UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

ACADEMIC REVIEW AND PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AGGREGATE REPORT FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Presented to Provost Russell Moore
February 26, 2014

Accepted: ___________________________ 03.06.2014
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs : Date
I. REVIEW PROCESS

The 2012-13 review cycle took up the social sciences units on campus; it was conducted in accordance with the 2013 review and planning guidelines. This involved looking at the Anthropology, Communication, Economics, Ethnic Studies, International Affairs, Linguistics, Political Science, Sociology, Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, and Women and Gender Studies departments and programs within the College of Arts and Sciences, along with the Institute of Behavioral Sciences constituted within the Graduate School; University Libraries was part of the discussion in relation to the units under review. The review of individual units was followed by a campus visit by four external reviewers who have broad experience of and vision for the social sciences. This review team met extensively with faculty and administrators and issued its report. This public document reflects the assessment of and recommendations for the aggregation of units under review as approved by the members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC).

II. THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

As defined by Colorado statute, the University of Colorado at Boulder is a “comprehensive graduate research university.” As the flagship university of the state, CU-Boulder has at its heart a commitment to a liberal arts education, combining the sciences and mathematics along with the humanities and arts and the social sciences as the traditional core of such an education. Focusing on people individually and collectively, the social sciences are central to the exploration of the social world we collectively make. They help us to understand everything from the way gender roles are constructed to how the global economy functions. They draw upon a wide range of methods and theories, with the work of individual social scientists sometimes looking similar to that of the physical sciences and sometimes similar to that of humanists, though the disciplines, of course, have their own integral methodologies as well. The social sciences units under review are thus central to the mission of the university. The departments in social sciences, along with the connected research institute, have long been a key to the University of Colorado at Boulder’s international reputation. On Academic Analytics ratings, one department scored in the top quintile within their discipline and another five scored in the next quintile. The university can be very proud to have such distinguished colleagues doing such transformative work. The state should be appreciative as well, as the work of these units contributes in significant ways to the economic growth of Colorado, with federal funds coming into the state through their work, with new knowledge arising from their research, and with the citizenry and workforce of Colorado benefiting from the education they receive in these core disciplines.

These units also include some of the largest majors at the university, which suggests that they are offering programs that students find essential to their intellectual growth and future success. These units serve our students and contribute to the viability of the campus as a whole.
III. ANALYSIS

The academic units that work in social sciences are strong academically and pedagogically, though each faces challenges and opportunities. ARPAC has reported on each of those units, providing recommendations best suited to the particular circumstances within each department or institute. There are, however, some issues that rise above the level of the particular and that can best be addressed collectively.

At the start, we should note the particular place of the Department of Communication in this review. When the review took place, the future of the department was uncertain as the campus discussed the possibility of including it in a new college. At this point, the campus has made clear its decision to include Communication in a new College of Media, Communication, and Information. ARPAC had some concerns about Communication at the start of this process. They seemed uncertain about their path. ARPAC is pleased to report that its concerns have largely been set aside by Communication’s response to the opportunity to join CMCI. Communication has proposed a strong strategic plan to move forward. ARPAC believes that the department will find itself able to prosper in its new home. Of course, if the Board of Regents were not to approve the proposed college, then Communication would need to re-examine its place in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The ERC indicates that “Overall, we were impressed by the quality and vitality of the participating units. Taken as a group, the social sciences are strong by national standards—in line with the exceptionally high AAU norm for similar departments and programs.” ARPAC, too, applauds the important research and teaching done by these colleagues.

That said, ARPAC notes that there was a lack of collective effort in this review that resulted in a rather thin aggregate-level report. The Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) is ultimately responsible for this process, and it is re-evaluating its current practice of having the aggregate review run by the units under review rather than by OFA itself. In some cycles, the units have produced very powerful collective efforts. In this case, the aggregate review seems to have become another opportunity for individual units to speak about their individual concerns. This group of units did not take advantage of the process’s call for collaborative conversations, collective deliberations, and common efforts. Some of ARPAC’s recommendations in this cycle do attempt to provide opportunities for communication and collaboration.

