CU-ARPAC Internal Review Committee  
**Report on the Institute of Behavioral Science**

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**Summary:** We find that the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) has written a self-study report that is an accurate and relatively thorough portrayal of the Institute.

**Activities:** We received the IBS Self-Study and related documents in mid-December. We selected our student committee member, Dan Johnson, in November 2012, and prior to our February 4th, 2013 site visit, Dan created and distributed an online survey to get graduate student input.

On February 4th, 2012, we had a series of meetings with IBS faculty, research staff, and administrative staff. An initial orientation meeting was held with Director Jane Menken (Dept. of Sociology), and members of the Self-Study Committee: Ed Greenberg (Dept. of Political Science), Jason Boardman (Dept. of Sociology), Fred Pampel (Dept. of Sociology, Emeritus), Steve Graham (IBS Administration), and graduate student (Elizabeth Lawrence, Dept. of Sociology). We then had a series of separate meetings with the following groups: IBS Professional Research Assistants (PRAs), who are individuals paid by grants to do research; IBS Research Personnel, generally individuals with advanced degrees and who can serve as P.I.s on grants; IBS (tenure-track) Faculty Associates who are not rostered in the Institute but are involved in Institute endeavors; IBS post-doctoral fellows; IBS Senior Research Personnel, IBS administrative and support staff (including IT support professionals, librarians, etc.), IBS-rostered tenured faculty, and IBS-rostered faculty who are not yet tenured. We also met with three faculty at a drop-in session and one postdoc and one researcher by phone who are currently working away from Colorado. For the most part, these individuals tend to be aligned with one of the 5 major programs of the Institute: Environment & Society (Terrence McCabe, director), Health & Society (Richard Jessor, director), Population (Richard Rogers, director), Institutions (Lee Alston, director) and Problem Behavior & Positive Youth Development (Delbert Elliott, director), which prior to the opening of the IBS building two years ago were housed in different locales.

**Evaluation of the Self-Study Report:** We reviewed the IBS responses to the 14 questions that were addressed in the self-study report. Our interviews with the IBS faculty and staff confirmed many of the key themes identified in the self study including: that IBS a) is a highly successful unit with a strong international reputation and record of extra-mural funding, b) has a committed core Faculty, and a large cohort of invested Faculty Associates, c) has a wide and diverse set of thriving programs including those that address important societal problems in our state, our country and across the world, and d) has been and continues to be
transformed by the creation and opening of a building for the Institute two years ago. Our interviews also confirmed that the Institute is at a critical crossroads with many long-standing leaders of the program and the director of the Institute itself stepping down in the near future. As such, many of the requested hiring needs appear very appropriate and, furthermore, will not be able to be met by junior level hires. In addition, it is also clear that the Institute administration is doing an extraordinary job going well above the call of duty and is severely taxed.

During our day of interviews, we also gained several key insights that were less salient in the written report that followed the prescribed format of 14 standardized questions. We highlight three of these points in the “Observations” section. The interview process also revealed several aspects of the report that would benefit from revision in order to clarify the evidence of true excellence in the report for readers. We identify these suggested revisions in the “Information that Might Be Added...” section.

**Observations.** The most enduring impressions from the day of interviews were certain points that become submerged in the report because of its fixed structure. We highlight these below.

- The most significant resource requests in the IBS proposal are for faculty lines. Four of the major leaders of the Institute who have served to obtain the majority of funding for the Institute will be retiring soon. Hence, findings suitable replacements and assuring a smooth transition of leadership is a major issue that the Institute will be facing in the near future. More specifically, the Director of Problem Behavior & Positive Youth Development Program, Del Elliott, is retiring. Currently there is an on-going search to fill the director position. In addition, Ed Greenberg will be retiring out of the Institutions Program, leaving this program without one of its senior stalwarts who has sustained it over the years. In December 2013, the director of the Health and Society Program, Richard Jessor, will be retiring. Moreover, Emeritus Professor Fred Pampel, who directs the Population center, plans to step down in the next few years. As the center grant that supports this portion of the program ends in May 2015, having a replacement in place in time to write a competitive renewal will be of importance. Thus, two other of the main Institute programs will be undergoing a change of leadership. Finally, Jane Menken, plans to step down as director in June of 2015. To keep the strength and continuity of the IBS programs providing the ability to hire four new faculty lines as requested, both at the senior and junior levels will be most important.

