

UCEDD Tip Sheets

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ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES
THE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & RESEARCH NETWORK



A project of AUCD, in partnership with ACL, to strengthen the network of UCEDDs

Admin Essentials

Changing Admin Homes

What is Addressed in this Tip Sheet?

This tip sheet explores how centers have switched administrative homes and what lessons have been learned in the process. It discusses some strategies and best practices provided in a virtual roundtable of three content experts; UCEDD Directors who have switched administrative homes within the past decade discussed what worked, ongoing considerations, and what happened after the move.

This tip sheet covers basic information about the required relationship between a UCEDD and a University before outlining advice from three content experts who joined an Admin Essentials Roundtable to share their experience moving administrative homes. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this topic, the conversation was not archived, and this tip sheet does not include their names or centers. For additional information on the roundtable conversation, contact [Sarah DeMaio](#).

Why is it Important

The DD Act mandates that “the Centers shall be interdisciplinary education, research, and public service units of universities [...] or public or not-for-profit entities associated with universities that engage in core functions [...] addressing, directly or indirectly, 1 or more areas of emphasis” (42 USC 15063 Sec. 153(a)(1)).

The Funding Opportunity Announcements further require that UCEDDs share “how the UCEDD participates in broader University academic programs that prepare personnel in a wide range of social and community roles that will contribute to the accommodation and inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.”

Additional specifications further establish the importance of and requirements for the UCEDD’s relationship to the university to achieve the goals of the DD Act. It is thus important for UCEDDs to be in the right administrative home to most effectively carry out their work and the core functions mandated in the DD Act.

Deciding to Move

Our content experts stressed that moving administrative home is a considerable undertaking and not one to approach lightly. There are a lot of factors to consider and questions to ask yourself. First and foremost is trying to determine if the new administrative home will be a better fit. All administrative homes come with benefits and drawbacks. Be sure that you consider the advantages and disadvantages of both of the relevant administrative units.

Moving doesn’t have to be for negative reasons with your administrative home – it can be for the potential gains that come with the move. For example, one UCEDD moved from the Department of Pediatrics to a freestanding center within the School of Medicine. There were no real problems with pediatrics but being housed there hampered the Center’s ability to work across the lifespan and be an interdisciplinary center. Being a more independent entity within the hospital allowed for more efficient use of time and a better focus on health systems.

There are other aspects to consider while finding a new match. One UCEDD, notably, found their new administrative home to be a better fit for social justice issues and their work promoting equity.

As you consider moving, the content experts recommended that you continue working on your relationship with your current administrative home. It may be possible to get the things you’re looking for where you are by strengthening relationships and negotiating. Naturally, there will be limitations, but engaging in these conversations can help reduce negative perceptions of your motivation for moving.

Case Study: Finding the Right Fit

One UCEDD started in the academic medical Center and tried three different locations, seeking the right fit. The Department of Pediatrics did not align with the UCEDD’s lifespan mission. In other departments, there were also mission mismatches; the UCEDD didn’t train physicians, but that was a big focus for the rest of the medical Center. Additionally, the medical Center meant less fiscal freedom. The UCEDD had to follow medical Center hiring freezes and layoffs and submit to scrutiny of external grant funding. There was also pressure for faculty to cover areas where they had no experience nor interest - that lacked a clear disability component. Given this, the UCEDD decided to look for a home outside the medical Center and ultimately found a better fit.

Important Considerations

Relationships

Moving administrative homes is a lot of work and requires strong relationships to make it happen. Often, these relationships are developed prior to when moving is seriously considered. These relationships from partnerships and collaborations may guide the decision of where and when a Center moves. One Center at the roundtable had multiple partnerships and activities with the new administrative home, including disability studies courses, which made it an obvious choice.

Other times, you have to start from scratch. As you look for a new administrative home, content experts urged considering academic fit. You do not want to be unwittingly siloed into one part of the lifespan or a single discipline. If you are starting a relationship with a potential new administrative home, start by learning more about them and teaching them about your UCEDD. Meet people, share your priorities, and how the UCEDD can help the new administrative home. Educating them about what your UCEDD does may help them to realize on their own that the move would be beneficial. As part of this, work to improve your exposure and visibility of your UCEDD across the institution.

It is essential to pay attention to your current home and not neglect these relationships. Consider their goals and try to work alongside them, not against them. Maintaining the relationship with your starting administrative home can be a critical factor in accomplishing the move. One UCEDD at the roundtable developed an MOU between the two administrative units to ensure that positive relationships and collaborations continued after the move. As part of this agreement, they formed an advisory committee of faculty from both departments to help formalize a long-term relationship, even as the UCEDD moved administrative homes. Faculty from the initial department wanted to stay involved; having a formal agreement for continued partnership provided essential reassurances that helped convince the initial department to sign off on the move.

“So by the time we had laid the foundation, I was totally open and transparent with where we were headed and what we wanted to accomplish.”

Timing

Our content experts agreed that it is important not to rush the move. It takes time to have the necessary conversations. Occasionally, there'll be a natural window of opportunity for such a move. There are opportunities you can seize based on shared interests and goals that help establish a stronger relationship. You might be able to partner on a project to have a more significant impact than either could have individually. For example, one UCEDD was instrumental in getting an autism legislative task force set up in their state. The project helped foster better connections and made them a more appealing partner. They could point to what the project was doing for them and what it did for the state to help make their case.

