

Council Meeting Minutes

March 7 – 8, 2019

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Council Members: Bobray Bordelon, Lisa Cook, Jane Fry, Michael Jones-Correa (Chair), Elizabeth Groff, Verna Keith, Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux, Katherine Wallman, Keith Whitfield, and Esther Wilder

ICPSR Staff: Dharma Akmon, Trent Alexander, JD Alford, Ashok Bhargav, Lindsay Blankenship, Johanna Bleckman, Sarah Burchart, Dieter Burrell, Monica Butler, Stephanie Carpenter, Robert Choate, Alina Conn, Edward Czilli, Sara del Norte, Linda Detterman, Ashley Doonan, Aubrey Garman, Gin Gorden, Libby Hemphill, Lynette Hoelter, Holli Homan, Laurie Howland, Stuart Hutchings, Dory Knight-Ingram, Abay Israel, Susan Jekielek, Meghan Jacobs, Sharvetta Johnson, Matthew Johnston, Kevin Kapalla, Lisa Kelly, Kilsang Kim, Michael Kirkwood, Kathryn Lavender, Susan Leonard, Maggie Levenstein, Jared Lyle, Nan McBride, James McNally, John Marcotte, Elizabeth Moss, Justin Noble, Michelle Overholser, Brent Phillips, Amy Pienta, Katey Pillars, Jukka Savolainen, Saundra Schneider, Chelsea Sample-Steele, Annalee Shelton, Michael Shove, Mike Staggs, Fillippo Stargell, David Thomas, Rujuta Umarji, Harsha Ummerpillai, Vanessa Unkeless-Perez, Jay Winker, and LingLing Zhang

ACTION ITEMS FOR JUNE 2019:

Approve 2020 Budget
Approve 2020 Membership Rate Fee Increase
Approve 2020 Summer Program Fees
Approve IDC Policy

Organizational updates

Michael Jones-Correa welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. Motion to approve the October meeting minutes. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Maggie reviewed the ongoing activities of the organization as follows:

Acquisitions

ICPSR has been doing a lot of outreach for acquisitions. We have been using Copper (sales software) for keeping track of acquisitions, and acquisitions and deposits have increased in the General Archive and across the organizations. We have been having renewed discussions with DataPass members. Maggie explained that DataPass is an organization of about a dozen like-minded digital archives, and the National Archives, that have promised to back up one another's data and collaborate in other ways. Some DataPass members were contracting with an organization called DPN that provided long-term data preservation. DPN is no longer in business. This has given DataPass members a renewed interest in supporting each other.

In October 2018, we announced that we had been getting ready to launch a general repository for the *American Education Research Association* (AERA). Those have now had a soft launch; we will be talking about that more at the AERA meetings in April. We are also about to get the journal repositories of the *American Economic Association* (AEA) and those will come with 10 years or more of data that the AEA has been collecting from all of its journals. Those journal repositories are going to get a lot more data very soon, and we have been getting ready for that process.

Curation

We have been doing a lot of work both in terms of curation workflow and curation technology. We have adopted a document that articulates our levels of curation, as guidance for ourselves. In the past, there was no clear criteria for deciding how much effort got put into curating a particular dataset. As a result, we sometimes over-invested in low value data sets. There was also variation in practice across curators. The new curation levels have reduced the time that it takes to curate, reducing the queues. Rujuta Umarji has written about some of this in the Curation report. We have three new curators who started this week. We are in the process of hiring two new supervisors in Curation. Although with those five people, we almost surely will be hiring in Curation. That means that we have been putting a lot of effort in training materials for the Curation staff.

We have been having meetings with PIs from each of the topical archive and with the Curation staff to improve communication and workflow so that everyone understands how the curation levels work, so that we can set priorities and then deliver on what we are promising to depositors and to funders. Again, that requires that we have sufficient staff and requires a better understanding of our flow of resources. We are also working hard on improving the curation operations as they exist today. We are working very hard to move Curation to Archonnex. As you may have noticed, we have made moving Curation to Archonnex one of our top three goals

for the organization for 2019. We have been saying this for a while. This is a really important priority, and I think I am coming to understand what a big lift this is for us. One question is whether to take advantage of the move to Archonnex to develop new tools and to modernize all of our technology or instead move Curation to Archonnex essentially as is. We need to get the move completed so that we don't have data coming in and out of Archonnex, which is disruptive and costly and leads to errors. So we will probably do some of both. Even systemizing our processes, like establishing levels of Curation, makes curation more efficient and makes it easier to design the new system. Moving curation to Archonnex will involve a lot of effort by both our IT staff, our Curation staff, by our archival staff. It requires input from the entire organization. By the end of the year we are hoping for a smoother workflow. I expect over the next couple of years we will need to continue investments in modernizing our Curation tools to make them more efficient and easier to use for the Curation staff.

