

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL,  
AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

July 12, 2016

The external review committee (ERC) report was delivered in July 2015 and was discussed at the ISBER board meeting in October 2015. The charge to the ERC was written by the ISBER Director and endorsed by the Office of Research. Prior to their visit, the ERC was provided with the ISBER self-assessment, a large binder of supporting materials, and set of questions (the ERC charge), which are included at the end of this document. The self-assessment was drafted by the ISBER director then reviewed, edited, and endorsed by the ISBER advisory committee. The self-assessment included extensive discussion of results from a survey of UCSB social science faculty and researchers conducted in December 2014. During their visit, the ERC met with the ISBER director, ISBER staff, directors of ISBER centers and programs, ISBER Advisory Committee, and a select group of social science faculty and researchers.

We thank the ERC for their efforts. The review process and the specific ERC recommendations will be useful in strategically charting a course for ISBER as it continues to serve the social science research community. Overall, the ERC was highly complementary of ISBER and its present leadership. The ERC concluded: "We strongly recommend that UCSB continue ISBER as an Organized Research Unit. We also believe that it needs additional resources if it is to continue to operate as effectively as it does now, ..."

There are two ERC recommendations that are particularly important to address in the near term. First, the ERC strongly questioned the location of outreach programs<sup>1</sup> at ISBER and encouraged UCSB to find a more appropriate location for them. We are strongly in favor of the programs being moved to a new administrative home. If the programs were moved to Student Affairs, and if sufficient grants administration staff were hired to achieve a critical mass, the programs would be administered in a setting that is coherent with the activities pursued with the funding. The programs are not social science in nature and having them as part of ISBER's portfolio obscures our image in the same way it would seem obscure to have them managed by the Marine Science Institute or the Earth Research Institute. Second, the ERC recommended that ISBER use internal funding and develop new programs to leverage extramural funding for social science research. We believe there are two main changes that need to be made to improve this leverage: (1) ISBER needs an Associate Director who can focus on facilitating collaborations and developing events to enhance the research culture of the social sciences, (2) The Research Development Director for the Social Sciences needs to be returned to a full 50% position.

Below, we provide a paraphrased listing of the ERC's recommendations and our response to each.

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<sup>1</sup> For the current fiscal year, ISBER is administering \$2.4 million in grants and contracts that primarily support the delivery of educational services or programs to a targeted group of students. The outreach programs include \$421,000 for MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement -- educational outreach and achievement programs targeting underrepresented minorities and first-generation students in elementary school through college), \$869,00 for Victim / Mental Health Services, \$585,000 for McNair Scholars Program (supports the transition from undergraduate to graduate training and targets first-generation, low income, and underrepresented students), \$542,000 for ONDAS (Opening New Doors to Accelerating Success -- purpose is to expand educational opportunities for Hispanic students).

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**1) Outreach programs should be moved elsewhere and perhaps centralized with other targeted retention/outreach programs that will develop in concert with UCSB's HSI programmatic funding. If they remain administratively managed by ISBER, the cost of that administration should be fully covered by offices of the Executive Vice Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor of Research. Other non-center special programs (UC Educational Evaluation Center, Health Data Research Facility) should be transitioned to centers or closed.**

This recommendation was the most emphatic for the ERC. They feel strongly that outreach/retention programs are not well-served by being housed in an institution devoted to a subset of disciplines and to research rather than student services. The current funding model hinders the mission of ISBER by taking substantial unreimbursed staff time and hinders the programmatic goals of the outreach programs by isolating them from other related programs on campus. ISBER strongly concurs with the ERC recommendations and strongly urges the EVC's office to take action to find a new administrative home for the outreach programs.

Given the prominence of the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status for the university, there is an excellent opportunity to consolidate the outreach programs under whichever administrative division at UCSB takes final control of HSI programming. Since the ERC, UCSB has successfully secured HSI retention and outreach program funding from the US Department of Education. A second grant is currently pending with US DOE. Both the McNair Scholars program and Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program are also predominantly serving Hispanic populations and they are mutually supportive of the more recent HSI funding directions. Integrating the outreach programs with other programming would enhance the effectiveness of the existing programs and allow for synergies with new initiatives. Moving the programs to Student Affairs would make the most sense in terms of aligning the goals of the funded programs with the broader mission of their administrative home.