Some UCEDDs see an opportunity in times of transition. A departing Dean might not be as committed to keeping the Center or want to ensure the process is complete before the new Dean starts. On the

other hand, a departing Dean might want to leave the decision and implementation to their successor. If they opt to leave the choice to the next Dean, use the time to have conversations with other important players to help lay the groundwork for the move.

A change in UCEDD Director might also provide an opportunity to switch administrative homes by allowing plans to be more explicit. A departing director might have more freedom to ask for the move explicitly. Choosing a new director from the desired administrative home is another strategy used to build momentum toward a move.

While there are natural windows, you can also create good timing through gradual and long-term conversations. Conversations with all the players can eventually get you to what feels like an inevitable time to request the move.

Communication

Each of our content experts stressed communication as a critical element for successfully moving administrative homes. Communication is vital for developing partnerships and making clear the benefits of the move. Stress the positive rather than dwelling on issues or problems. You can be grateful to your initial administrative home for all that they have done while simultaneously making a case for why the move is a good thing. One expert recommended framing the move as an evolution rather than a departure or separation.

The content experts shared some positive reasons to move that you can share in these conversations:

- Moving can make it easier to build partnerships and projects with other facets of the university or with community members.
- Greater independence can improve visibility and exposure, thus advancing the work of the UCEDD.

Have a plan for communicating who you are and what more you could do if you moved administrative homes. You will encounter people who don't know what the Center does, so be ready to explain the importance of your UCEDD for the university and the state. Our content experts recommended having these conversations before you even broach the topic of a move and to ground the discussions in the substantive, day-to-day work you're doing.

We kept everything simple, positive, and grateful for what they had done for us for the period we had been there.

Communication can happen through more formal channels too. As mentioned earlier, the deans of the two involved schools developed an MOU about the long-term relationships with the UCEDD. While it prolonged the move, it was an important tool to accomplish the ultimate goal.

Is There a Champion?

Changing administrative homes doesn't require a champion, but it can prove helpful. One UCEDD benefitted from a Dean that had been a UCEDD director in another state. He understood what a UCEDD was and wanted it in his College. As such, he negotiated a good deal for them in terms of returns on indirects. At another UCEDD, a vice-chancellor took a keen interest in the UCEDD and its work, helping the Center move despite a reluctance from their then administrative home.

Process/Strategies

A variety of strategies were employed or recommended by our content experts. These include:

- Emphasize mutual benefit, how the UCEDD and the move are necessary for the state and university. You don't want to look self-serving.
- Ground your conversations in your Center's mission, vision, goals, objectives, and work. Be ready to explain what the UCEDD is to people who don't understand what you do.
- Demonstrate how your goals align with the work and priorities of where you want to move. Share how you can help.
- Be open and transparent about where you're heading and what you want to accomplish. Be positive about this future rather than negative about the past.
- Involve AUCD and your ACL project officer. A statement that the UCEDD is an independent center can make the Dean more open to discussion.

Content experts shared about some of the administrative processes necessary to make the process happen:

- Switching administrative homes involves a lot of paperwork. Notably, the relevant department will likely have to do relinquishment paperwork.
- Depending on how your contracts are written, you may or may not have to make extensive updates and changes. If your contracts are with the university and coming through a centralized financial system, you may not need to modify contracts much. You should check with all relevant players and the University financial department to make any necessary changes.
- You will have to revise and renegotiate your MOU, as it likely identifies an administrative home and its role. Revision might not be pressing if the MOU is with the university more broadly, but you should review it before the next five-year application cycle.

Challenges

Our content experts shared some setbacks they encountered while moving. You might encounter a Dean or department that doesn't want the UCEDD to move to another administrative home. Sometimes, you can help it happen anyway by going higher up the organizational hierarchy, such as the Provost. They might not, however, want to get involved and prefer to leave it to the deans. In this case, don't rush it. Maintain open and friendly discussions. It's essential to help both sides feel like they're gaining, or at least not losing, something from this move.

Moving is a big undertaking, so expect some surprising obstacles along the way. For example, one UCEDD had a minor issue with the human resources department because the UCEDD moved July 1, with the start of the fiscal year. Not expecting the large influx of new people, HR scrambled to put people in positions, placing them in whatever was open and had the same salary—filtering through this

and sorting people into the correct positions took some time.

Changing administrative homes brings a lot of change in administrative procedures for staff, some of which might not be expected. Each school and administrative unit has different ways of operating. Be aware that it can take time to learn all the new procedures and processes for even day-to-day functions

Life After the Move

All our content experts reported positive changes from switching administrative homes. Overall, they enjoyed consistent and reliable administrative support with the transition and ensuring everything was transferred over. Transitioning is an extensive process, with the transfer of grants and learning the different processes of the new home institution.

Moving to a more independent position within the medical Center allowed one UCEDD to more effectively and broadly share their work. This UCEDD got a better seat around the table and was able to talk about their work at monthly faculty meetings.

Overall, the content experts reported better collaboration and relationships after the move with new partners and those in their prior administrative home. Improving visibility also allowed some to get more corporate and private dollars to support their work.

Our partnerships are much stronger. People we didn't even know about, people who didn't know about us, are now working together in ways that never would've happened before. It's been a lot of fun.

For More Information

- [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
- [UCEDD Tip Sheets: UCEDD Grants Management: Negotiating UCEDD-University Agreements](#)
- [2021 Report on University-UCEDD Relationships and Agreements](#)

For More Information

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