



**Research Council Minutes
March 26, 2009
3:00 p.m.
Champ Hall Conference Room**

RESEARCH COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brent Miller, Chair	Jagath Kaluarachchi	Jim MacMahon
Byron Burnham	for Scott Hinton	Nat Frazer
Richard Clement	Richard Mueller	Jim Dorward
Bryce Fifield	For Mary Hubbard	for Carol Strong
John Allen	Doug Lemon	Vincent Wickwar
for Yolanda Flores Niemann	Mac McKee	

GUESTS:

Ron Gillam	Aaron Olsen	Teresa Seeholzer
Adam Fowles	David Paul	Lorraine Walker
Richard Krannich	Russ Price	Ned Weinschenker
Anna McEntire		Karl White

ACTION ITEMS

1. **Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2009** - Brent Miller

Nat Frazer motioned to approve the minutes of February 26, 2009. Richard Clement seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION

1. **Welcome & Introductions** - Brent Miller
2. **Presentation:** “Community SRN’s: The influence of social structure on community development decisions and processes.”

By John C. Allen, Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology.

Dr. Allen’s research focuses on connections between social groups and how their structure may influence a community’s ability to deal with change. “*Social Relationship Networks (SRNs) mitigate both negative and positive consequences of development and may be a*

key to the quality of life within communities.” Emotional, financial, and political powers are evident within network structures, and by understanding how social influences impact decision processes, communities can learn how to empower themselves as they make decisions related to sustainable development and economic viability for their community.

Dr. Allen gave an overview of a recent case study involving a small rural county in Southern Utah. This research area covered 2,000 square miles with ~ 20,000 residents, and the economy consists of agriculture, mining, tourism, retail, and manufacturing. A large oil discovery nearby has generated interest in gaining insight about the positive and negative impact this would have on their community. Dr. Allen’s research centered on the question: “Are formal and informal ties among local leaders related to the outcome of decisions within the community?” His research is focused on measuring and evaluating the influence of different network structures, along with related variables such as attitude towards development and the environment.

An objective of the research was to understand whether or not SRNs matter in the decision process. Also, do SRNs leaders’ perceptions about economic development impact the environment? Interviews with the community addressed two main questions: 1) Have you noticed any major changes in your community in the last 5 years? If the answer was yes, they were asked to identify the positive and/or negative outcomes, and 2) What changes do you envision in the future? A content analysis of responses was done, and the data were analyzed.

Results showed the community was accepting of the changes taking place, but tension and concerns emerged as the residents did not want a proposed coal fired plant to be visible in the valley. Some SRNs in the community believed the development advances were negative, while others viewed the impact as neutral. Variables such as income and education levels of the participants did not have an effect on the social networks, but age and education did play a role on whether a participant believed development had a negative impact upon the environment.

Results of this case study helped the community identify communication barriers, alternatives, and decision processes that could be improved. It was evident that SRNs do matter in local communities, and understanding them can help communities be better prepared to address conflicts related to development issues.

3. **EPSCoR Update and Discussion** - Brent Miller

On March 17, 2009, representatives from USU, U of U, BYU, and Utah’s Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), met in Salt Lake City with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED). At the recommendation of Jim MacMahon, USU also invited consultant Jim Gosz, former NSF Program Officer and an EPSCoR State Program Director.

The purpose of the meeting was to have a discussion about what steps Utah needs to take to submit a winning planning grant. The next phase is to compile elements of the planning grant. If funded, Utah’s EPSCoR jurisdiction would then be activated. On April 15, 2009, USU deans/designated representative will also participate in this effort by giving input to help shape the planning grant as it is prepared.

