

January 22, 2018

Social and Behavioral Sciences Strategy Task Force

Brent Roberts *Chair*

Kristen Bub

Craig Gundersen

Hillary Klonoff-Cohen

Christopher Larrison

Jeffrey Mondak

Silvina Montrul

Andrew Orta

Eva Pomerantz

Brian Quick

Patrick Vargas

Dear Colleagues:

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has seen tremendous change and progress in the last three years in the Social and Behavioral Sciences arena. Many of the most pressing issues facing modern society concern social and behavioral problems. Poverty, health behavior change, globalization, food insecurity, lost human capital, and fast paced technological innovation are challenges that are at their core social and behavioral issues. Under the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and as part of the last strategic plan, the Social and Behavioral Sciences Interdisciplinary Working Group outlined a strategy for the social sciences on campus. During this time, the campus started the Social and Behavioral Science Research Initiative (SBSRI), which then convened working groups in social science and engineering, initiated a methods workshop series, connected dozens of researchers to new grant opportunities, and provided seed funds for research projects ranging from solving food insecurity to understanding the links between early childhood stress and the microbiome.

To build on this progress, to contribute to our next phase of strategic planning, and to create the best possible foundation for future success in this area, we are initiating the development of a comprehensive strategy for Social and Behavioral Sciences research, education and engagement.

Based on consultation with campus leadership, including the Deans and Institute Directors with whom you are associated, you have been identified to contribute critically to this process by serving on the Social and Behavioral Sciences Strategy Task Force. Brent Roberts has agreed to lead this Task Force, whose efforts will culminate in a report. We understand that the Social and Behavioral Science Task Force began its work in mid-November, and that this letter serves to “officially” charge the work that is already underway.

In carrying out its strategy making effort, the task force should explicitly address the following:

- In what areas does Illinois have the greatest opportunity to positively impact state, national and global social and behavioral sciences through research, education and engagement?
- What opportunities and challenges do we face in social and behavioral sciences-related research and education over the next five to ten years?
- What specific actions would be most effective in realizing our potential in social and behavioral sciences education, research and engagement? What new investments would be necessary to implement those actions? Please distinguish short (24 months), medium (3-5 years), and long-term horizons (5-10 years) for the actions.
- How can we better leverage our research strengths to enhance the university's educational mission in social and behavioral sciences -related fields?
- The area of social and behavioral sciences presents many opportunities for community engagement. How best can we engage our local community through social and behavioral sciences?

Your team might wish to consider additional questions to help guide the development of multiple strategies for Social and Behavioral Sciences at our institution. In producing the comprehensive strategy, we ask that you develop, at the outset of your efforts, a process for engaging key internal and external stakeholders and drawing on the diversity of disciplinary expertise on the campus.

We would like to receive your presentation as an initial report no later than January 22, 2018; and we would like to invite a representative of your group to a broader planning meeting on January 26, 2018 to present your initial findings. A report will be due in February, 2018. Please contact Staci Provezis (sprovez2@illinois.edu) in the Provost's Office with questions or requests that emerge during your review.

We appreciate your willingness to serve on this task force.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Jones
Chancellor

Andreas C. Cangellaris
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

c: Susan Martinis, Interim Vice Chancellor for Research
William Bernhard, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Staci Provezis, Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness