

#### CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Social Science Research Center
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## CSUF Center and Institutes Self-Study and Program Review

Center Name: Social Science Research Center (SSRC)

College Affiliation: College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Year Established: 1987

Year of Last Review: 03/15/2018

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#### I. Mission and Goals

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC), a non-profit organization at California State University, Fullerton, was established in 1987 to provide research services to community organizations and research support to university faculty. Our primary goal is to assist non-profit and tax-supported agencies and organizations answer research questions that will lead to improved service delivery and public policy. Appendix A depicts how the SSRC aligns its missions and goals with the University's. The Social Science Research Center also provides a rich experiential learning environment for student interns and employees, consistent with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' value of "providing collaborative research, networking, mentoring, service learning, and other practices that prepare students to enter the local and global workforce."

#### II. Activities

Center activities in the past six fiscal years have been directed towards meeting its missions and the mission and goals of the University in a variety of ways. In the past six fiscal years (2017/2018 through 2022/2023), the SSRC has experienced significant growth: it has provided research services to 34 clients, translating into \$10,251,821 in contracts. Many of these clients utilized the SSRC's services multiple times within the past six years, resulting in 68 completed projects during this period. A list of unique clients and cumulative awarded funding by sponsor is depicted in Appendix B.

Of the \$9.16 million awarded in direct costs, nearly \$5.5 million has been paid in salary and wages to students employed at the SSRC. Student involvement in the research process as employees at the SSRC provides them not only with technical skills associated with research (such as data entry, familiarity with best practices, and written communication skills) but also with so-called "soft skills," such as oral communication, listening, negotiation, teamwork, and persuasion skills.

In addition to hiring student employees, the SSRC offers a comprehensive internship program that exemplifies a learning-by-doing model (See Appendix C for a two-page description of the Internship Program). Admitted interns are provided with a start-to-finish experience of the applied social science research process, which includes a) collecting data directly as a telephone interviewer, b) working alongside telephone lab supervisors to help oversee the data collection process, c) engaging in data validation and quality assurance with collected data, d) cleaning data files to make them client-ready, and e) assisting with analysis and report preparation. Intern success in the program is tracked based on their goals and objectives desired at the program's start compared to those attained upon completion. During the current reporting period, the SSRC has hosted 48 students, the majority who have either majored or minored in HSS fields, with the remaining students majoring in Health Science. Qualitative feedback collected from each intern upon the program's completion indicates a high level of satisfaction. For example, one student stated:

'I had an amazing time working as an intern at SSRC. As a Psychology major, I can definitely say that the position provided the necessary practical experience in the field. I learned many vital things such as creating & designing surveys via Qualtrics, collecting data from respondents, and interpreting the statistical results plotted on graphs. Most of all, I had the opportunity to work with a team that consists of kind, hard working, and persevering individuals. My supervisors were very professional, and they taught me all that I needed to know in the field of research. They believed in my aptitude and treated me with respect. The research center truly fosters growth. They will guide you every step of the way, and reward your input, no matter how big or small. Working at SSRC also bolstered up my resume and it made my background more competitive. So much so that I was able to secure a job not long after graduating. If I could have the opportunity to work at SSRC again, I would

gladly take it."

Three SSRC interns have gone on to be employed by the SSRC in diverse roles (ranging from telephone interviewer to project manager). Others have gone on to obtain research-related positions at other companies or were admitted to programs in their respective fields of study with the support of letters of recommendation from the SSRC.

Finally, one of the center's goals is to provide research support to CSUF faculty and staff. During the current reporting period, the SSRC submitted \$1,878,402 worth of cost estimates to CSUF faculty. Of the proposals submitted, the SSRC was awarded \$243,111 of total requested funding. (See Appendix D for a list of submissions).

