

Centers

The multidisciplinary research center is one of the mechanisms that has been used to promote programmatic research on environmental hazards. The National Research Council's Committee on Disaster Research in the Social Sciences (2006) recently examined the performance of a number of different multidisciplinary research centers. Four of these centers were explicitly funded by the National Science Foundation to conduct interdisciplinary research on earthquake hazards. These were the National Center for Earthquake Engineering Research (NCEER) and its three successors, the Multidisciplinary Center for Earthquake Engineering Research (MCEER), the Mid-America Earthquake (MAE) Center, and Pacific Earthquake Engineering Research (PEER) Center. These centers were funded by a 10-year NSF grant to address a broad range of issues associated with earthquake hazard reduction. NCEER initiated a program that involved physical and social scientists and engineers that was later adopted, to varying degrees, by MCEER, the MAE Center and the PEER Center.

Other multidisciplinary research centers include the University of Delaware Disaster Research Center (DRC), the University of Colorado Natural Hazards Center (NHC), and the Texas A&M University Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center (HRRC). DRC (www.udel.edu/DRC/)—which was established in 1963—was initially staffed exclusively by sociologists, but now includes a number of affiliated faculty from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Funded by individual project proposals, DRC has conducted research on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in the United States as well as Mexico, Canada, Japan, Italy, and Turkey.

NHC (www.colorado.edu/hazards/o/) has served as a clearinghouse for information about social and policy aspects of disasters since 1976. NHC receives continuing funding from eight federal agencies and the Public Entity Risk Institute to share information among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers through its newsletter, library, and annual conference. In addition, NHC affiliated faculty and graduate students conduct research on disaster response that is funded by agencies such as NSF and the Department of Homeland Security.

HRRC (archone.tamu.edu/hrrc/), established in 1989, is staffed by sociologists, psychologists, planners, political scientists, economists, geographers, as well as geologists, landscape architects, and engineers. HRRC faculty and staff have conducted research on hazard analysis, hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness and response, and disaster recovery—as well as broader issues of environmental analysis and planning. HRRC projects are funded by a diverse set of agencies, including multiple directorates in the National Science Foundation, multiple components of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, US Department of Agriculture, National Park Service, Transportation Research Board, Texas Department of Transportation, Texas General Land Office, and Lower Colorado River Authority.