Input/Comments

- Jim MacMahon commented that two concerns were highlighted at the March 17th meeting as critical components that must be included in every planning grant: 1) A State Science and Technology Plan must be clearly outlined; however, Utah does not have one in place at this time, and 2) A detailed planning schedule that coincides with the EPSCoR calendar must be outlined. The planning grant phase will require extensive preparation and attention to detail.
- As the planning grant evolves, Utah needs a State Director and Executive Management Team to oversee the structure of this grant. Governor Huntsman has been updated on the EPSCoR process and has noted that Dianne Nielson, Governor's Energy Advisor, will also be involved. Dean Frazer and Jim MacMahon commented that as Utah's committee is organized, it will be vital to the success of this grant to include representatives that have a broad spectrum of interests.
- Dean Frazer reiterated the consultant's suggestion that Utah's proposal should not outline strengths, weaknesses, and gaps, but rather focus solely on Utah's strengths and the positive benefits of why Utah should receive jurisdiction and be an EPSCoR partner.
- Timelines of the Planning Grant and Research Infrastructure projects were discussed. Research Council was reminded that EPSCoR is not just about NSF opportunities, but other federal agencies use the same criteria and do not require the approved NSF jurisdiction in order to provide co-funding (e.g., NASA).

4. Biomedical & Behavioral Research Opportunities – Brent Miller with guests Ron Gillam, Karl White, Aaron Olsen, and David Paul

A handout was distributed that summarized discussions, updates, and opportunities that have been shared across campus relative to the federal stimulus program and research opportunities available to USU.

In NIH's Biomedical and Behavioral focus, some limited submission opportunities have been announced. Ron Gillam talked about new imaging technology of interest to researchers at USU who are engaged with sensory research; taste, smell, and hearing. This technology opportunity would enhance USU's competitiveness and advance the collaborative work in this area.

Aaron Olsen commented that the stimulus package presents new opportunities for USU to seek funding support to complete "shell space" in the new USTAR building underway at Innovation Campus, along with pursuing large fixed equipment needs and/or enhancements. He noted that any state funds already identified for this building cannot be "swapped" out and redirected to federal funds.

Doug Lemon stated that he would be traveling to Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) the following week and would share with Research Council in April information on opportunities where USU can possibly partner with PNNL in the physical & biological sciences, engineering, and social behavioral sciences.

David Paul commented that even though some of the opportunities are limited submissions, NIH has other program options related to instrumentation/equipment needs which USU

researchers should investigate and pursue. Lorraine Walker relayed that the deadlines are fast approaching on these opportunities so quick action is required.

Karl White said that the Utah Department of Health has approached USU's Computer Science Department to partner on an opportunity related to electronic health records.

5. **Research Matters & Research Week Update** – Anna McEntire

Anna recapped the agenda for Research Week and gave an overview of the workshops that would be offered. Pamphlets with detail about the workshops have been distributed both hard copy and electronically to the colleges. After Research Week concludes, resource materials (photos, press releases, awards) will be distributed so that this information can be repurposed as needed within the colleges.

Research Matters 2009 has been finalized and is currently at printer. Copies will arrive on campus by March 30th and distribution will begin in April.

6. **Graduate Student Symposium Update** – Aaron Davis

Aaron thanked the colleges for their support of this year's event and said that 123 graduate students from four institutions (USU, BYU, University of Idaho, and Idaho State) will be participating. This year's event will host the highest number of participants in the history of the symposium. He also noted that workshops to strengthen curriculum vitas, public speaking, and presentations skills are scheduled on April 1, 2009.

7. **Wrap Up Discussion and Calendar Events – Brent Miller**

- **Calendar Events:**

- March 30 – April 3, 2009 - Research Week
- April 2, 2009 – Innovation & Invention Day
 - 3:30-5:00 p.m. – SDL Calibration Building
- April 15, 2009 – Next round of seed funding proposals due to VPR Office (Funded proposals announced first week of June for July 1, 2009 start date)
- April 23, 2009 – Research Council
- April 24, 2009 – 7:30 a.m. Sunrise Session, 7:30 a.m. Little America Hotel, SLC
 - Presenter: Ronda Callister – “Careers of Professional and Academic Women: Progress and On-going Challenges”

- **Furlough Update:**

Brent thanked everyone for their input on this topic at February's Research Council. He commented that a memo was sent to the President and Provost outlining the concerns and challenges that result when state and federal research funds are included in the furlough.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Teresa Seeholzer, Research Council Secretary