Despite these limitations, ARPAC was impressed by the work being done by the social science units. The committee was aware prior to the review of the large contribution made by these units to the campus teaching mission, but it is fair to say that the committee was particularly impressed by the quality of the academic work being done. Three of the top ten largest majors on campus are in the social sciences (Communication, Economics, and International Affairs), with two others (Political Science and Sociology) in the top twenty. Our Anthropology Department has the second
largest number of majors in the country. These units also do an enormous amount of teaching to non-majors, with Economics, for example, providing more than 32,000 total SCH per year, Sociology more than 28,000 total SCH, and Political Science more than total 21,000 SCH. Moreover, these degrees and courses are delivered at a much lower cost than many other popular majors, particularly those in the sciences and engineering. It is safe to say that, to a great extent, the campus relies on the work of social scientists to sustain its funding. And at the same time, our colleagues in these fields are doing first-rate scholarly work.

ARPAC believes that the campus should look at further investments in the social sciences, a position argued by individual units and supported by the aggregate-level ERC. ARPAC has not made many recommendations for new faculty positions during the current seven-year review cycle. This reluctance to recommended new positions was in part a recognition of budget constraints, in part a result of the addition of more than 100 faculty lines prior to the 2008 economic collapse, and in part a response to other needs. In this year’s review, however, ARPAC has made a number of recommendations to increase the size of the faculty in social science units. In some cases, new faculty lines have been recommended to keep up with increasing enrollments. In other cases, the recommendation seeks to move units forward within their disciplinary rankings. In light of the high demand for social science degrees and their low costs, the campus could benefit by increasing the size of these programs rather than investing in more expensive alternatives. Given that the campus intends to grow by about ten percent, it could greatly benefit the campus to expand the social sciences as high-demand, relatively low-cost units that provide first-rate educational experiences. ARPAC notes that one could meet the growing student demand simply by hiring instructors and other contingent faculty. However, ARPAC believes that a better approach would be to reward the units that are producing significant numbers of student credit hours by investing in their scholarly efforts. ARPAC also believes that we should be looking at issues other than revenue generation. For example, Linguistics may be a relatively small program, but a small investment there could provide an opportunity for the department to make a major leap forward intellectually and thus bring prestige to the campus. Investing in the division as a whole will help all units within the division and, in fact, within the college. We have a first-rate natural science division; its stature will only be supported by strong social science (and humanities and arts) departments.

As in all reviews, space is an issue. The status of the space held by these units varies, from the wonderful new IBS building to the sub-optimal spaces housing Communication and Ethnic Studies (in the basements of Hellem and Ketchum, respectively). ARPAC is pleased to note that Ketchum will undergo some renewal work, and it urges that, at the same time as basic improvements are being made, the campus find way to improve the teaching and office space within that building. One concrete suggestion was that classrooms could be placed in the basement, moving faculty and department offices to other floors in the building. ARPAC is also excited about the possibility of finding funding for a building modeled on IBS that could provide first-rate space for some units in the
Moreover, when expectations are created involving social science units rather than units in other divisions, schools, or colleges, supported. For example, calls for interdisciplinary work should not be read as simply natural sciences. The hybrid nature of some disciplines and others with faculty members who think of themselves as linked to the natural sciences. Some units—Linguistics, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences, and Ethnic Studies—should be considered for new locations that are freed up as other units move to East Campus; as units gain new space, their old space can be usefully repurposed. Many units also noted the lack of high-capacity lecture halls for large-enrollment classes.

While there was perhaps less discussion in this cycle than in others about possible ways to reorganize the units under review, a few items in this area did arise. First, at the initial conversation at the review fall convocation, there was a vigorous and exciting discussion of the possibility for creating shared statistics and methods courses across the division. This conversation does not seem to have progressed much during the review year. Still, ARPAC supports the exploration of a joint statistics training program and the possibility of a joint training program in qualitative and ethnographic methods. Second, the ERC recommends that the campus “work with faculty to identify one or more clusters of small units that could benefit from organizing an administrative support hub;” they also suggest shared and improved IT services. ARPAC supports having a discussion about these issues.

Third, and most important, there was a clear desire to find more support for collective and interdisciplinary scholarly work. There are shared problems that have some shared solutions, and there are collective opportunities that are being missed. At a basic level, it is important that the units under review be aware of resources (i.e., ASSETT) available to them. IBS provides a powerful and successful model for such work, but its efforts are focused on a particular set of research initiatives that do not reach all the faculty members in the division. It is the case that communication between IBS and other faculty members in the division and beyond the college can always be improved. Such moves as linking websites and making clear how one becomes affiliated with IBS can help.