Details of how the outreach programs ended up in ISBER are thoroughly documented in the self-assessment. Our self-assessment highlights the structural budget shortfall due to administering the programs. In June 2015, after receiving the ERC's report, VCR Witherell agreed to take action and secure new permanent funding to address the budget shortfall. In February 2016, VCR Witherell informed the ISBER director that an agreement had been reached with the Executive Vice Chancellor's office and that details of the new funding would be announced soon. While our strong preference is that the programs be moved out of ISBER, until that is achieved, we strongly urge the campus to fully fund the staff FTE devoted to outreach programs.

The other special programs identified by the ERC are already transitioned or in transition. The UCEC closed after John Yun (PI of the funding) was recruited to Michigan State University and the request for continued funding as a Multicampus Research Initiative failed. The Health Data Research Facility is already on a path to transition to the health data metrics group at UC Davis. We expect the HDRF to be closed within three years.

**2) ISBER, with the support of UCSB more widely, needs to consider how to use internal funds to leverage higher levels of extramural funding.**

We have given careful consideration to this recommendation and view this as central to the mission of ISBER. There are opportunities to stimulate the development and submission of extramural proposals by individual faculty and teams of faculty. We believe more can be done to promote informal gatherings of faculty (similar to the rooftop research mixers hosted by the Earth Research Institute), to develop faculty exchanges and expert databases, and to target and support teams of

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faculty pursuing large extramural grants. Two key elements of implementing these extramural funding supports are appointing an Associate Director who can oversee these functions and the return of a full 50% time Director of Social Science Research Development.

ISBER has had an Associate Director serving in varied roles in the past. Under Director Appelbaum, the Associate Director was Barbara Herr-Harthorn and she was actively involved in myriad aspects of the institute and also covered social science research development (the position currently held by Barbara Walker). Under Director Fenstermaker, the Associate Director was a faculty appointment (John Mohr) but he was given few duties beyond signature authority in the Director's absence. Under Director Sweeney the Associate Director position was eliminated pending a clear role for the position. It is clear now that having a faculty member as an Associate Director, and charged with enhancing the culture of research and collaboration in the social sciences, would add substantial value to the campus. Following compensation norms in other ORUs we expect the Associate Director would receive a one course teaching release and a stipend. We seek funding for the stipend from the Vice Chancellor of Research and for the teaching release from the Dean of Social Sciences.

Whereas an ISBER Associate Director can provide faculty leadership, the UCSB Director of Social Science Research Development (DSSRD) must play a day-to-day role in the implementation of programs to incubate extramural funding. The DSSRD has been Barbara Walker. Her time has been increasingly devoted to leading campus efforts to first establish UCSB's HSI status and then to secure Department of Education funding. Only 37% of Walker's time is now devoted to social science research development. If the next HSI proposal is successful (and we hope it will be) her time will be further reduced. It appears Walker is on a path towards full time support of UCSB's HSI and other diversity initiatives, which would be a boon for the campus but a major impediment to social science research funding.

The DSSRD plays a key role in extramural social science funding. The position is currently charged with assisting faculty in funding searches, providing individual consultations on grant proposals, and running grant-writing workshops once per year. Director Sweeney and Research Development Director Meredith Murr, have revised the job description of the DSSRD to include a provision that all recipients of the Social Science Research Grants (SSRGPs) be required to work with the DSSRD to develop and submit an extramural proposal. We believe that this will improve the rate of conversion of the intramural funding to extramural funding. The review process of the SSRGP already provides excellent feedback to applicants and often suggests potential on-campus collaborators or mentors for junior faculty. The mandate to develop and submit an extramural proposal will provide a strongly mentored path to encourage the development and submission of new extramural funding proposals.

It is imperative that ISBER return to having full time support for research development. This central function benefits faculty and the campus as a whole. We strongly encourage a new hire in support of social science research development, or return of Barbara Walker to a full 50% position, to work closely with the ISBER Director and Associate Director.

### ***3) The leadership role in furthering the social science research at UCSB should be filled by the Dean of Social Sciences, Directors of ISBER Centers, and center-affiliated faculty.***

ISBER largely agrees with this assessment because as an ORU we do not have the policy controls (input on hiring plans, review of promotion/merit/retention cases) necessary to propel or shape the research directions. ISBER's primary role, as indicated in its mission, is to "facilitate and enable

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social science research." As we note within this response, ISBER has been very successful in facilitating research through initiatives like Qualtrics, SSRGP, and the secure computing environment.