- The impact of having a new building unified building for IBS has been profound. The time needed to design the building and obtain the money for funding the building has been a huge endeavor, which has kept the administration of the Institute occupied for a significant amount of time.
That the Institute funding levels and work has continued at such a high level during this project and the transition to the new building is a testimony to the hard work of many members of IBS. Not only has the new building increased morale amongst the members of IBS (who previously had been housed in very old and outdated buildings), but it is providing more cross-talk and interaction between programs, allows additional facilities for related departments (e.g., office space for graduate students in Sociology), and provides a focus for Institute endeavors. The building has been carefully designed to foster additional interactions, another testament to the loving care put into the design of the building by the IBS director and her team.

- The overriding impression that came through time after time from the various constituencies was that IBS is a great place to work and, in some cases at least, was cited as the primary reason that an individual came to CU or remained at CU in spite of other offers or opportunities. The success of IBS in its research and scholarship and as a resource for graduate and advanced training is a result of the successes of individuals and groups that are supported and fostered by the Institute at every level.

**Information that Might be Added to the IBS Report:** In general, the self-study very clearly articulated the strengths and needs of the unit. However, we also identified three areas where information might profitably be added to the self-study.

- **Institute-wide priorities.** Prior to the opening of the IBS building, the Institute’s 5 programs were housed in different buildings. Bringing these programs together is an on-going process, but more information about how the Institute functions as a whole and where it plans to go as a whole would be useful to include in the self-study. We found it notable that included in the report was one that addressed all self-study questions for each of the programs individually. These sections were often longer and more complete than the sections speaking to issues for the Institute as a whole. For example, the report lacked an overall organizational chart, which would be extremely helpful for the outside reviewers; during our on-site visit, Director Menken provided us with this and plans to add it to the report. Moreover, now that the 5 programs are co-located, there is no discussion of specific areas of specialization that might allow future hires to serve as a catalyst for inter-digitization of the different programs. Although there is concern expressed in the report about the lack of ties with Psychology and Neuroscience, that logically might play a larger role in IBS than they currently do, there was not a consideration of how hiring in particular areas of expertise might serve to build those ties. Furthermore, there is no discussion of general themes that might tie across different Institute programs, such as “risk and resilience”. In
In sum, a broader discussion of Institute-wide rather than program-wide objectives would be a helpful additional to the self-study.

- **Information about general Institute structure and governance.** As the Institute will be undergoing a large transformation of leadership, it would also help for the Institute to discuss how new leadership roles will be changed. It appears that the by-laws included with the self-study are somewhat dated and/or on certain occasions not followed. The faculty informed us that decisions are made by the program directors, either individually or in concert with each other as the Board of Directors, but that there is no occasion (e.g., once a semester, once a year) where the faculty as a whole meet with the Institute Director and Program Directors to discuss the on-going issues facing the Institute, nor does the director have either an external-advisory committee, or any mechanisms for wider faculty input. As a result, the faculty felt that the decision-making of the Institute was rather opaque, and that since program directors are usually in place for some period of time, that the decision-making and perspectives can become somewhat insular. Moreover, although they feel able to provide informal input, it appears that larger group discussion (and perhaps voting) for program leadership does not occur. As there is going to be a changing of the guard, we sensed that a better clarification of how these leadership positions will be filled and discussion of mechanisms for faculty input would be very much welcomed at this critical point in time. In addition, we received the strong impression that there are at least a handful of existing tenured faculty members who would be willing to help in the transition and play a leadership role if the means by which such a selection process occurs was made clearer. In sum, a larger discussion of the governance of the Institute and procedures for faculty input and representation would be a helpful addition to the self-study.

- **Communication and Publicity.** As noted above, during our visit there was some discussion of how information is communicated amongst Institute faculty and the program directors. This issue appeared to be reflective of a broader issue of communication both within the Institute members itself and of the Institute with the outside world. Although the building was designed to aid communication amongst individuals (and appears to be doing that), individuals who spoke to us noted the lack of more formal means of communication amongst individuals, especially those who in the process of developing their careers. There appears to be no formal mechanisms for graduate students or post-doctoral students to meet on a regular basis, list serves specific to groups of individuals (e.g., graduate students and post-docs, administrative staff, list serves for technical and/or statistical issues, etc.), or a yearly “research day” where students can present their work to all the Institute membership. As enhancing graduate education is a focus of
Flagship 2030, an expanded discussion of some of these issues might be helpful.

Moreover, the Institute is doing much work that impacts individuals in our state, our country and our world. The public is not aware of much of their research and the programs they run. As another focus of Flagship 2030 relates to outreach and public relevance, a larger discussion of this issue would be helpful. We note that it is clear that the staff is already stretched very thin and we not see how this issue could be dressed with the existing resources.