Funding

Our membership revenue is up, and the membership team has been doing a great job. Our social media presence has increased, a lot of our topical archives are posting regularly, and new ICPSR 101 videos have been released on YouTube. Membership engagement is important for bringing in new members and sustaining our membership. In terms of sponsored funding, the Mellon project has now been funded. This is a multi-million dollar new data collection project. We are starting to hire for this project. We have submitted the NADHAP (drug abuse) renewal, which is one of big archives. We have been actively submitting lots of other proposals including those that would fund infrastructure development. We have some really big topical archives that are coming up for renewal again this year, including DSDR, Civic Leads, and NACJD. When we discuss budget and priorities those are sources of uncertainty and are priorities for the organization to make sure they are successful.

Overall organization

We had our first retreat of the FUnC leaders on February 20, 2019. The retreat was a great success. We reviewed our Strategic Plan, and our number one priority was unquestionably improving organizational culture – in particular improving communication and collaboration across the organization. There are a number of things that we are doing in this regard. We have been using SLACK and that has helped with communication across the organization. We have a new committee that is working on the intranet site. The second goal for the year is moving Curation to Archonnex, and the third goal is improving our financial reporting and planning. The organization has been putting a lot of thought and time into this. We still do not have a full time Center Administrator. Trent Alexander has been the acting Center Administrator for quite a while. The Center Administrator position will be posted at the end of March. Trent has been very helpful in this role particularly during the reorganization of ISR Human Resources. Trent has really been involved in that. JD Alford and Trent and I have been working on the budgeting process.

Financial

We anticipate a slight deficit for this year. Smaller than what we have budgeted for this fiscal year. We are trying to improve our reporting process. JD Alford has been working on this. Our financial statements serve several functions. Unit directors need budgets that help them manage their units. PIs need to manage sponsored project budgets. We also need to have a budget planning process that reflects the strategic goals of the organization. Finally, we need to have timely reports to accurately compare our actuals with planned amounts so that we can produce projections.

Question from Council about ISR commitment for Maggie Levenstein's and Libby Hemphill's salary. Council also asked about trends in revenue from the VDE. Maggie explained that the VDE revenue reflects the cost of service for users. It does not generate a profit. We would like to eventually move VDE to cloud to provide greater and more flexible storage and computing capacity.

Salary expenditures are about 55% of budget compared to 45% at this time last year. Non-salary expenditures are higher in the first part of the year, as was the case last year. The budget is thus following historical trends.

We will save money if we reduce the IO split. There were discussions regarding expanding membership dollars. Maggie also discussed getting ICPSR to work with foundations like MacArthur to support archiving of data by their grantees, as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation does.

Membership has all but four R1s. Identified who we didn't have and the reasons why they are not members, and we discussed techniques of recruiting them.

2020 preliminary budget

The budget is based on committed revenue of 15.4 million. We raised membership rates a year ago; it had no impact on renewals. Summer Program revenues are projected to be higher this year; they took a hit last year because of international student issues. Additional revenue will come from the Gates Foundation for Diversity scholarships. We have approved budgets with deficits for the last several years. We can change this by writing more and better proposals. We can increase membership revenue through growth or higher fees. Alternatively, we can cut costs. Maggie wants to balance the budget by investing in technology that gives us a competitive edge and improves how we deliver services. We will balance our budget by doing things that strengthen the organization, and help us to generate more membership dollars and more sponsored dollars. The new budgeting process will allow us to make better planning decisions.

Grants and contracts: Strategies and Results

I. Current Funding and Submissions

Maggie reported that while ICPSR's proposal submission count is lower, the funding received has increased. This is believed to be in part the result of a new proposal selection process that evaluates the effort required for a submission, the likelihood of receiving the award, along with the award's value. The implementation of the Proposal Selection Committee (Trent Alexander, Maggie Levenstein, and Amy Pienta) has also been an effective tool for planning and coordinating submissions. The proposal editing group has created a shared drive with current template language to ensure a consistent and accurate depiction of ICPSR.

Recently, federal funding for activities like data archiving has been shifting from grants to contracts, which has posed an obstacle for ICPSR. Compared to grants, there is a much larger logistical workload when submitting proposals and reporting for contracts. This requires that we develop the capacity to efficiently handle this additional paperwork.

