

August 8, 2008

TO: Gerry Hanley

FROM: Katherine C. Naff, SSRIC Chair

SUBJECT: SSRIC present and planned activities

cc: SSRIC representatives

Thank you for the opportunity to present the initiatives that SSRIC has undertaken to promote research and instruction across the CSU. This memo summarizes our current activities and future plans. As you know, for the last 36 years SSRIC has served as a CSU-wide research and teaching community. We have done so by making available curriculum materials, access to databases, forums for student and faculty learning. We have also done so by developing a network of faculty across the CSU who can participate in the growth and development of new initiatives such as DIVA and FRESCA (see III-F below).

I. Development of Curriculum Materials

The Council has been involved in developing curriculum materials through most of its 36 years of existence. Currently, we provide (at <http://www.ssrc.org>):

- A. two online textbooks,
- B. a series of instructional modules and exercises,
- C. several instructional handouts.

A. Online textbooks (<http://www.ssrc.org/tr/onlinetextbooks>)

SPSS for Windows 13.0: A Basic Tutorial. Topics covered include file creation, variable transformation, univariate statistics, crosstabulation (including measures of association and significance), comparison of means (paired sample t-tests, independent sample t-tests, and anova), correlation and regression, and multivariate analysis). Each chapter includes exercises using a subset of the General Social Survey. A new version of the tutorial (for SPSS version 16) has been completed and should be available by the end of August, 2008.

Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science: The POWERMUTT Project. A hybrid textbook/website. Topics include research design, types and sources of data, measurement, frequency distribution and crosstabulation (including measures of association and significance), comparison of means (paired sample t-tests, independent sample t-tests, and anova), correlation and regression, and longitudinal analysis. A variety of datasets is included. At

present, the project is designed for use with SPSS. A version using SDA (see below.) will be ready by late summer or early fall.

- B. Instructional modules and exercises (<http://www.ssrc.org/trd/modules> and <http://www.ssrc.org/trd/exercises>)

In 1997, the Council received a grant from the CSU to develop what was then known as the Teaching Resources Depository (TRD). Modules (including substantive chapters, methodological chapters, and exercises with accompanying datasets) were developed in geography, anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science. The project also produced a series of stand-alone exercises with accompanying datasets.

In part because of a lack of stable, ongoing funding, much of this material has become dated. In 2007 the Council was able to fund an update of the geography module, and a new interactive introduction to SPSS. Updates of the modules on social issues and on the California legislature have been completed and will be posted to the Website in the near future. The Council is currently working with Andrew Roderick to update the TRD (see future initiatives)

- C. Instructional handouts (<http://www.ssrc.org/tr/instructionalhandouts>)

The Council has developed a set of handouts, suitable for classes and workshops, to provide instruction in the use of the social science databases to which the CSU subscribes.

The Council's philosophy has been that the copyright for materials developed under its aegis resides with the authors, but that unrestricted use is granted for all non-commercial, educational purposes. At present, all of the materials developed use data that are freely available. In the event that materials are developed using proprietary databases (such as those to which the CSU subscribes), access will be password protected and limited to CSU students, faculty, and staff. An exception to this general policy is the SPSS Tutorial. Through an agreement with McGraw Hill's Primus Custom Publishing, each online version of the tutorial is freely available provided that at least 200 copies of the hard copy version are sold by the publisher. To date, we have never had any problem reaching this target.

II. Other instructional and research-related activities

In addition to contributing directly to instruction by developing courseware, the Council has also assisted instruction through:

- A. the annual Student Research Conference,
- B. workshops designed primarily for faculty,
- C. acquisition of an SDA license, and
- D. active membership in the ICPSR.

- A. Student Research Competition (SRC): Since 1977, the Council has sponsored a SRC. (Note: this conference should not be confused with the CSU Student Research Competition, which was developed later.) In recent years, the SRC (<http://www.ssrc.org/participate/src>) has been very successful. Last year's conference at CSU, Long Beach included 43 presentations by graduate and undergraduate students from 11 campuses.
- B. Workshops for faculty : The Council sends representatives to any CSU campus to provide workshops on the following topics: use of the databases to which the CSU subscribes (ICPSR's voluminous databases, Field Poll, Roper poll, UC Data); SPSS statistical package (beginning and intermediate); and SDA (see point C). Over the past four years, we have presented 31 workshops, visiting all but two campuses (the Maritime Academy and Sonoma) at least once. In this way, we expand our reach by teaching faculty skills that they, in turn, can teach their own students. Workshops have been provided at no direct cost to campuses (other than providing lunch to presenters and participants). We have been able to reimburse presenters' expenses out of the Council's travel budget.
- C. SDA license: The Council has acquired a license for Survey Documentation and Analysis (SDA; a server-side statistical analysis package developed at UC Berkeley). To date, we have converted six datasets to SDA format (<http://www.ssrc.org/sda>). While SDA lacks the power and functionality of SPSS, and is generally not considered suitable for scholarly research, the fact that it requires no client-side software (other than an Internet browser), makes it ideally suited for many instructional applications. The CSU site license for SPSS does not permit students to install copies on their personal computers, and it is our understanding that most community colleges do not have SPSS site licenses at all. We see SDA as a potentially very fruitful tool for partnering with social scientists at community colleges.

