

On the Center for the Social Sciences and Super Department Ideas

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Rationale for School of Public Policy

- Most important and radical collaboration we can undertake in the social sciences is to form a School of Public Policy
- What problems would this solve?
 - That Cornell's social science whole is less than the sum of its parts (2018 Organizational Structures Cttee, 2017 External Social Sciences Review Cttee, 2012 Provost's Cttee on Public Policy, 2009 Social Sciences Task Force, etc.)
 - Research strengths/synergies in policy aren't fully exploited
 - Less visible to outsiders; implications for reputation which matters for attracting better students and faculty
 - Cornell can close an important gap with our peer institutions: Harvard (KSG), Princeton (Woodrow Wilson), UC Berkeley (Goldman), Michigan (Ford), University of Chicago (Harris), Duke (Sanford), Wisconsin (LaFollette), etc.

2017 Report of the Social Sciences External Review Committee

- “Consider a Major Public Policy Initiative,” p. 7:

Given Cornell’s long history of engagement with public outreach, we were surprised that there is no school or institute of public policy at the university where faculty from various disciplines, including political science, economics, sociology, and psychology can work with students and practitioners on research-based solutions to compelling public challenges. We believe that Cornell would benefit from creating a highly visible institutional home to leverage and make more visible the strengths of Cornell’s widely scattered public policy scholars. In addition to the synergy it could create with the 3-4

- described its absence on campus as a “glaring hole in Cornell’s social science constellation” (p. 8).

Then Why Hasn't It Happened?

- Concerns about cost – 2012 report called for 15 new faculty
 - For this reason, 2018 Organizational Structures Committee set the proposal aside because it violated their zero-cost rule
- Complications with moving lines out of existing departments / colleges
 - Most people happy where they are
 - Concern about weakening existing units to create a new one
 - Distinction between statutory and endowed
- Concern would be too limited in scope, would be built around one or few departments instead of be truly campus-wide

One Possible Structure

- Virtual school
 - Everyone's line stays in current unit
 - Doesn't require any departments or colleges to be broken up or merged
 - Also doesn't preclude any such reorganizations
- Voluntary affiliation
- Departments organized by topic, such as "health policy," "environmental policy," "social welfare policy," etc.
 - Unify researchers of common interests across different disciplines/units, promoting research synergies
 - Increased visibility to outsiders
 - Can serve as hubs for future cluster hires
- Can be done immediately at no cost; maintains flexibility to adapt structure in future

On Health-Related Social Science Scholarship

[Professor Jeff Niederdeppe](#) (Communication)