Despite the success the center has experienced in increasing its efforts to collaborate with faculty on research, there have been some challenges in meeting that goal. The most common role CSUF faculty and staff want the SSRC to play in their research proposals is that of an external evaluator. Understandably, the line item for program evaluation in these proposals is typically the smallest in the budget. The SSRC works with faculty and staff to develop budgets for their program evaluations; however, in our experience, there is typically little to no room in most proposals' budgets for these costs in their entirety. For this reason, the amount of funds allocated for external evaluation by faculty and staff in their research proposals oftentimes prohibits the SSRC from taking on these contracts. Another challenge to providing research support to faculty is the ubiquity of online surveys. For minimal cost, faculty with access to Qualtrics can develop and administer online surveys without the center's support. Faculty who use the center for data collection do so for larger-scale projects that involve the management of a large volume of data. In addition, the SSRC finds that the rate of success, as defined by receiving a contract as a result of submitting a cost estimate, is much lower when working with faculty than with external clients. This is so despite the fact that submitting estimates for CSUF faculty typically involves developing sections of proposals that external estimates do not require. This means the SSRC devotes more time on faculty cost estimates than on cost estimates for external clients, but experiences a lower rate of success. To keep the center operational, it needs to prioritize the receipt of external funding, which limits the number of faculty-center partnerships it can accommodate.

#### III. Organizational Structure and Governance

The organizational structure of the SSRC is illustrated in Appendix E.

A faculty-led Advisory Board was convened in the spring of 2018 to help inform strategies to strengthen the relationship between the Center and the College. The purpose of this board is to represent the SSRC in the wider community, inform improvements in business practices, and strengthen marketing and outreach efforts. The board serves an "advisory" function to the center director and Associate Dean. The board has no direct influence over center functioning and does not contribute to the review process. However, the center director relies on individual members in the center's day-to-day operations. For example, members of the faculty-led Advisory Board may assist in recruiting a faculty member who has expertise in conducting focused group discussions with underserved populations in a specific language. The center director also solicits the feedback of Advisory Board members before making decisions that might affect the overall function or visibility of the center.

#### IV. Resources and Sustainability

Primary funding awarded to SSRC is a result of grant issued contracts. In the past six fiscal years, the SSRC has generated a total of \$10.2 million in contracts with intramural and extramural agencies (See Appendix F for a list of grants generated by year). Indirect costs, university facilities and administrative costs, comprise \$1,076,695 of the total funding issued to the center, 15% of which (or \$161,751) has been distributed to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to offset the cost of the director's salary. Each year, the College of Humanities and Social Science allocates a 1.0 FTE to support the center director.

In addition to the above-referenced sources of funding, the SSRC also receives indirect resources through the hours served by its interns. Over the past sixe years, the center has recruited approximately 48 interns. Students typically allocate 80 hours per semester and develop their skills, including but not limited to the following areas: data collection, supervisory tasks, data files, survey design, and analyses.

In the last six fiscal years, the center staff has grown in parallel with its increased growth in contract activity. Center staff includes the director, an administrative operations manager, one project manager, two assistant project managers, two lead supervisors, four assistant supervisors, five executive interviewers and nearly 184 telephone interviewers and research assistants, 40% of who work remotely. Personnel employed at the SSRC, with the exception of the center director, are hired through the CSUF Fullerton Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC). Of the ASC positions, two are full-time benefited, two are part-time benefited, and the remaining are part-time unbenefited student employee positions. Moreover, an advisory board comprised of six CSUF faculty offer their time on a voluntary basis.

The Social Science Research Center is located in the basement of McCarthy Hall. It occupies approximately 3,000-3,200 square feet of space. This scaled square footage is includes five offices, a reception desk and common area, a large room containing 26 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) work stations and two supervisor stations, and a break room. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SSRC also maintains a virtual work from home call center that provides access to 16 additional remote operated stations for a grand total of 42 physical and remote calling stations combined. The SSRC space also includes a conference room and small locked storage area for HR records and archived data. This space is assigned by the Vice President for Academic Affairs through the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs. The conference room is used for training and educational purposes, as well as to meet with potential and present clients. It is also used by various faculty and staff on campus who reserve the room when it is not being used by center staff.

Costs related to center space for the last six years averaged \$6,136, with the exception of campus closure during COVID-19, and included telephone usage, equipment leasing expenses, I/T software, postage and freight, physical plant work orders, general supplies, telephone usage and printing expenses.

Considering the entrepreneurial success enjoyed to date by the Center director, the Social Science Research Center continues to maintain its sustainability. During the current reporting period, the SSRC reached its physical operating capacity. As a result, additional growth is not expected in the next three fiscal years. Rather, the SSRC will redirect its effort toward developing business strategies

#### SSRC SELF-STUDY 2024

that facilitate adaptation to the changing industry climate including the integration of more advanced multi-method research approaches to address the precipitous decrease in response rates in telephone survey research, focusing on more program evaluation work, developing a strategic plan to guide the center's development over the course of the next three years, and promoting professional development.