- D. ICPSR : The Council has taken the lead in continuing the CSU's membership in the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). We encourage the consortium (the world's leading social science data archive, whose primary focus is faculty research) to give attention to "cultivating the garden" through initiatives at the undergraduate level. This year, an SSRIC member was elected to a four-year term on the ICPSR's 11 member governing council. In addition, a member of the SSRIC has served on that council for eight of the past 12 years. During the first two years of the ICPSR's "Undergraduate Research Paper Competition," (<http://icpsr.org/ICPSR/prize/index.html>) an SSRIC member has chaired the review committee, and SSRIC members have constituted half of that committee's six members. SSRIC members have contributed to the ICPSR's growing collection of instructional resources, including, most recently, a module on "Investigating Community and Social Capital" (<http://icpsr.org/ICSC/index.html>)

III. Future Directions (on the agenda for further discussion by the Council at its Fall (October 3) meeting)

- A. Marketing existing resources: As far as we know, for example, the political science research methods site has, aside from incidental use, been adopted as an online textbook only at Cal Poly, Pomona, CSU, Dominguez Hills, and the University of Toronto. The MERLOT project would seem to be an ideal way of increasing awareness and encouraging access. In addition, we need to figure out effective ways of communicating with our counterparts at California's community colleges. This may be facilitated by our work with Andrew Roderick (see III F below)
- B. The CSU Transforming Course Design initiative (http://www.calstate.edu/ats/transforming_course_design/) seeks to address "high impact, low success" courses. In most of the social sciences, the introductory research methods course has proven to be a major stumbling block for undergraduates, who tend to put off taking it as long as possible, and often do poorly when they finally do so. The materials we have already developed were designed to address this very problem, and we are looking for ways to continue to develop courseware and, as already noted, develop more effective means of dissemination.

- C. Online statistics course: We agree that there is a specific need for an online statistics course designed specifically for undergraduates majoring in one of the social sciences. A first draft of an outline of such a course is attached. Approval for the initiative, including solicitation of interested faculty to work on the project, is on the agenda for the Council's Fall meeting on October 3.

- D. Student Research Conference: We are exploring ways to increase the impact of our annual Student Research Conference. One possibility would be to create tie-ins with national essay contests and undergraduate journals. A number of national honor societies in the social sciences sponsor one or both of these. We are examining how to do more to publicize such opportunities to our students.

- E. Faculty network: We have a network of "research oriented faculty" to whom we direct relevant notices about database availability, RFPs, etc. On our agenda for the Fall meeting is discussion of how to expand the utility of this network. We anticipate continuing to disseminate information about, and solicit faculty participation with such projects as DIVA and FRESKA (see below)

- F. Collaboration with Andrew Roderick, Director of Computing, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, SFSU. We currently contract with Andrew to maintain our website, on which can be found information on all of our activities and links to databases and teaching resources. We will be working with Andrew this year to enhancing the quality of our Teaching Resource Depository including looking at the possibility of developing online materials to supplement our existing workshops. We also expect to collaborate with Andrew on his development of DIVA (Digital Information Virtual Archive). We are looking at finding additional publicly available datasets to add to the archive and advising Andrew on the best way to package and present those datasets. We also anticipate working with Andrew on the FRESKA (Faculty Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities Community Profile System) initiative by serving as a pilot group in the project.

G. Consortium of Applied Social Science Research Centers (CASSRC): There are quite a few social science research centers in the CSU. Last year we worked with Dr. Elizabeth Ambos to create a Consortium of Applied Social Science Research Centers. Last year we had an organizational meeting at the Chancellor's Office and created a listserv for the consortium. This Consortium provides a mechanism for the Chancellor's Office to distribute RFP's to appropriate research centers in the CSU. These could be from outside organizations, but they could also be projects that the Chancellor's Office needs to carry out internally. The Consortium also provides the opportunity for these research centers to work together and possibly to partner on large projects. We plan to continue developing this Consortium in 2008-09. There is a built in liaison between the CASSRC and the SSRIC with two members overlapping between the two groups. This means that it will be easy to maintain communication between the two groups.