

Contact: Rachel Boon

**REQUEST FOR NEW CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
CENTER FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE INNOVATION**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to create the Center for Social Science Innovation in the Office of the Vice President for Research.

The Council of Provosts and Board office support approval of this request.

Background: In December of 2023, the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) assembled a team comprised of the Public Policy Center (PPC) director, faculty and associate deans for research. Their task was to redesign the PPC's mission, organizational structure and operational function to create a new research and service center dedicated to supporting social sciences. This initiative stemmed from an internal review of the existing PPC, which revealed that its mission and purpose needed restructuring to focus on addressing emerging societal challenges. The proposed Center for Social Science Innovation (CSSI) emerged as the result of this restructuring and, if approved, will replace the existing PPC.

Need for proposed center. The proposed CSSI will provide a variety of concrete mechanisms to enable social scientists at the University of Iowa (UI) to generate practical but critical insights about fundamental issues of relevance to Iowans. CSSI's general mission is to *advance, support, and celebrate interdisciplinary social science research*. In pursuing that mission, the CSSI provides strategic resources to support high impact, innovative research; foster interdisciplinary collaboration; maintain strong partnerships with centers on campus and at Iowa's regent universities; facilitate contract and grant development; and collaborate with constituents from Iowa's communities to solve local challenges.

Activities and objectives of proposed center. The proposed CSSI pursues four core priorities that reflect the intent of its larger mission, each with complementary purposes. Mechanisms under these priorities would be available to campus faculty, staff scientists, students and their collaborators. The transition committee has also developed metrics to annually assess the implementation and success of each priority.

- I. **Research Incubation:** to catalyze research ideas; contribute to and develop collaborative research partnerships; foster novel analytical (quantitative and qualitative) and theoretical approaches; develop active research consortiums and networks.
Example mechanisms: faculty research fellowships; dissertation completion fellowships; post-doctoral traineeships; grant writing residency and summer scholar programs; thematic initiatives targeting topics of significance to external funding agencies.
- II. **Grant Development and Programming:** to identify external funding opportunities; support the development of competitive grant proposals; build relationships with grant funding agencies.
Example mechanisms: Review and edit grant proposals; host grant writing groups and seminars; pre-award and post-award budget management; coordinate with UI Division of Sponsored Programs.

- III. **Survey and Multimethodology Research Services:** to provide survey and multimethod research services, including qualitative and quantitative approaches; support design and implementation of research projects; navigate research infrastructure and administrative requirements.
Example mechanisms: data collection and analysis; survey development; hosting focus groups; methodological consultation; methods workshops; Institutional Review Board liaison.
- IV. **Communication and Dissemination:** to communicate practical knowledge of research to the wider community; celebrate and recognize social science research on campus; forge collaborative connections with peer universities; build value and respectful culture of interdisciplinary social science scholarship.
Example mechanisms: visual abstracts; research symposiums and events; alumni relations; grant newsletters; community outreach events; fulfill dissemination requirements of federally funded projects.

As part of its mission to function as a dynamic community for social scientists, CSSI also intends to implement a faculty affiliate program to create diverse networks of social science scholars. The proposed affiliate program is available to UI social scientists who request a termed complimentary appointment with CSSI. This program provides many benefits including access to resources and opportunities. Faculty affiliates will have priority access to the proposed CSSI's research incubation programming and research support services, including survey and methodology support and grant development assistance. Through this program the CSSI can further advance and support interdisciplinary social science research across the university.

Relationship to mission and strategic plan. The objectives of the CSSI align with the UI's Strategic Plan, namely the priorities of (a) advancing research and discovery; (b) improving student, faculty and staff success; and (c) expanding the university's impact on local and regional communities. Specifically, CSSI represents a needed investment in faculty development. The CSSI will help to build the university's strengths in advancing emerging areas of research and discovery by offering robust supports to foster innovative scholarship. Additionally, research and professional development activities will involve collaboration across disciplines (e.g., nursing, social work, public affairs, public health). Through these programs the CSSI will also facilitate opportunities for learning and skill development among graduate and undergraduate students. By partnering with local communities to provide research services addressing their needs (e.g., surveys on quality-of-life issues, criminal justice system process assessments) and by sharing the research findings with the wider community, CSSI will be positioned to enrich Iowa's communities.

Relationship to other centers/institutes at the university. As a research and service center the proposed CSSI will collaborate with other centers and institutes on campus to serve social science researchers and advance its four strategic priorities. These efforts are intended to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and enhance the value of social science scholarship on campus. Cooperative relationships have been forged with the Injury Prevention Research Center (OVPR/College of Public Health), Obermann Center for Advanced Studies (OVPR), Office of Community Engagement (Provost), Csomay Center for Gerontological Excellence (College of Nursing), Office of Undergraduate Research (OVPR), Research Development Office (OVPR) and the Driver Safety Research Institute (College of Engineering). Collaborative ties have also been developed to the Carver College of Medicine, College of Law, College of Education, and multiple departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Relationship to centers/institutes at other universities in Iowa and potential for collaboration. The longstanding Center for Social and Behavioral Research (CSBR) at the University of Northern

