Memorandum

To: University Senate

From: Brian L. Winer, Chair
Council on Academic Affairs

Date: January 31, 2007

A PROPOSAL FROM THE COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC AFFAIRS TO ABOLISH THE CENTER FOR SURVEY RESEARCH

WHEREAS the Center for Survey Research was established in 1999, with a Director reporting to the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and with most of its initial funding dedicated to a staff infrastructure for an income-earning unit, through which contract/grant monies for commissioned surveys could flow to support faculty research and graduate student training; and

WHEREAS with the loss of a major contract for surveys and as faculty took their grant-funded survey work elsewhere, the viability of the Center was not realized, and in 2004 the College returned to the Office of Academic Affairs most of the academic enrichment grant that had been the basis of the Center’s initial funding; and

WHEREAS independent of center status, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Center will continue to support the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research, now coordinated by the former Director of the Center working with an inter-college faculty oversight committee; and

WHEREAS following initial discussions on January 18, 2006, the proposal was approved by the Council on Academic Affairs on July 20, 2006.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate approve the proposal to abolish the Center for Survey Research, and respectfully request concurrence from the Board of Trustees.
Paul:

The proposal from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to abolish the Center for Survey Research was approved by the Council on Academic Affairs at its meeting on July 20, 2006. Thank you for attending the meeting and responding to questions/comments.

Current rules/guidelines specify that such action needs formal approval by the University Senate and the Board of Trustees. Therefore I will send this proposal to the Secretary of the University Senate for action at an Autumn Quarter 2006 Senate meeting. I will contact you once I know the specific date. The proposal will be presented there by Professor Brian Winer, incoming Chair of the Council, but it is important that you attend that Senate meeting to respond to detailed questions or comments.

As you know, this is the first center/institute to be abolished following the current guidelines. This was an important first case. As you also know, the Council will begin a systematic review of centers beginning this Autumn, and simultaneously will make proposed revisions to the current center rule to help streamline the establishment/review/abolition process.

Given that you have just completed this process, and that you have several other centers that report to you, it is likely that the Council will contact you for input to its forthcoming work on centers/institutes.

This message represents my formal communication with you about this action. You will not receive a separate letter from me. Please keep a copy of this message for your file(s) on the proposal and I will do the same for the file in the Office of Academic Affairs.

If you have any questions about the action taken by the Council, please contact Professor Raymond Noe, current Chair, (noe.22@osu.edu) or me.

Randy

W. Randy Smith
Vice Provost
Dutta, Lakshmi

From: Smith, Randy
Sent: Thursday, July 13, 2006 5:57 PM
To: Dutta, Lakshmi
Subject: FW: Center for Survey Research

Lakshmi:

Here is the letter from Paul Beck.

R.

From: Beck, Paul [mailto:beck.9@osu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2006 6:38 PM
To: Smith, Randy
Subject: Center for Survey Research

Dear Randy:

At CAA's request, I am writing to reiterate my recommendation that the Center for Survey Research (CSR) be closed as a College of Social and Behavioral Science (SBS) research center and my pledge of SBS's continuing support for the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research (GISSR). The background for this recommendation and pledge were reported in more detail to CAA in my 11/15/05 memo and a subsequent meeting with the committee. A summary of this report is repeated below.

The CSR was created in 1997 with funding from an OAA Academic Enrichment grant of $105,000 and matching funds from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, largely through departmental assignment of GRAs to the Center. Most of the OAA/SBS funding was dedicated to funding the staff infrastructure for an "income earning unit" through which contract/grant monies for commissioned surveys could flow to support faculty research and graduate student training. Unfortunately, our hopes for CSR as a viable research center were not realized. It lost a major contract for monthly surveys, and faculty were taking their grant-funded survey work elsewhere. As faculty interest and external funding declined, SBS departments became reluctant to assign GRAs, whose stipends were the major part of the SBS match, to the Center; and (under the new budgeting system) their fee authorizations became an added departmental burden. By FY2004, CSR had fallen deeply in debt. At the end of that year, my predecessor Dean Ripley closed CSR's income earning unit, and the College assumed responsibility for paying off its $200,000 deficit. After I became Dean on July 1, 2004, most of the Academic Enrichment grant ($90,000) was returned to OAA because the Center was no longer fulfilling the functions that had been the basis for the original grant. With the end of research activity in the CSR and the depletion of its funding base, I concluded that its center status was no longer justified. Therefore, I recommended to CAA in November, 2005, that CSR be closed as an SBS research center.

The Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research (GISSR) was launched in 2000, and it continues. Since FY06, it has been coordinated by Professor Jerry Kosicki in the School of Communication and overseen by an inter-college faculty oversight committee. The $15,000 remaining in SBS from the original Academic Enrichment grant and another $15,000 in matching SBS money fund a survey research colloquia, a summer graduate fellows program, and an administrative stipend for the program coordinator. The GISSR continues to serve the University well, and I expect it to attract even more student interest in the future. (There is also a possibility that a parallel interdisciplinary program, drawing upon the same faculty expertise and leadership, will be developed as an undergraduate minor.) As a faithful steward of OAA AE funds and with its own matching money, SBS will

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continue to support the Graduate Interdisciplinary Program in Survey Research, independent of the center status for CSR.

Please let me know if you need any further information from me about these matters. I look forward to meeting with CAA on July 20 to respond to whatever questions its members may have.

Paul

Paul A. Beck, Dean
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FAX: 614-292-9530
Dear Randy:

I understand that the College of Social and Behavioral Science’s Center for Survey Research (CSR) is scheduled to be reviewed by CAA sometime this year. I am writing to inform you, before CAA invests its valuable time in a review, of the College’s intention to close down the CSR as a college center.

CSR was created in 1997 with funding from an OAA Academic Enrichment grant of $105,000 and matching funds from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences mostly to support GRAs in the Center. Most of this money was dedicated to supporting an “income earning unit” in the Center through which contract and grant monies for commissioned surveys could flow. At the time, there was strong interest within SBS in establishing a college-wide survey center that could conduct surveys for funded faculty research and for non-university clients. “Profits” from funded projects through the CSR’s income earning account were to be invested in additional faculty and student survey projects. At the time, there also was a strong commitment to use the Center as a training laboratory for students interested in developing an expertise in survey research. These had been functions ably performed by the Department of Political Science’s Polimetrics Laboratory in the preceding years. It was felt that by broadening the base of the survey unit beyond a single department, the prospects for more grant-funded and contract surveys would increase, giving the unit the stronger financial foundation that is necessary to sustain an active survey organization.

Unfortunately, our hopes for CSR have not been realized. In the first several years of its existence, a continuing contract with the Columbus Dispatch underwrote considerable CSR activity, and it handled a significant number of faculty projects. In subsequent years, however, the CSR lost the Dispatch contract, and many SBS faculty were taking their grant-funded survey to other centers, especially those that had developed survey expertise beyond the use of telephone random-digit-dialing surveys, which had been the hallmark of the CSR. A major part of the SBS match for the AE grant was provided through departmental assignments of GRAs to the CSR. As faculty interest in the Center and its contract workload declined, these departments concluded that their GRAs were not receiving the kind of training they wanted and alternative assignments of scarce GRA positions became more attractive. By FY2004, without the Dispatch project and with other external projects that did not bring significant returns, CSR had fallen deeply in debt; its revenues dropped below its out-of-pocket costs, even with the AE subsidy. At the end of FY2004, on the eve of my becoming the new Dean of SBS, with my full approval, my predecessor Dean Ripley terminated the income earning unit within the CSR, liquidated its equipment and furniture assets to pay down some of the deficit, let its survey staff go, and assumed College responsibility for the remainder of the deficit, which was about $200,000. After I became Dean on July 1, 2004, I initiated discussions with the Office of Academic Affairs about the changes in the Center, and we agreed that most of the Academic Enrichment grant funds ($90,000) should be returned to OAA because the Center was no longer fulfilling the functions that had been the basis for the original grant.

Early in the development of the Center, its second function, to train graduate students in survey research, became institutionalized. A Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research was approved, and it attracted interest from students in SBS and beyond. This program was built up under the leadership of Professor Herb Weisberg in Political Science, and it continues to operate and is doing well. After Herb became Chair of Political Science, I appointed Professor Jerry Kosicki in the School of Communication, who had been the Director of the Center for Survey Research through FY04, as its new coordinator. A portion of the Academic Enrichment grant had been dedicated to this training function of the Center, and OAA agreed to leave its share of that amount in the College to support the Survey Research specialization.

With this email, I am formally proposing to eliminate the Center for Survey Research in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I am a firm believer that just as centers should be created when there is compelling purpose to do so, they should be eliminated when that purpose is no longer being served. I have
discussed this decision with the chairs of SBS departments and schools and with the College's Budget and Planning Committee, and there is widespread support for the decision – and no active dissent. SBS will continue to host the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research, with Jerry Kosicki as its Coordinator, and the remaining funds in the AE grant will provide modest OAA and SBS support for its activities – a summer grants program for graduate students, a colloquium series in survey research, and its administration.

Please let me know if you need any further information from me about this proposal. I do not know who officially ends center status for a unit, and I look forward to your and CAA's advice about what to do next.

Paul

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1/10/2006