#### Highlights and Accomplishments

As a result of the success the center has experienced in securing external and internal contracts, the SSRC has also significantly grown its general reserve fund administrated through the Auxiliary Services Corporation. This outcome has provided the SSRC with greater resources to meet its mission and goals. For example, an increased and healthy Agency Account has allowed the Center to designate 12% of its Operations Coordinator's time to supervision of the interns. Funding in the SSRC's Agency Account is also used to send SSRC staff to professional development workshops/webinars, maintain the CATI Lab, hire more CATI supervisors, and bring on new staff.

A robust SSRC agency account has also allowed the SSRC to be more selective about the projects it chooses to undertake. This has resulted in the receipt of larger contracts and contracts in which the services provided support more meaningful work. For example, the center is very proud to have provided program evaluation services to the North Orange County Public Collaborative. Formed in 2017 by AB 97 (Ting, 2017), an act of the state legislature, the North Orange County Public Safety Collaborative is a coalition of cities, police agencies, nonprofits, and agencies dedicated to greatly reducing the need for law enforcement intervention in homelessness, youth violence and postincarceration re-entry through regionally coordinated, creative social intervention programs, partnerships and initiatives. The Board of State Community Collections allocated \$20,000,000 to support the Collaborative's efforts. Using a multi-method approach, the SSRC has documented the Collaborative's success, provided evaluation support, maintained data on how Collaborative funds were used, and has been integral to informing the direction of the group's efforts. The SSRC's relationship with the Collaborative has resulted in multiple contracts since 2017, totaling more than half a million, and fostered collaboration between the center, nonprofit agencies, law enforcement agencies, and public entities serving the region, including various elected officials. As a result, the center director was awarded November, 2022 Citizen of the Month by State Senator Josh Newman's office. Additionally, she had the opportunity to meet Governor Gavin Newsom and at the opening of the Collaborative's offspring, the HOPE Center, located in Fullerton. The center's work with the Collaborative has also been highlighted in the Orange County register. This work demonstrates the SSRC's to continue to contribute to research that can ultimately serve the public interest.

By way of follow-up to the previous review period, SSRC successfully accomplished the following proposed objectives:

1. **Upgrading center infrastructure**: In 2019, the SSRC upgraded the CATI-Lab physically by way of a renovation that included carpentry, painting, electrical, furniture, and IT improvements. The renovation of the call center resulted in two additional calling stations for a total of 26 physical stations. Functionally, an upgrade to the CATI-La's survey administration software was completed by replacing WinCATI 4.2 with Sensus Web and Qualtrics XM. Moreover, the addition of a Work from Home Remote Apps software was incorporated to facilitate ongoing research services during COVID-19. The incorporation of a work from home call center resulted in 16 additional remote operated stations for a grand total of 42 physical and remote calling stations combined.

- 2. Expand the number of students served by the internship program: Since the last reporting period (FY 2015-2016 through FY 2017-2017), the average number of interns hosted by the center did not significantly increase. However, the SSRC recently modified its internship program from unpaid to paid. The internship program is currently undergoing adjustments in an effort to strengthen the experience offered to the students the center serves.
- 3. Increase the number of management level staff by one full-time position: As of the last CCI review period, the SSRC increased its number of full-time staff by one additional fulltime position. The SSRC staff also grew its staff through the addition of two part-time benefitted positions.
- 4. Work with the College of Communications to identify and hire a part-time student to manage the Center's social media accounts: The SSRC successfully hired a part time student to monitor the center's social media accounts and revamp the SSRC online website. In addition, in collaboration with University IT, SSRC created a formal online training module for telephone interviewing staff.
- 5. With the support of the faculty-led advisory board, increase the number of meaningful collaborative partnerships the SSRC undertakes with HSS faculty. The SSRC slightly increased the number of collaborative partnerships with HSS faculty and CSUF faculty from other divisions. Although the number of collaborations only increased slightly, the frequency with which the SSRC submitted a cost estimate to the same faculty increased substantially, thus the total number of proposals submitted increased.

