that any particular duties and responsibilities of each committee, over and above those spelled out in the Constitution will be developed and recorded as stated in BY-LAWS Section V.

II. **Membership:**

A. General requirements are that members will:

1. have a demonstrated interest in research related to vision, or show clear evidence of engagement in a vision research collaboration and
2. have refereed research publications, and
3. **provide a CV documenting their accomplishments in vision research.**

Individuals interested in being a VSRC member will provide the Director with evidence that the above conditions have been met. The Director, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will be responsible for appointments, categorizations and terminations of membership. Members will be reevaluated every UWIRC funding cycle, one year before the end of the cycle through a request for member updated information and reconsideration by the Executive Committee.

B. Membership categories:

1. **Affiliated:** Any Individual who meets all the criteria in the BY-LAWS Section II. A. and has a terminal graduate or professional degree (excluding graduate students).
Affiliated members do not have voting rights.
2. **Regular:** UAB faculty who meet all of the criteria in the BY-LAWS Section II. A.
Regular members do have voting rights.

C. Other Leadership Roles

1. An Associate Director or other leadership role(s) may be appointed or removed by the VSRC Director with approval of the VSRC Executive Committee. These individuals report to the Director and the duration of service is determined by the EC in consultation with the Director.

III. National Eye Institute P30 (NEI P30) Core Grant and Governance

The NEI P30 Core Grant is an independent but highly related support critical to the success of the VSRC. Its governance and day-to-day workings are beyond the purview of the VSRC. In the event that there is a lapse in funding for the NEI P30, the Directors of the NEI P30 Cores will remain on the Executive Committee. VSRC members and their associates will have access to the NEI P30 Cores as stipulated in the NEI P30 grant.

IV. Educational Activities of the VSRC - Visiting Scholars Program (VSP), Other VSRC Seminar Series, and Other Educational Opportunities

The Visiting Scholars Program brings leading scholars and research scientists who are outside of the university to the campus and the VSRC for the benefit of the VSRC members, post-doctoral trainees, graduate students and all interested UAB faculty. Visiting scholars will present seminars and participate in individual or small group discussions. A Director of the Visiting Scholars Program (VSP) will be recommended by the VSRC Director, and approved by majority vote of the VSRC Executive Committee. The Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science's "Loris and Rich Lecture Series in Ophthalmology and Visual Science" complements the VSP by bringing in leading scientists from around the world. The Vision Research at UAB

Seminar series showcases vision research at UAB and other relevant speakers. This seminar series is designed to foster collaboration among UAB vision scientists and to provide awareness of services and facilities that may not be directly related to vision research, but can be applied to vision research and are available to UAB researchers. The VSRC will support other educational activities for students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty development, and community outreach as allowed by the budget.

V. Changes in the BY-LAWS

Changes in the BY-LAWS may be initiated by any two regular members of the VSRC and must be circulated in writing to the VSRC Executive Committee at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled EC meeting. The VSRC Executive Committee will discuss the merits of the proposed changes and will provide a recommendation to the VSRC Internal Advisory Committee. Majority approval of the VSRC Internal Advisory Committee is required to implement the proposed changes.

Approvals:

July 16, 2021

Date



Director,
Vision Science Research Center on
behalf of the VSRC Executive Committee

July 15, 2021

Date



Vice President for Research,
The University of Alabama at Birmingham