Conclusion

We conclude that the Self Study of the Institute of Behavioral Science appropriately reflects the accomplishments and progress of a world class research institute, led by outstanding faculty and directors, and fostering outstanding research and training. The occupation of the new building, a result of the endeavors over many years of the IBS leadership, provides a unique opportunity to build on the past successes of the research programs in a more integrated manner. Our discussions with faculty, researchers, staff, and trainees, lead us to suggest that the Self Study and strategic planning might incorporate a more inclusive and transparent model for governance, consideration of Institute wide planning and priorities, and enhanced communication both internally and externally.
Activities

In general, the IBS self-study addresses the graduate program correctly and accurately. Based on a thorough review of the report, three core issues were identified as needing additional information and further review. To gather information regarding graduate training at IBS, an anonymous online survey was distributed to all current IBS graduate students using Qualtrics. Of the 38 students in the graduate training program, 35 students (92%) of students completed the survey. Students were notified of the survey via email 12 days before the deadline and were given a reminder 5 days from the deadline and again on the day of the deadline. Students were also encouraged to provide open feedback to the reviewer via email. The three issues needing further attention, and results from the survey of graduate students, are outlined below.

(1) Funding. Issues around graduate funding were cited frequently throughout the self-study report, but no descriptive statistics were provided regarding sources of funding among graduate students. Based on the reports from 35 graduate students, the majority of students are currently funded by GRAs (34%) and TAs (37%), with all other students funded by other department or external sources. Summer funding, which students and faculty had reported as being a “selling point” for prospective students, was slightly less consistent: 17% of students did not receive summer funding last year. How can IBS ensure that students receive (at least partial) funding during the summer? This is an important point in terms of recruitment and productivity of graduate students.

Just over half of IBS students reported applying for independent funding (56%) at some point in their training. It is surprising, given the numerous references to limited funding made in the self study, that all students are not encouraged to submit a proposal for independent funding. When students were asked if a formal requirement of preparing a “submit-able” grant proposal be introduced into the training program (via a program requirement or as part of a required course), 76% liked the idea. Could this be one way to encourage more proposals for independent funding? Other potential solutions to reduce the funding burdens on GRAs and TAs may be issues to highlight in the self-study report.

(2) Interdisciplinary training. The report emphasized the extensive, top-notch opportunities for interdisciplinary training for graduate students with an impressive list of short courses, workshops, and projects. While there is discussion
in the report of "high attendance" at many trainings, there is no assessment of how many graduate students actually make use of these opportunities. By student report, 63% attend approximately one training per year, which suggests students utilize these resources. However, a majority of students (66%) reported that they have been unable to attend trainings they wanted to attend, and the most common reason was that the schedule of these trainings conflict with graduate student responsibilities (e.g. TAing, course times, meetings). If these trainings are a highlight of the interdisciplinary training for graduate students in IBS, can more efforts be made to reduce scheduling conflicts between the program’s required activities for students and these valuable (but optional) trainings?

Another recommendation in the report for improving graduating training is the addition of new certificate programs (similar to the demography certificate program). The report discussed this option as another opportunity for students, without citing if students would want or utilize these new programs. In fact only 19% reported they would absolutely commit to a certificate program in their area of interest, with the majority saying probably (66%) and a minority saying they would likely not commit to a program (16%). When asked to indicate potential barriers to committing to a certificate program, 80% of students reported that they were too busy to increase their workload, and 25% of students reported that they would not commit to a certificate program because the requirements could be unattainable (based on their perception that requirements of current certificate programs are often unattainable). Based on these findings, it seems appropriate that the self-study emphasize the wealth of existing interdisciplinary training opportunities and suggestions for new programs, but should balance this enthusiasm with efforts to recognize and accommodate the already demanding responsibilities of graduate trainees. What steps can be done to streamline certificate programs with the established training program, such that students do not have to commit to an unattainable, or at least unappealing, amount of additional responsibilities to obtain a certificate?

(3) Graduate student recruitment. The self-study report indicates that continued growth of the graduate training program through recruitment of outstanding graduate students to IBS is a major goal moving forward. However, over half of current IBS graduate students reported that IBS did not factor into their decision to attend CU. This result suggests that more needs to be done in terms of recruiting and marketing. With this in mind, graduate students were polled about potential ways to continue to draw outstanding applicants to the IBS program. The most common responses were to enhance communication with other academic departments at CU (82%) and improve marketing both within (44%) and outside the CU community (62%). Graduate students suggested both targeted recruitment of applicants by IBS, as well as increased presence in the recruitment processes of academic departments at CU. As the recruitment of students is increasingly competitive today, how can IBS use this information from graduate students to improve recruitment and maintain their record of outstanding graduate trainees?
Note – This graduate student report does not address the portions of the IBS self-study under question 3 (undergraduate education).
Appendix: Survey Questions cited in report on Graduate Student Perceptions