#### V. Planning and Strategic Outlook

As of the last CCI review period, the SSRC team has established a new mission and vision statement in an effort to initiate a formal strategic plan. The creation of a strategic plan will provide fundamental direction to enable organizational learning and enhance the support and services offered by the center. The SSRC will initiate a strategic plan by identifying organizational goals, developing accounting tools, implementing systematic planning, and measuring and evaluating goal outcomes during the coming six-year period. Although the SSRC enacts informal measures to address some of these processes, such as administering client and employee satisfaction surveys, formal organization-wide strategies are necessary given the recent significant operational growth the center has experienced. In consideration of this growth, a strategic plan will be an essential component to fulfilling the center's organizational values.

In particular, the SSRC will address the following steps in its process to develop a formal strategic plan:

- 1. Establish organizational goals
- 2. Introduce organizational accounting via SWOT analysis or other analytical tool.
- 3. Create systematic planning of strategies to meet goals
- 4. Develop measure outcomes and evaluate performance in meeting goals
- 5. Enact midcourse corrections and/or new strategies

#### APPENDIX A

#### SSRC Contribution to Meeting the Goals of the University's Strategic Plan

#### Goal 1

Provide a transformational educational experience and environment for all students. Titan students are immeasurably enriched by immersive experiences and a robust array of services that support their well-being, provide a sense of belonging, and promote academic success. The many benefits from this institutional commitment—enhanced learning, retention, confidence, and affinity for the university—ensure Titan graduates are well prepared to excel in the workforce or in further education.

According to a statement made by the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations, "a critical challenge facing the national statistical system, the public sector more widely and research is the availability of skilled statisticians and methodologists. The need for these skills cannot be met without the involvement of academic survey organizations that produce these experts." The SSRC represents a laboratory where these tools are honed and the next generation has the ability to learn this knowledge and skillset.

#### Goal 2

Strengthen opportunities for student completion and graduation. Perhaps nothing is more central to our educational mission than providing equitable access to the opportunities and resources necessary for student success. Degree completion is one metric, albeit a fundamental one, by which student success is measured, and our commitment to supporting students in achieving that goal is interlinked with a myriad endeavors that promote student success in all forms.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, participation in undergraduate research or internships is a high impact practice. The SSRC provides both of these experiences to students. Students hired at the SSRC receive both financial support by way of employment and academically relevant training. To the extent that the SSRC can be incorporated into courses as a service learning site, students are able to further connect curricular content with hands on application which facilitates the learning process.

#### Goal 3

Recruit and retrain a high quality and diverse faculty and staff. We value the abundant depth and breadth of diversity of our campus, and recognize the profound power gained from learning amide, supporting and celebrating the multitude of backgrounds and perspectives here. Key to our success as an institution is elevating and infusing equity minded practices in all we do. WE must also continue to recognize and uplift the vibrancy of our faculty and staff, as our students grow and achieve in an environment that is as diverse as they are.

A faculty member's ability to compete for external funds can have a significant impact on their scholarly life, the probability of securing tenure, and the types of research opportunities they can offer to students. The SSRC supports CSUF faculty in developing their research proposals and provides an infrastructure for scientific data collection that faculty need to compete for funding effectively. Thus, the SSRC is a resource to assist faculty from all backgrounds in their research and scholarly activities, contributing to their retention.