Iowa (UNI) focuses on providing applied research services to UNI faculty, community organizations, and state and national clients. These services include but are not limited to data collection and program evaluations. The proposed CSSI's focus on survey, methodology and evaluation services complements and will not compete with the CSBR's menu of research service offerings. Research services at CSSI differ in several ways that uniquely fit the UI's expansive and comprehensive research needs, e.g., opportunities for UI faculty to utilize national panel databases, support navigating campus research administration and compliance, research incubation, traineeships, grant consultation, and facilitation of cross-center partnerships. The CSBR offers specialized expertise in program evaluation research not available at CSSI. The Director of the CSBR, Professor Mary Losch, provided input on the creation of CSSI in conversations with Professor Mark Berg and his staff. Professor Losch and the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UNI fully support the development of CSSI. UNI looks forward to and anticipates future collaborations between the two centers. At Iowa State University (ISU) the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM), located in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, provides specialized technical expertise in aspects of sampling through support and operational services. Some of the services at CSSM complement those at CSSI, though CSSM's capacities for survey sampling are more advanced. Moreover, much of the work at CSSM involves the agricultural sciences, which is not a focus area at CSSI. Professor Zhengyuan Zhu, the Director of CSSM and the ISU Office of the Vice President for Research support the proposed CSSI at the UI. Professor Zhu, after reviewing this proposal and speaking with Professor Berg, noted that he looks forward to collaborations between the two centers. The CSBR and CSSM differ from CSSI regarding their missions and organizational priorities (see priorities in section #2). CSSI will provide a range of research incubation programming for UI faculty not available at CSBR or CSSM. The CSSI uniquely offers multiple research design workshops. Also, CSSI will provide robust end-to-end grant development support for UI researchers (e.g., grant budgeting, reviewing and workshopping grant proposals, post-award support) that will be fully integrated with its other operational priorities including research incubation. It is a goal of CSSI leadership and the OVPR to develop meaningful collaborative relationships with CSBR and CSSM through the sharing of expertise and opportunities (e.g., workshops, grant proposals).

Resources, facilities and equipment required. Because OVPR currently provides research support and services to the UI community under the existing center structure of the PPC, additional personnel, facilities, and equipment will not be required to establish the CSSI or implement its proposed priorities. Staffing structure is unlikely to change from its current form (PPC employs seven full-time staff, three part-time staff, one half-time faculty member-Professor Berg-to direct the center, and several undergraduate students on an hourly basis). The full-time staff include a research and operations manager to oversee the daily research and engagement operations, a manager of the survey and multimethod services unit, a finance manager to oversee the budget and post-award grant support, a grant development manager, and three staff to assist with survey and project services.

The proposed center will operate in the Public Policy Research Building (9,608 sq. ft), which was built in 1984 and acquired and renovated in 2021. The 2-story building contains 25 offices, two conference rooms for meetings, workshops, and presentations, a call center, a computer lab, transcription room, and two break rooms. As part of its current center structure, the CSSI is already equipped with the resources, technology, and software required to continue offering research incubation and survey, evaluation, and methodology support services. Across the call center, computer lab, and transcription room, we have 26 computers equipped with software including WinCATI, Stata, SAS, SPSS, and other necessary specialized software.

Expected funding sources. University and organizational allocations will consist of general education funds (GEF) allocated from the OVPR budget. These funds will be allocated at the same level as the current commitment to the existing PPC. Thus, the CSSI will not require a new GEF stream of funds. The funds should remain constant as forecasted in the table below.

The current balance of PPC unrestricted gift and grant/contract revenue will be reallocated to the proposed CSSI, with the expectation of generating new revenue as forecasted in the table below. The negative change from years two to three in this category is a result of having completed investments in current fixed cost resources in years one and two that facilitate sustained growth in subsequent years.

CSSI is anticipated to yield a strong return on the university’s investment through the research development initiatives, multiple research services, community engagement and training opportunities provided through the center’s four core priorities. The research incubation programming (e.g., traineeships, grant writing residency, working groups), grant development, and research services (e.g., pilot data collection) will increase the volume of grant applications submitted to external funding agencies and assist faculty with drafting competitive proposals, which, if funded, result in money flowing back to the university. For example, faculty have utilized the resources provided through the Grant Writer’s Residency Program to write and submit an NIH R01 grant application. The programming also has potential to enhance the quality and volume of faculty and student scholarship. The funds provided to CSSI will also support efforts to enhance undergraduate and graduate student training through meaningful faculty-student partnerships sponsored in coordination with the Office of Undergraduate Research, and hands-on research experiences with data collection, analysis and project development. Investment in communication and dissemination efforts will enhance the visibility and reach of CSSI’s research, thereby attracting additional funding and collaboration opportunities.

	SOURCE(S) OF FUNDS	TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS
Year 1 (forecasted)	Univ/Org allocations	\$800,000
	Service Center Revenue	\$300,000
	Gifts/Grants/Contract Revenue	\$280,000
Year 2 (forecasted)	Univ/Org allocations	\$800,000
	Service Center Revenue	\$300,000
	Gifts/Grants/Contract Revenue	\$280,000
Year 3 (forecasted)	Univ/Org allocations	\$800,000
	Service Center Revenue	\$310,000
	Gifts/Grants/Contract Revenue	\$132,000
Year 4 (forecasted)	Univ/Org allocations	\$800,000
	Service Center Revenue	\$316,250
	Gifts/Grants/Contract Revenue	\$140,000
Year 5 (forecasted)	Univ/Org allocations	\$800,000
	Service Center Revenue	\$335,000
	Gifts/Grants/Contract Revenue	\$150,000

Evaluation plan. The center will be reviewed according to requirements of funders as well as the university standard review processes for centers and institutes.

Date of implementation. Upon approval by the Board of Regents.