IBS_SelfStudy

Q1 What year in the program are you?
☐ 1st year
☐ 2nd year
☐ 3rd year
☐ 4th year
☐ 5th year
☐ 6th, 7th, 8th... year

Q2 How are you currently funded?
☐ I am not currently funded
☐ Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)
☐ Teaching Assistant (TA)
☐ Independent funding (e.g. NSF, NRSA, etc)
☐ Other internal/external funding (please specify) ________________

Q5 How were you funded during the summer of 2012
☐ I was not funded during this time
☐ Same funding as I reported in Question # 2
☐ GRA
☐ TA
☐ Independent funding
☐ other internal/external funding

Q6 In your time at IBS, have you submitted a proposal for independent funding (NSF, NRSA, other grants, etc)?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Answer If In your time at IBS, have you submitted a proposal for in... Yes Is Selected

Q7 Was your proposal accepted (i.e. did you receive independent funding)?
☐ Yes
☐ No
Q8 Why haven't you submitted a proposal for independent funding? Check all that apply.
- I don't have the time to prepare a proposal
- I don't have the support I need to prepare a proposal
- I don't need the funding
- Any other reason (please specify) ________________

Q9 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "I like the idea of IBS having a formal 'infrastructure' for students to submit grant proposals for independent funding." Examples: a requirement of IBS graduate students to prepare a "submit-able" grant proposal at some point during their training (and a requirement of IBS faculty to support their advisees in this process), OR, a course in which a required assignment is to prepare a "submit-able" grant proposal, with support of faculty member and peers.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q10 Approximately how many IBS-sponsored short courses, workshops or trainings have you attended in your time at IBS?
- More than one training per year in the program
- About one training per year in the program
- About one training for every two years in the program
- I haven't attended any trainings yet

Answer If Approximately how many IBS-sponsored short courses, workshops... I haven't attended any trainings yet Is Not Selected

Q14 In general, have you found the training(s) valuable?
- Very Valuable
- Valuable
- Somewhat Valuable
- Not Valuable
Q12 Has there been a training you wanted to attend but did not attend?
- No, I've attended all the trainings I wanted to attend
- No, there haven't been any trainings I've wanted to attend
- Yes

Answer If Has there been a training you wanted to attend but did no... Yes Is Selected

Q13 Why didn't you attend the training?
- I didn't have the time for it
- The schedule of the training conflicted with my schedule (e.g. courses, meetings, TAing)
- Any other reason (please specify) ________________

Q15 If a new certificate program in your field of study was implemented in IBS that had requirements similar to those for current certificate programs (e.g. demography certificate) would you enroll in the program?
- Absolutely
- Probably
- Probably Not
- Absolutely Not
- Not applicable

Answer If If a new certificate program in your ... Absolutely Is Not Selected

Q16 What would keep you from committing to a certificate program in your area of study? Check all that apply.
- I am too busy to increase my workload
- I am concerned that the requirements for the program could be unattainable
- I don't think a certificate program would enhance my training at IBS
- I don't think a certificate program would increase my "marketability" as a job applicant in the future
- Any other reason (please specify) ________________
Q18 Half of the graduate students at IBS reported that IBS did not factor into their decision to attend CU. Given the increasing competition in recruiting prospective students and the goal of IBS to maintain outstanding graduate students, do you see this as a problem for IBS?

☐ No
☐ Yes

Q19 What more can be done to draw prospective students to IBS? Check all that apply.

☐ Update/Improve the website
☐ Better communication with academic departments at CU
☐ Increase/Improve marketing within the CU community
☐ Increase/Improve marketing outside the CU community
☐ Other suggestions (please specify) ________________

Q20 20. Please indicate the extent to which the graduate student community within IBS feels integrated and interdisciplinary.

☐ Very integrated and interdisciplinary, just like the rest of IBS
☐ Somewhat integrated and interdisciplinary
☐ Somewhat segmented by academic department
☐ Very segmented by academic department

Q21 Please indicate how the level of integration in the graduate student community at IBS (as indicated in your response to question 20) impacts your training (research productivity, education) at IBS.

☐ Very positively
☐ Somewhat positively
☐ No impact
☐ Somewhat negatively
☐ Very negatively
Q22 Please indicate how the level of integration in the graduate student community at IBS (as indicated in your response to question 20) impacts your quality of life (social interactions, relationships, etc) at IBS and outside IBS.

- Very positively
- Somewhat positively
- No impact
- Somewhat negatively
- Very negatively