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A Proposal for Union College Membership  
in the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research

To expect excellence in teaching and research in the natural sciences without providing well-equipped laboratories would be a cruel hoax. Yet for a long time a rectangular classroom equipped with nothing more than chalkboard and chairs was considered sufficient for the teaching of social science. Membership in the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research bears the same relationship to political science as the laboratory does to the sciences. One would not think of a new Science and Engineering Building without laboratories; one should not think of a Social Science Department without Consortium membership.

The Inter-University Consortium for Political Research (ICPR) was created in 1962 as a new development in academic organization. It is a partnership between the Center for Political Studies of The University of Michigan and colleges, universities, and non-profit research organizations now numbering over 140 in the United States and abroad. Its objectives include (1) creating an archive of multi-purpose data that will serve a variety of research and training needs; (2) developing computer based systems of data management and statistical analysis designed to maximize the utility for the individual scholar of the data available from the archives; (3) developing training programs shaped to enable scholars to make optimal use of the archival data.

The heart of the ICPR is its unsurpassed data archive. Originally a repository for the Survey Research Center's biennial national election survey data, it now includes machine readable data in all areas of political science, data that is also valuable to the other disciplines in the Social Sciences. These data files are the raw materials of many major pieces of research in the past several decades and represent substantial investments of time and talent by the original investigators. Several million dollars of public and private funds have supported the initial acquisition of the data now in the ICPR archive.

A list of data files in the ICPR archive is far too lengthy to be included here, but is included in the 1966-1968 biennial report of the ICPR and the 1969 and 1970 annual reports, copies of which are available in SS-216.

Extensiveness of Data Files

Through membership in the ICPR, faculty and students have access to data worth millions of dollars in the fields of American government,

comparative politics, and international relations. Although these data would probably receive their greatest use in the Department of Political Science, they will be available to all members of the college community and should be of particular value to other departments in Division II, the undergraduate interdisciplinary programs in Latin American Studies and Comparative Communist Studies, the undergraduate and graduate programs in American Studies, and possibly the graduate program in Administrative and Engineering Systems. There is no doubt that faculty and students in programs and departments other than Political Science will benefit from the college's membership in the ICPR.

The availability of a rich lode of data through ICPR membership will benefit both the student body and the faculty. In political science, as in all the social sciences, large amounts of diverse data are required for research, and the cost of collecting these data are usually the major obstacle in a research project.

#### Benefits to Students

Membership in the ICPR would be a tremendous boost to independent research by students. The ten week trimester and the twenty weeks for senior thesis research are often insufficient time for students to design a research project, collect the requisite data, analyze the data, and produce a well-written report. Students are also severely limited by lack of funds and the difficulty of collecting data outside of the Capital District, even more so in foreign countries. Too often the data collection costs of original research lead to independent studies and senior theses which are little more than rehash of what others have done. The library is quite properly the students' major research center, but it should not be the only one.

#### Benefits to Faculty

Data collection is not the prohibitive obstacle to faculty research in the social sciences that it is to student research, but it is nonetheless a major cost. The availability of social science data through the ICPR therefore becomes an important asset for faculty research. Union is undeniably increasing its emphasis on faculty research, and if this is to be a justifiable expectation on the part of the college, it must also provide the faculty with some of the means to do research. ICPR membership would go far toward encouraging and promoting faculty research in political science as well as in a number of other areas in the social sciences.

### ICPR Seminars

In addition to its data archive, the ICPR has developed training seminars and specialized research seminars. Each summer since 1963 the ICPR has offered summer seminars on research design, data analysis, and/or the application of mathematics to political research. The training program makes extensive use of some of the most outstanding political scientists and the ICPR data archive. These seminars provide the best methodological training available in the discipline. Financial assistance to the participants in the summer seminars is provided by the ICPR. In the past this financial aid has covered more than half the cost for the participants.

Also since 1963, the ICPR has organized specialized research seminars to review research in various substantive areas. In the past these seminars have dealt with such topics as judicial behavior, comparative political research, developing countries, and legislative behavior.

### Cost of Membership

The only drawback to joining the ICPR is the annual membership fee. This amounts to \$2300 for 1970-71, \$2600 for 1971-72, and \$2900 for 1972-73. Although the benefits of ICPR membership exceed the financial cost, recognition of the college's tight budget led to the investigation last year of joint membership as a means of reducing the cost to the college. The ICPR is willing to accept joint memberships, Swarthmore, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr already sharing a membership, but of the nine members of the Hudson-Mohawk Association, only Skidmore indicated an interest in joining the ICPR. Other possible partners in the upstate New York area include Colgate, Vassar, and Hamilton. Joint membership possibilities are being explored again this year, but Union's membership should not be dependant upon finding one or more partners to share the cost. ICPR membership is simply too valuable to be contingent upon a shared membership fee.

No other investment can create more possibilities for student and faculty research than access to the data files and training programs of the ICPR, and in a time of constructed financial resources for the academic community this has become even more consequential than in the past. The likelihood of either public or foundation funding for individual research projects is certainly not as bright as in the past. Therefore, ICPR membership is of increasing value to the individual faculty member and student and to any college with a continuing commitment to excellence in teaching and research.

Appendix A

Partial List of the 140 ICPR Members

Schools Similar to Union

Alleghany College

Dartmouth College

Oberlin College

Swarthmore College

(Haverford)

(Bryn Mawr)

Wesleyan University

Williams College

Schools Representative of the Other 140

University of Alabama

Arizona State University

Denison University

University of Essex (Colchester, England)

Georgia State College

University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Harvard University

Idaho State University

Mankato State College

University of New Hampshire

North Texas State University

Princeton University

Schools Representative of the Other 140 - (continued)

University of South Carolina

SUNY, Albany

SUNY, Binghamton

SUNY, Buffalo

SUNY, Stony Brook

University of Vermont

Yale University