

February 28, 2006

Research Data Technology Centre Advisory Council

Minutes from Meeting

17 February 2006, 3:00-4:30, SSC 9430

Present (showing regrets):

Roderic Beaujot, Sociology (Academic Director)
David Bellhouse, Statistical and Actuarial Sciences (regrets)
Jamie Campbell, Education (student representative)
Joyce Garnett, Chief Librarian (regrets)
Iris Gutmanis, Evaluation and Research, Parkwood Hospital
Tedd Hewitt, Research V-P (Alison Ariss acting as replacement)
Julie McMullin, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Science
Reza Nakhaie, Sociology, University of Windsor
Chris Robinson, Economics
Maira Stewart, Family Medicine
Stewart Thornhill, Ivey (Taiyuan Wang acting as replacement)
Staff:
Cynthia Cook, Statistics Canada (Senior Analyst, Regional Supervisor)
Bradley Corbett, Statistics Canada (Analyst)
Vince Gray, Social Science Network and Data Services (Liaison Officer)

Documents:

Minutes of meeting of 1 April 2005
Budget dated 19 December 2005
Report to CFI dated 9 June 2005
Report to Statistics Canada dated 29 September 2005
Centre Status Document dated 13 August 2004 (sent only to new members)

1. Welcome to new members of Advisory Council

As per our meeting of 1 April 2005, Brian Timney (Dean, Social Science Faculty) has named Reza Nakhaie to represent University of Windsor and Iris Gutmanis to represent researchers in the community. With the departure of Martin Cook to the University of Waterloo, Jamie Campbell was named as student representative.

2. Minutes of 1 April 2005

It was decided to post on the RDC web site a version of the minutes, once persons at the meeting have seen the minutes as circulated by e-mail.

The names of members of the Advisory Council will also be placed on the web site.

We will leave the terms of reference for Council as they are in the minutes of 1 April 2005.

3. Director's Report

The Report to Canadian Foundation for Innovation covered the period Sept 2004 to April 2005. We indicated that the centre has had a "minor impact" to this point, leaving room for progress toward things like "benefits for Canada."

The Report to Statistics Canada covered the same period. This report indicates 30 projects with 37 researchers including 5 Research Staff (persons from Social Science Network and Data Services who have access to the RDC for purposes of installing hardware and software). We will use the report to Statistics Canada as our main report, showing the list of projects, list of persons with access to the RDC, and list of publications. The reports put out by Statistics Canada show fewer persons and projects because these have been allocated at Universities where they originally accessed RDC data, for a give project.

4. Budget

The budget used for 2005-06 shows the following income:

Central Administration (UPIF):	\$50,000
SSHRC/CIHR	\$57,503
Faculty of Social Science	<u>\$10,187</u>
Total	\$117,690

This budget satisfies the requirement from SSHRC/CIHR that at least half of the operating costs come from the university.

The larger amounts for 2006-07 are partly to anticipate future costs in the renewal of hardware and software (\$30,000). If the Network receives a CFI Leading Edge Grant there will not be need for all of these amounts (see #6 below).

There was debate about the priority to place on "Statistical and Methodological Services" (Statistical Consultant). It was proposed that this would be important for undergraduate students, but the RDC is not oriented to undergraduate students. The RDCs operate under the assumption that researchers have the necessary statistical competence, and that Advisors provide this help for students. We need to determine the need for a part-time in-house statistical consultant. It was proposed to seek the funding of such services from other faculties.

The budget used for 2006-07 is based on budgets used by NCCRDC for SSHRC/CIHR application, and these figures were also used in the "centre status" document. Missing from this budget are real funds for Secretarial and Administrative support, which would be important for making reports, keeping track of publications using the RDC data, and working toward the increased profile of the RDC.

5. Profile

Review of web site: rdc.uwo.ca

Review of e-list

Review of list of persons and projects with access to the RDC

Review of publications list

It was noted that the e-distribution list has 70 names, which does not include all persons with access to the Centre. People are encouraged to place themselves on this list through the web site.