#### Goal 4

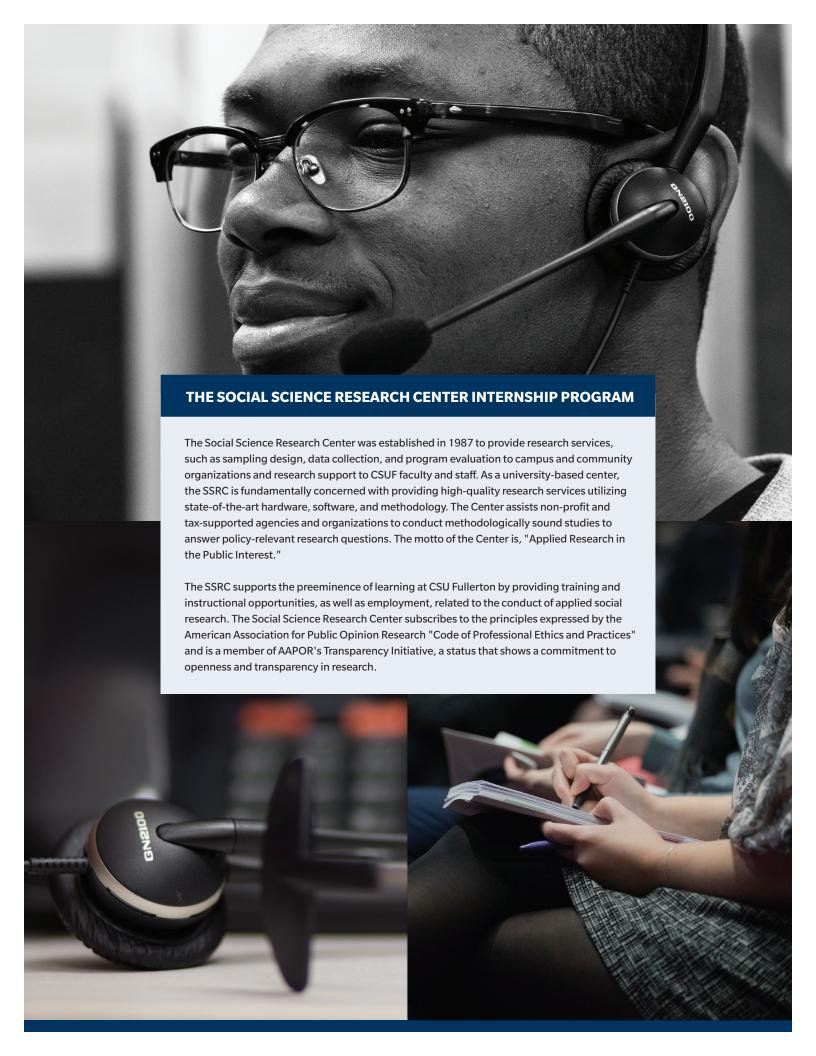
Expand and strengthen our financial and physical capacity. In direct service to the educational mission of the university, we seek to maximize revenue opportunities' and philanthropic investment in the institution, while also ensuring our physical spaces best support and promote our learning environment and the evolving need of the Titan community.

The SSRC serves as a fee-for-service entrepreneurial center which generates revenue through overhead costs for the college and university. Because the majority of its client base consists of non-profit and public agencies, the SSRC serves as a bridge between faculty, students and the wider community. These connections build strong relationships leading to an elevated reputation for the SSRC and university, increasing the potential donor base.

### APPENDIX B. List of Center Clients (Fiscal Years 17/18 – 22/23) Total Direct Indirect

		Total Direct	Indirect	Total
	Sponsor	Costs	Costs	Funding
1	Accion & Opportunity Fund	\$110,284	\$13,269	\$123,553
2	California Air Resources Board	\$463,545	\$139,065	\$602,610
3	California State Dominguez Hills	\$25,093	\$7,520	\$32,613
4	SPAD, California State Dominguez Hills	\$37,184	\$13,758	\$50,942
5	CSUF Department of Political Science: Dr. Christine Gardiner	\$22,000	\$0	\$22,000
6	CSUF Department of Political Science: Dr. Shelley Arsneault	\$610	\$0	\$610
7	Children's Home Society of California	\$18,105	\$5,431	\$23,536
8	City of Berkeley	\$61,190	\$18,357	\$79,547
9	City of Stanton	\$576,607	\$7,256	\$583,863
10	County of Orange Health Care Agency (HCS)	\$204,391	\$14,030	\$218,421
11	CSUF Center for Economic Education	\$293	\$0	\$293
12	CSUF College of Business and Economics	\$39,239	\$0	\$39,239
13	CSUF College of Natural Sciences	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000
14	CSUF Department of Communications	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
15	CSUF Department of Health Science	\$89,762	\$5,391	\$95,153
16	CSUF Department of Public Health	\$19,326	\$0	\$19,326
17	CSUF Office of the Provost	\$5,430	\$0	\$5,430
18	EVALCORP Research & Consulting	\$65,846	\$19,754	\$85,600
19	Gannett Fleming	\$65,302	\$19,591	\$84,893
20	Harder+Company Community Research	\$168,074	\$50,424	\$218,498
21	Mid City Research LLC	\$146,004	\$43,801	\$189,805
22	Municipal Water District of Orange County	\$31,865	\$9,510	\$41,375
23	Nusura	\$6,112	\$1,834	\$7,946
24	OneOC	\$318,152	\$31,815	\$349,967
25	Rio Hondo Community College District	\$23,958	\$8,642	\$32,600
26	Riverside City College	\$52,386	\$10,518	\$71,225
27	San Jose State University Research Foundation	\$47,565	\$9,513	\$57,078
28	Sonoma County Junior College District	\$6,241,018	\$580,668	\$6,821,686
29	The Regents of the University of California: American	\$76,807	\$11,521	\$88,328
	Civil Liberties Union			
30	The Regents of the University of California: Cancer Health Equity Partnership	\$38,000	\$14,060	\$52,060
31	The Regents of the University of California Berkeley	\$97,191	\$11,663	\$108,854
32	The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles a	\$1,482	\$0	\$1,482
	Corporation Sole			-
33	Tuolumne River Trust	\$13,304	\$3,991	\$17,295
34	University of California Davis	\$86,821	\$30,172	\$116,993