ARPAC believes that the Center to Advance Research and Teaching in the Social Sciences (CARTSS) provides the best vehicle for bringing together work in the division and beyond. CARTSS can support the work of individual researchers, disciplinary groups, and interdisciplinary teams. Among other efforts, CARTSS might 1) house a support person for grantsmanship, 2) house a cross-disciplinary statistics or methods course; 3) create an interdisciplinary speaker series or mini-conference that would promote greater exchange and collaboration among social science units and raise the visibility of the social sciences as a whole; and 4) help increase web-interconnectivity among the units.

ARPAC does note that there is a great variety across the social science divisions, with some units housing faculty members who might have affinities with humanities disciplines and others with faculty members who think of themselves as linked to the natural sciences. The hybrid nature of some departments needs to be recognized and supported. For example, calls for interdisciplinary work should not be read as simply involving social science units rather than units in other divisions, schools, or colleges. Moreover, when expectations are created for, say, grant productivity, significant
contextual differences should be acknowledged, including the fact that humanities-oriented faculty members do not traditionally have the same opportunities for seeking external funding as do science-oriented faculty members.

Diversity was raised as a major issue by the ERC. Despite progress in some departments, diversity across the division could be stronger. The reviewers were concerned that some department diversity plans were off putting to prospective colleagues. The ERC wanted to be sure that chairs and search committees received the necessary training to avoid potential hidden bias, that departments analyzed their cultures and how welcoming they are to underrepresented groups, and that the campus continued to support targeted hires.

ARPAC recommends that all units continue to address these issues. Units should examine their own practices and the best practices of other units here and at other universities. Units should examine data on diversity within their particular disciplines at the national level; they need to be aware of the pools for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members. The campus should continue to help departments increase diversity through, for example, targeted recruitment and hiring.

Graduate education is fully developed within some of the units under review and being developed in others. There are some extremely strong graduate programs in the division and others that can become stronger. As in other reviews, funding for graduate students is an issue. ARPAC believes that available funding should be focused on doctoral students. ARPAC recommends that units, working with the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School, seek to increase all Ph.D. appointments to provide full tuition coverage. Efforts should be made to minimize discrepancies across the division so that appointments in one department roughly resemble those in others. The Graduate School should examine its method for allocating fellowship support to consider whether a greater weight should be given to doctoral over master’s level students.

There was considerable discussion in this review of professional master’s programs. The university already has some successful models, such as the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program in Linguistics. Other units are considering developing professional master’s programs in, say, contract anthropology. There may be a place for a professional master’s in social statistics that could be administered by CARTSS. ARPAC notes that it is time for these departments to examine the role of the traditional MA degree, its relation to our Ph.D. programs, and the advantages and disadvantages of offering a professional master’s, perhaps in place of a traditional master’s degree. It should be noted that professional masters degrees are unlikely to be successful unless they can attract a sizable student population, with some on ARPAC suggesting that 30 students would be needed in most programs. In addition, professional master’s programs must be distinguished from traditional master’s programs in their purpose, design, and delivery. ARPAC believes that the time and resources required of units to sustain a professional master’s track should be carefully considered. Of particular concern is the possibility that such a degree program might
distract from the needs of existing undergraduate or doctoral tracks. As ARPAC has noted in past reviews, institutes can help draw students to our graduate programs. ARPAC urges the Graduate School to pursue more innovative ways to attract graduate students, for example, by working with the institutes and the departments to create unified application portals for students drawn to CU by the reputation of an institute.

Recruitment and retention arose as an issue in a number of departments, particularly where there was a high turnover of faculty members. ARPAC has made some specific recommendations in individual reports. ARPAC believes that the campus needs to reopen a conversation on its faculty-retention practices. It is pleased to see that the campus is more interested in proactive or pre-emptive retention offers. It also notes some particular problems. Step promotion increases are low. Raising them for all faculty members would be a good idea, but we may need a different mechanism (e.g., percentage increases, market-driven increases) in some departments. There was some concern that the current expectation that a unit provide one-third of the cost of a retention package might be too burdensome, particularly for small units and units with high differentials between our pay levels and those of our AAU peers. Some ARPAC members suggested that we consider creating a campus-level pool for retention packages as a parallel to the campus-level pool for start-ups. Others noted that creating such a pool would essentially involve all units subsidizing retention efforts that might be required more frequently in particular disciplines. Departments should also consider other efforts to retain their best faculty, including a more aggressive use of endowed chairs, faculty fellowships, and other endowed additions to salaries. We need to keep our best people, and better retention policies might help.