The list of projects by datasets shows 40 projects. This list will be updated to show the name of the Principal Investigator. It was agreed that this list could be posted on our web site, but these project titles are also available through the main web site of the RDCs.

The list of researchers by departmental affiliations shows 69 people. Some corrections need to be made to this list. This list is not to be posted on the web site because it would need the approval of the persons listed.

An analysis should be made, comparing the projects with those proposed in the CFI application. The CFI application should be posted on our web site.

It was proposed that the registration for the e-distribution list could include a small profile as a means of identifying people with similar interests.

It was proposed that we hold informal workshop sessions on given data sets, where people could present work in progress.

6. Activities of the RDC National Coordinating Committee

The NCC, which meets twice per year and includes all Academic Directors, plays a very important role in terms of relations with Statistics Canada, coordination, establishing various associated protocols, helping to secure funding. It takes to heart the mission of RDCs in terms of not only access to data but increasing the use of the data, enhancing the necessary skills, and ensuring impact through dissemination of results.

The NCC has established funding for operational costs in the amount of \$600,000 from SSHRC and \$450,000 (to be increased to \$600,000) from CIHR. These amounts would be increased if SSHRC/CIHR themselves had increased budgets. The amounts received are slightly more than 50% of the \$2 million per year in the application. There is an application to CFI Leading Edge Grant for \$4 m over 4 years, (Statistics Canada for the other \$6 m) for renewal of hardware and software, hard link across centres (Network intranet), and meta data development.

Part of the SSHRC/CIHR application was for funds to be used centrally, to support the NCC chair, and for a Knowledge Transfer Officer for the RDCs. It was thought that some 10-12% of funds being used centrally would be appropriate, and that the KTO would be an important

priority.

A Conference, hosted by the Vancouver RDC is scheduled for 12-13 May, on Education, Training and the Evolving Workplace. The announcement will be circulated once more.

7. Outreach on campus

- SSNDS pamphlet

- Fall presentation at SSNDS

- Faculty outreach: new faculty orientation, faculty development workshops

- Announcements to graduate methods courses

Suggestions are welcome for increasing awareness of the facility and data sets.

There was a discussion of the utility of developing a common course, relevant to students from various departments, on analysing survey data, or on substantive questions involving longitudinal analysis. Such courses have been developed at McMaster and Waterloo. Cynthia Cook is developing protocol for such courses. It was proposed that funds could be accessed for such inter-disciplinary developments and inter-faculty cooperation; one could make the case for a faculty position in Social/Health Statistics.

It was noted that the RDC mostly serves researchers and graduate students. In the case of graduate theses, it is important that the advisor be a co-applicant so that the advisor can come into the RDC to look at preliminary results, to reduce the amount of results subject to disclosure, and to reduce problems of residual disclosure.

On a case-by-case basis, the RDC could be used by students writing undergraduate theses, as long as this was a full-year project, the advisor was able to supervise the student, and the application to use the RDC data is made in good time.

The following is scheduled for 2 March: “A workshop on some why’s and how’s of analyzing complex survey data,” with two specialists from Statistics Canada. All are encouraged to disseminate the flier.

Personnel from the RDC went to a presentation regarding having an ICES (Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences) link at Western.

The RDC is noted in the Social Science Faculty Academic Plan

8. The “to do” list based on CFI application

- Collaborative joint research link with Simulated Data Centre at Cornell University:

There has been progress, but no full report is provided here.

Development of event history software:

Rajulton Fernando continues to work on this software and he will present on estimating direct and indirect effects in chain graph models, at the meetings of the Statistical Society of Canada.

Internet Data Library System (IDLS) for use within RDC:

This is mostly for access to meta data. There are also developments on this question at Alberta and McMaster, and it is also part of the CFI Leading Edge Grant application, thus the role for Western in this area remains to be determined. The context would be rather different if RDCs were networked, which is also part of the current CFI application.

Links with Waterloo, McMaster and Toronto, especially for training and workshops:

These exchanges and discussions are ongoing.

Mexico/INEGI:

Links have been developed, and there is administrative support for exchanges with Mexico, but there is need for an expression of research interest on the part of faculty from Western.

9. Other business

Nil.