#### **The Social Science Research Center**

College of Humanities and Social Sciences



#### **BRINGING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

The SSRC exemplifies a learning-by-doing model in which interns have the opportunity to be involved in the design of research protocols and sampling methods, questionnaire development, data collection, quality control processes, data analysis, and report production. Interns receive training, supervision, and feedback from professional research methodologists and are supported by SSRC staff at all levels.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

The Social Science Research Center creates academic experiences that incorporate community work and engagement. Additionally, experience gained while interning at the Center builds practical and transferrable skills in research methods, statistics, project management, communicating with clients, report writing, evaluation, and skills like transcription, data entry, sample management, and survey programming.



The SSRC was integral to the success I found in my career. Getting an offer letter two weeks before graduation was the best peace of mind I could have asked for. I never really considered research as a viable career, but the SSRC changed my perspective. The new career goal is to continue in market research and maybe be a consultant with a Fortune 500 company as "Consumer Insights" or something of that nature, so thanks for that!"

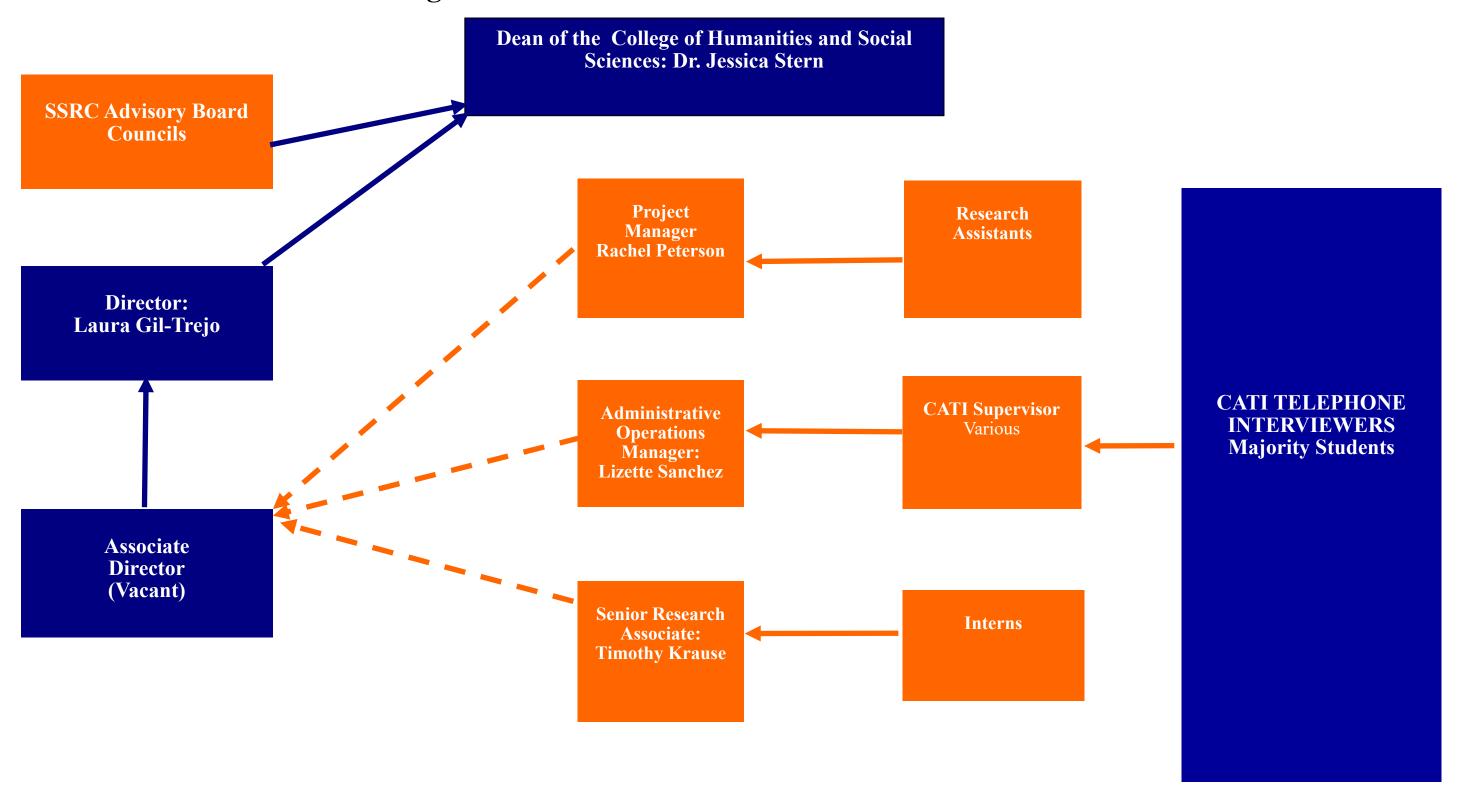
Matthew Xa

# "Right now my job's industry would be market research with a side of big data. Having the SSRC's internship on my resume really allowed me to frame my experiences to my job interview. I was able to discuss all the different kinds of survey methodologies the SSRC uses (CATI, web surveys, Qualtrics) so even just exposure to this kind of stuff helped me establish myself as a professional.... A big part of what I do now is preparing data for clients, so Fred having me assist with cross tabs, tables, cleaning data; merging data really put me a step ahead.

Appendix D. Cost Estimate/Proposals Submitted to CSUF Faculty/Staff