On the other hand, ISBER is not well placed to lead efforts to shape the direction of social science research or to fundamentally change the importance and level of extramurally-funded social science research at UCSB. That leadership needs to come both from above and from individual faculty below. The search for a new Dean of Social Sciences offers an opportunity to seek a Dean who embraces the role of extramurally-funded social science research in propelling the stature of UCSB social science nationally and internationally. We see great opportunities for leadership that encourages extramural funding, supports research, and offers a vision for future campus research directions. From above, the Social Science Dean's office should have the ability to materially support and incentivize research and to facilitate clusters of hires in target-rich domains as has been done with the Broom Center for Demography. The Social Science Dean's office should emphasize the importance of extramurally-funded research in hiring, promotion, and retention, where funds are realistically obtainable. From below, individual faculty researchers are ultimately responsible for securing funding and developing robust research programs. ISBER can facilitate SSRGP seed funding working towards extramural funding, as discussed previously.

ISBER also agrees that its research centers have a critical role to play in promoting integrative, cross-disciplinary research programs. The review criteria for centers adopted by ISBER in April 2015 was designed to incubate, promote, and retain research centers that function as critical nodes in fostering research. Under this model, center directors and center advisory boards play a central role in leading social science research efforts and determining fruitful directions for new research.

#### ***4) While commending the recent expansion of ISBER to deliver non-administrative research services (Qualtrics, and a secure-computing environment), the ERC recommends against pursuing the establishment of a Social Science Research Methods Unit.***

This ERC recommendation is specifically in response to **charge item 3** (see below). Since starting as ISBER director, Sweeney has moved to expand ISBER's mission beyond research administration. The ERC notes that ISBER is still perceived as an administrative services unit by most of the faculty they consulted during their visit. The ERC supported the services developed and available over the last few years (Qualtrics survey software, Secure Computing environment) but did not endorse the development of a social science research methods unit. They argued that other centers are already offering some of these services (Broom Center) and that ISBER does not have the capacity to move in this direction.

While we respect the recommendation, we believe that abandoning the idea of a research methods unit is not warranted. The ERC only met with a small selection of social science faculty and appears to have not fully read or digested the survey results provided in our self-assessment. The survey demonstrated that there is strong support and need among social science faculty for consultation on research methods (see pages 10-11 of the self-assessment). The existence of a research methods unit would not preclude ISBER centers offering methods courses. We believe that a centralized research methods unit would provide important coordination, advertising, and delivery of consulting services and short courses that are not easily captured at the level of a center.

We plan to continue to develop the plans for a research methods unit but we recognize that it needs to be carefully coordinated with existing services on campus and will need buy-in from social science faculty and graduate students.

**5) *Strongly endorse and commend the ISBER director's new criteria for review of centers and planned schedule of center reviews. Recommend that the reviews occur on an accelerated schedule and in order of last reviewed.***

We are delighted that the ERC endorsed our plans and our new review criteria. We have started to review centers and the first set will be completed in Fall 2016. After the first few are completed we will accelerate the schedule. The first review has been a learning process and we targeted one of our strongest centers (CITS) to see how the process unfolds, so that adjustments could be made for later reviews if needed.

**6) *Independent scholars (professional researcher series) need to be better integrated and mentored, preferably within the confines of ISBER Centers.***

ISBER has only a small number of independent researchers and each one has a unique history and relationship with units affiliated with ISBER. We do not plan to increase this pool of researchers. After reviewing individual situations, we do not view the integration of independent researchers as an issue warranting a more general response.

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**External Review Committee Charge**

Please assess the quality and breadth of ISBER's service to the social sciences at UCSB. Your report should be based on your evaluation of written materials submitted for this review and any presentations and meetings during your site visit. If possible we would like to have the following points addressed in your report:

1. Is ISBER carrying out its stated mission? Is that mission well matched to supporting the needs of current research directions in the social sciences?
2. Are the quality and quantity of research produced by grants and awards administered by ISBER at the level expected for a leading research university?
3. What is your evaluation of the plans for the future? Should ISBER continue with its plans to increase the scope of ISBER's mission and deliver a broader set of research services? Specifically, should ISBER pursue the creation of a social science methods unit and would additional support from the university be justified? Is it appropriate to rebrand ISBER as the Social Science Research Institute?
4. In what ways should ISBER work to increase the number of faculty engaged in extramurally funded research? Are current research development activities sufficient? Are small grants programs, such as the SSRGP, useful in stimulating additional extramural research funding?
5. Does the management structure and organization of ISBER serve the mission well? Are contracts and grants well managed?
6. Is the administrative staff effective and efficient? Is there good communication and a shared sense of mission across the staff?
7. Should ISBER continue to administer outreach programs? Is the administration of those activities compatible with an ORU that is primarily charged with supporting interdisciplinary research in the social sciences?
8. Would you recommend that UCSB approve continuing ISBER as an Organized Research Unit?