Funding arose as an issue in a number of ways. Faculty members often believed that they were not being supported sufficiently given their large contribution to the campus’s teaching efforts. Reviewers and administrators expressed mixed feelings about the division’s performance in bringing in grant funding. There were widespread complaints about the effectiveness of fund-raising. We have already discussed our belief that an investment should be made in the social sciences. We encourage the College of Arts and Sciences to make clear its expectations of the levels of funded research in the various departments and disciplines. The campus needs to work to make sure that the campuses are supporting the social sciences.

As in other review years, the University Libraries surveyed the needs and concerns of the units under review. Most social science units indicate overall satisfaction with library resources, particularly electronic journals, databases, and services such as PASCAL document delivery and interlibrary loan (ILL). Many comments reflect a broad understanding of current budget constraints although some units lack an awareness of eBooks and express dissatisfaction with the ability to locate resources in the online catalog. This lack of awareness highlights the need for greater outreach from University Libraries subject specialists. Development of a new libraries website using Drupal is underway to improve the end-user experience. Requests for streaming videos, documentary films in particular, surfaced in some social science self-studies, and
The development of a streamlined process has begun. Furthermore, the libraries are aware of opportunities to host campus digital content as well as develop archival collections from Colorado’s communities of color.

Social science units expressed cautious optimism for Open Access (OA), with some units requesting time to debate the challenges and opportunities. Opinions on the mechanism by which access should be provided (and paid for) varied. The Libraries Faculty Open Access Policy provides OA at no cost to the author via deposit in the CU-Boulder repository. A campus-wide policy using the library policy as a model would help to increase open access to the scholarly outputs of these units while avoiding many of the concerns over the costs to authors for publishing in (some) open access journals. OA funds were requested during 2012-2013. Six graduate students and three faculty members met the criteria and received funding. The idea of an institutional repository (IR) was also well received but, like OA, requires broader discussion about how it would be managed, accessed, and secured. Overall, the social sciences feel adequately supported by the libraries with regard to traditional formats but want help with streaming videos and data sets, as well as further discussion of the benefits of OA and the Institutional Repository.

ARPAC applauds the work of the staff in the division. It notes that a number of these units are understaffed and that pay rates often seem low. The campus’ move to exempt more staff members may help. ARPAC also notes that, for the most part, advising in this division met with greater satisfaction than in some other review cycles.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **INVEST MORE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

ARPAC has recommended adding faculty lines to a number of social science units. It strongly urges the College of Arts and Sciences to view the requests from these departments favorably. In addition, ARPAC recommends that the college dean work with the faculty and with the Office of Academic Affairs to develop a strategy for investing in the social sciences, given student demand and the relatively low cost of these programs. As the campus grows, it would make sense to invest in the social sciences as high-demand and high-quality disciplines. This investment can strengthen the campus’s financial situation by bringing students into desirable and efficient programs. It will also improve scholarly work in the social sciences.

2. **COMMIT TO FURTHER CAMPUS SPACE ENHANCEMENTS**

ARPAC strongly recommends that the basic structural work to be done on Ketchum be combined with a redesign of the teaching and office spaces within the building. ARPAC also urges the campus to pursue private funding for a building modeled on the IBS facility to house some social science units. As space is freed up by moves to East Campus, social science units should be considered for that repurposed space.
3. PROMOTE COLLECTIVE CAMPUS EFFORTS BENEFITING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

ARPAC recommends that CARTSS be re-examined in order to strengthen its role as a driver of interdisciplinary work in the social sciences. Additional resources may need to be allocated to CARTSS so it can support the work of individual researchers, disciplinary groups, and interdisciplinary teams. Among other efforts, CARTSS might 1) house a support person for grantsmanship, 2) house a cross-disciplinary statistics or methods course; 3) create an interdisciplinary speaker series or mini-conference that would promote greater exchange and collaboration between social science units, and would raise the visibility of the social sciences as a whole; and 4) help increase web-interconnectivity between the units.

In addition, ARPAC supports the development of a joint statistics training program and the possibility of a joint training program in qualitative and ethnographic methods. Such programs, including a professional master’s in social statistics, might be housed in CARTTS.