	Sponsor	Project Type	Total Funded	Funded/ Awarded
1	CSUF Center for Economic Education	Evaluation	\$293	Yes
2	CSUF College of Business and Economics	Web-Based	\$39,239	Yes
3	CSUF College of Natural Sciences	Evaluation	\$3,000	Yes
4	CSUF Department of Communications	Web-Based	\$6,000	Yes
5	CSUF Department of Health Science	Varies	\$95,153	Yes
6	CSUF Department of Political Science	Web-Based	\$22,000	Yes
7	CSUF Department of Political Science	Analysis	\$610	Yes
8	CSUF Department of Public Health	Focus Group	\$19,326	Yes
9	CSUF Office of the Provost	Focus Group	\$5,430	Yes
10	The Regents of the University of California	Evaluation	\$52,060	Yes
11	California State University, Fullerton	Varies	423,560	No
12	College of Health and Human Development	Focus Group	\$15,026	No
13	CSUF College of Engineering and Computer Science	Varies	\$137,574	No
14	CSUF College of Humanities and Social Sciences	Evaluation	\$15,769	No
15	CSUF Department of Education	Evaluation	\$71,805	No
16	CSUF Department of Political Science	Evaluation	\$6,395	No
17	CSUF Department of Public Health	Varies	\$896,957	No
18	CSUF Strategic Communications	Web-Based	\$25,954	No
19	Department of Politics, Administration and Justice	Web-Based	\$31,851	No

APPENDIX E. Organizational Structure of the Social Science Research Center



APPENDIX F. Funding for Latest Six Years of Operation

	Total Direct	Indirect Costs	Total Funding
	Costs		
FY 17-18	\$1,247,895	\$283,171	\$1,531,066
FY 18-19	\$1,052,997	\$227,574	\$1,280,571
FY 19-20	\$1,226,835	\$252,304	\$1,479,139
FY 20-21	\$447,856	\$95,730	\$543,586
FY 21-22	\$3,304,467	\$185,569	\$3,498,357
FY 22-23	\$1,877,259	\$32,347	\$1,909,606
Total Funding	\$9,157,309	\$1,076,695	\$10,242,325