

**SUBMITTED BY: M. ROY WILSON, PRESIDENT**

**RECOMMENDATION TO RENEW CHARTER  
Center for Urban Studies**

It is recommended that the Board of Governors renew the charter for the Center for Urban Studies (CUS) through June 30, 2028, as recommended by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-I (CIAC-I). The Provost concurs with this six-year charter renewal recommendation, as does the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate.

**Background**

Established in 1967 the mission of CUS is to:

provide the University with a centralized focus on research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and evaluation on urban and metropolitan issues and to encourage and assist faculty throughout the University engaged in such activities.

In pursuing this mission, the Center shall seek to promote urban research on an interdisciplinary basis. It shall also attempt to encourage faculty involvement in research, professional activities and community service directed to problems of particular concern to the Detroit Metropolitan area and to promote the use of Detroit area data and analyses in course instruction. The Center will seek to obtain a portion of its support from external sources and to assist faculty members throughout the University in obtaining external support for urban research activities.

In 2003, Dr. Lyke Thompson became the Director of the CUS. Under Dr. Thompson's exemplary leadership, CUS supports interdisciplinary research amongst 80 faculty throughout campus, focused specifically on urban and metropolitan issues identified in the region. Dr. Thompson is supported by a managing director, four program directors, two grant writing specialist, twenty-two research assistants and over two hundred WSU students and youth from within the community. CUS has an annual budget of \$5.2 million, with only 5.9% of it's funding coming from university general funds. Despite decreases in funding from the university over the last 10-years, the center's budget has grown from \$1.7 million (2011) to \$4.8 million (2021). This growth is solely based on increased external grant and contract funding support.

**Review**

In accordance with the Board of Governors Wayne State University Statute 2.23.01 *Centers and Institutes: Policy on Creation, Operation, Review, and Discontinuance*, CUS underwent a formal review by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-I (CIAC-I) during the Summer of 2022.

The CIAC-I committee followed the guidelines provided by the Provost's office to assess the evidence and value of the CUS as a freestanding unit at WSU. The review process involved a) CIAC-I committee report for rechartering in 2013 b) CUS approved charter (February 1995, amended July 2004) c) CUS self-study) d) attachments to the self-study including list of funded projects, support to WSU faculty and staff, annual report, organizational chart etc. d) CUS

written response to the committee's questions ahead of the site visit e) an in-person site visit at the Center for Urban Studies with interviews with the Center's leadership, senior management team, internal and external constituents

The CIAC-I report recommended that the charter for this Center be renewed for a period of six years. The committee submitted a final report to the Provost and to the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate. The Policy Committee of the Academic Senate received the report and prepared a recommendation for a six-year renewal also.

### **CUS strengths as indicated by the CIAC-I**

CUS' value and activities are closely aligned with Wayne State University's mission and values:

- a. Since the last review in 2013 CUS has created and developed in-depth research and engagement programs in:
  - Research and Evaluation with expertise in survey research
  - Early childhood and disability
  - AmeriCorps Urban Safety (AMUS) program
  - Health Homes
  - Strategies and tools for Overdose Prevention (STOP)
  - Urban Public Safety and Crime Analysis
  - Urban Health with a specific focus on toxic exposures
- b. Through its expertise in survey and community-engage research, and proven record of funding and impact, the Center has drawn in over 80 faculty from across the university (Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Business, Law, Social and Behavioral Sciences).
- c. The center has employed dozens of undergraduate and graduate students over the years and provides them with outstanding mentoring, training, research experience, and opportunities for community engagement and leadership. The students are representative of almost all the schools and colleges across the university.
- d. Recently WSU was awarded (Sept 2022) a five-year \$11.3 million award from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences/National Institute of Health, to develop a new Superfund Research Program, the Center for Leadership in Environmental Awareness and Research (CLEAR). CUS will head the Community Core component of this project; connecting and supporting the scholars and community members conducting research on understanding and mitigating adverse birth outcomes and serious developmental health problems that have been associated with urban environmental exposure to volatile organic chemicals, a special class of pollutant found in the subsurface of post-industrial cities like Detroit.

In its site visit, the CIAC-I committee found repeated support for the notion that CUS brings value to all of its constituencies. CIAC-I received more than 30 internal letters of support and 50 external letters of support. The letters of support repeatedly remark that CUS' "work is vital", "essential", CUS is a "valued partner", and that their "expertise in social science research and use of the latest data collection tools and methodologies...is of the utmost importance to Wayne State University and the communities they serve."

### Recommendations by the CIAC-I for the next charter period

The committee recommended the following for the CUS:

- a. **Sponsorships, other forms of fund development:** Given that less than 6% of the Center's operating budget comes from the General Fund, and the rest comes from grants and contracts, staffing for the programs can become precarious. The Center may want to investigate whether models of program sponsorship or individual giving may augment the Center's unrestricted funds. The Center Director may want to hold conversations with the Vice-President and/or Associate Vice President for Development to discuss programs that might be attractive to individual donors.
- b. **Enhancing its visibility within the University and Outside of it:** The Center does not currently have the personnel to regularly track the outcomes of the faculty members it assists (e.g., publications, grants) nor the outcomes for its students and the impact of their experience with the Center. These data are important but not easily obtained and the Center may need some resources for an administrative assistant to help collect this information.
- c. **Improving the awareness of faculty and students about the Center and its programs.:** The Center (like most Centers and Institutes) is not highlighted in the new faculty orientation. Thus, faculty who do not hear about the Center through word of mouth may well be missing important opportunities to connect with the Center as they establish their program of research. Similarly, student services may want to highlight both the educational and work opportunities available for students at the Center for Urban Studies.

### Recommendations by the Academic Senate Policy Committee for the next charter period

The committee recommended the following for the CUS:

- a. **Establish an advisory board:** We were surprised to note, that the provost at the time of the original charter for the center suggested that the center should not establish an advisory board. An advisory board can be helpful to centers in increasing faculty awareness of the work of the center and in engaging a wider array of faculty and external community members.
- b. **Invite an external review prior to the next charter renewal:** CUS may benefit from inviting an external review of its work by a scholar at another university with a similar center. Outside reviewers may be aware of new programming and ideas that could enhance the work of the center, and they may see more readily areas where there are unnecessary hurdles to accomplishing the center's objectives. The center leadership may want to invite one or more such external reviewers to conduct a review prior to the next charter renewal time, to encourage potential areas of innovation that are currently not being considered.