II. Goals

ICPSR aims to increase proposal submissions and to increase awards. To accomplish this goal, research staff of all levels will need to be involved in the proposal writing process. Relationships will need to be established with additional funders, including foundations.

ICPSR intends to improve its ability to compete for contract funding and meet their more stringent reporting requirements. Staff plans to consult with other institutions within University of Michigan, such as Michigan Engineering, that have considerable experience with federal contracts.

III. Recommendations

Esther Wilder proposed exploring NSF's international research experience program for students as an opportunity for the Summer Program. Funding for these programs typically have IDC rates and offers awards up to \$1 million. Maggie Levenstein and Sandy Schneider added that the Summer Program participates in a small program focusing on students from Africa and the Middle East which has been very successful. The current program is indirectly funded by this NSF program via the American Political Science Association.

Voting and Recommendations

The Nomination Committee consists of those who are rotating off of Council as well as two non-Council members. We would like suggestions of nominees for Council. Please continue to send those in. April 1 is the deadline for the Council nominees.

We need two continuing Council members and a former winner of each award to serve on the Miller and Flanigan Award committees. These two awards are given out in the OR meeting.

Strategic Plan Update and Discussion

I. Education in the ICPSR Strategic Plan

Maggie Levenstein gave an overview and mentioned she would like to see the Strategic Plan moved into a Project Management System like Jira for version control. Council approved the Executive Summary over a year ago. Staff has had two follow up sessions with Strategic Plan consultant Ruth Bardenstein. Ruth met with each unit and went through goals for the current year, and adjustments for the next year. The overall sense is that more people in the organization are taking leadership in writing proposals. There is a more effective grant writing process and there is also now a proposal-editing group.

II. 2018 Outcomes

ICPSR is expanding membership funding, digitized Summer Program registrations, reviewing the possibility of approaching the ICPSR alumni for future support. The data stewardship policy committee was created.

III. 2019 Goals

Our technology goals are to move into Archonnex, and move the data pipeline into a single integrated platform. Hiring a Center Administrator who has a strong background in financials and grants and contracts. We are also looking into acquiring new data types for example, geospatial data. Lynette Hoelter discussed Statsnap. Lynette indicated that Statsnap is a really good data exploration tool, however, she wants to develop the software further.

Summer Program

I. Overview of the Summer Program

The Summer Program developed a video “Explain the Summer Program in a Feeling” by Scott Campbell and Stephanie Carpenter. It was reviewed by Council.

Saundra Schneider reported on the highlights of the 2019 Summer Program: Similar to past programs with two four-week sessions and numerous short courses. Innovations include two two-week, four per day, workshops in the First Session; a new four-week workshop on Machine Learning (First Session); a second four-week diversity workshop (in the Second Session); and Python lectures in each session. The Program will also offer over forty short workshops across the U.S., Canada, and Europe, including four sponsored workshops.

II. Diversity Initiatives

In 2018, ISR and U-M provided funding for fifteen incoming graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds to attend the Program. The Gates Foundation grant will increase this effort and expand to continuing graduate students. We have heavily advertised these awards. Schneider is part of a proposal to NSF to support 8 to 10 political science graduate students from underrepresented groups to attend the Program.

III. Other Accomplishments

Sandy commented that the Summer Program has accomplished a great deal including working with the ISR education group and the SRC Summer Institute, and was able to secure the Newberry Building for two more years. They are working to clarify and organize visas for Chinese participants for this year. They are creating videos, including a new video on diversity writ large (i.e. to include academic and research disciplines).

IV. Challenges

There are a few challenges in finding adequate lodging in Ann Arbor for instructors and participants as well as pursuing alternative models of training and alternative media to deliver training.

V. Immediate Goals

The immediate goals of the Summer Program are to implement the program for this summer, and make it another success. We are also currently working on recruiting TAs and working on scheduling the Blalock lectures.

VI. Post-Program Goals

The Summer Program will review a complete assessment of the Gates-funded diversity activity as well as a thorough examination of revenue, of participation by disciplines and groups, and revenue from different groups served. The Summer Program will investigate new funding options in order to institutionalize the diversity activities.

The Council and the Summer Program staff discussed diversity concerns as well as topics for the Blalock lectures. Summer Program also presented the number of diversity scholars in 2018, their challenges and successes of the 2018 diversity scholarships, as well as tracking diversity scholar's overtime.

The Summer Program expects to have digitization of past participant records ready for analysis by the fall of 2019.