ARPAC applauds the successes of IBS and encourages it to continue to reach out across the social sciences and beyond to find productive partnerships.

4. STRENGTHEN CAMPUS DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The social sciences contribute to diversity on campus. All units are called on to continue and to strengthen their efforts to increase diversity at all levels. They should examine national data on diversity by discipline or field. The campus should support diversity hiring and provide diversity training for chairs and search committees.

5. STRENGTHEN GRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

a. Focus available funding on doctoral, not master’s, students. Seek to increase all Ph.D. appointments to provide full tuition coverage.

b. Efforts should be made to minimize discrepancies across the division so that appointments in one department roughly resemble those in others. Perhaps it would be useful if the Graduate School could create a template by which departments could record percentage appointments, courses taught, hours worked, and other relevant data.

c. The Graduate School should examine its method for allocating fellowship support and consider whether a greater weight should be given to doctoral over master’s-level students.

d. Departments should engage in conversations about master’s and professional master’s programs. Note that professional master’s programs are unlikely to be successful unless they can attract a critical mass of students. Pilot programs may provide
needed information. Professional master’s programs must be distinguished from traditional master’s programs in their purpose, design, and delivery.

e. Explore ways in which IBS can aid in the recruitment of graduate students.

f. Make sure that units are aware of increased flexibility to run some small-section graduate classes.

6. IMPROVE FACULTY RETENTION

The campus should engage in a conversation about how best to retain our top faculty members. We should examine the step increases at promotions, cost-sharing in retention packages, the aggressive use of endowments, and other measures to improve retention.

7. DEFINE A FUNDING STRATEGY

The social sciences clearly contribute to the financial wellbeing of the campus through their teaching efforts. There were some concerns expressed in the review about the levels of external funding being brought in by the division. The college and the campus should make clear their expectations concerning external funding by department and discipline.

Increasing philanthropic support for the social sciences is essential as we move into the future. ARPAC understands the constraints under which the Office of University Advancement operates, but all concerned should ensure that this current group of units be given full consideration in planning for fundraising, particularly given the excellence of these units. There should be rich opportunities to raise money for units working in such important areas as global health and the prevention of violence. ARPAC understands that successful fundraising requires the full and responsible involvement of the faculty in individual units, but it also requires leadership from the campus and cooperation from advancement efforts on campus. The College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School, the campus, and the Office of University Advancement need to develop a strong strategy for raising money for the social sciences. Based upon reporting from the units, ARPAC believes that concerted efforts necessary to raise funds for endowed chairs and named professorships. A secondary focus should be graduate fellowships.

OTHER:

8. Establish and enforce a single, campus-wide course-buy-out policy for all faculty members, whether in academic departments or in research institutes.

9. All units should review their bylaws to make sure their policies are in accord with university and campus rules. In particular, all departments should have explicit provision in their bylaws regarding instructors and senior instructors, in keeping with the
Academic Affairs Response to the Task Force on Instructors; regarding mentoring of faculty; and regarding spousal hiring procedures. In addition, guidelines for comprehensive review, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review should define clearly the criteria for findings of “excellence,” “meritorious,” and “less than meritorious” in personnel reviews. Units should take care to include within such criteria appropriate credit for interdisciplinary work undertaken by its faculty members.

10. All units should make sure they meet campus criteria in the area of assessment. The College of Arts and Sciences should encourage units to develop assessment tools and monitor their progress. The campus Assessment Oversight Committee can be an important asset in this process; ARPAC encourages that committee to reach out to the units in this review cycle.

11. The social sciences have much to contribute to the campus’s efforts at internationalization. Units should work with campus leadership to develop and to highlight their international efforts.

12. The Graduate School and the College of Arts and Sciences should work with the departments to ensure that they record and publicize career placement of all graduate students who complete their degrees and systematically maintain and update graduate alumni contact lists with subsequent career developments.

13. Make sure that all units are aware and are using the 2008 memorandum entitled “Guidelines for DA-ICR Distribution: Co-Rostered Faculty and/or Shared Proposals.”

The deans of the college of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School must report annually on the first of May for a period of three years following the year of the receipt of this report (e.g., May 1, 2015, 2016, and 2017) to the provost on the implementation of these recommendations. The provost, as part of the review reforms, has agreed to respond annually to all outstanding matters under her/his purview arising from this review year. All official responses will be posted online.