



SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**FULLERTON**<sup>TM</sup>

# 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:** 2012

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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 mission and goals with those of the University. The Social Science Research Center also provides a rich experiential learning environment for student interns and employees, which is consistent with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' value on Student-Centered Learning.

## **II. Activities**

In the past three fiscal years (2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18), the SSRC has provided research support services to 26 clients translating into \$4,397,036 in contracts. A list of these clients as well the contract size associated with each is depicted in Appendix B.

Of the \$3,616,537 awarded in direct costs, nearly \$1.7 million has been paid in salary and wages to students that have been 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 the hiring of student employees, the SSRC Internship Program was started in the Fall 2015 as a means of further fulfilling Goals 1 and 2 of the University's Strategic Plan (See Appendix C for a two-page description of the Internship Program). Since its inception, the program has hosted 19 students over a three year period, with all but four of these (who are currently in the process) successfully completing the program. Of the 19 students involved, 16 (84%) have either majored or minored in HSS fields, with the remaining students majoring in Health Science.

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 start of the program compared to those attained upon completion of the program. Thirteen of the fifteen interns who have completed the program so far indicated they would recommend it to their colleagues (two summer interns were not asked this question), indicating an extremely high rate of satisfaction with the program. Three SSRC interns have gone on to be employed by the SSRC in diverse roles (ranging from telephone interviewer to assistant 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 based on letters of recommendation from the SSRC.

In addition to the internship program, the SSRC has served as a Service Learning site for Dr. Angela MinhTu Nguyen's Research Design (PSYCH 510) during the 17/18 Academic Years. In this capacity, the SSRC hosts a group of PSYCH 510 students by involving them in some aspect of a project that the center is completing. For example, our most recent cohort was asked to construct open-ended questions that could be administered during 12 semi-structured key informant

interviews with parents whose child had been displaced from a daycare program in Orange County due to problem behaviors. They also conducted a review of the literature to ascertain best practices with respect to early childhood education (ECE) programs. The list of best-practices resulting from this review was provided to SSRC client, Children’s Home Society, Orange County Chapter to inform the development of a pilot-program targeting ECE providers this spring.

Finally, while one of the center’s goals is to provide research support to CSUF faculty and staff, several factors have made reaching this goal more difficult. First, in the last three years Center staff has witnessed the campus community leaning towards the hiring of external consultants to meet their information needs. Second, compared to other CSUs and four-year institutions, CSUF faculty are less likely to apply for external funding for their research. Lastly, when CSUF faculty/staff do receive external funding for their research, they typically contain small budgets for program evaluation services, making it difficult to contract with them, or they are able to conduct the required research activities using their own student research assistants.

These challenges notwithstanding, the SSRC has submitted \$186,020 worth of proposals to CSUF faculty and staff in the last three academic years, and has been awarded \$41,006, or 22% of that total (See Appendix D for a list of submissions). Approximately \$69,118 or 37% of the cost estimates developed during this time have been for HSS faculty/staff, of which \$37,267, or 54%, has been awarded. These data suggest that while HSS faculty/staff do not seek the services of the SSRC as often as the campus community does as a whole, when they do, the SSRC is more likely to obtain a formal agreement with them. As a result, the center director, in collaboration with the Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, has developed a faculty-led advisory board council to inform strategies to strengthen the relationship between HSS faculty/staff and the center. This group met for the first time in the spring of 2018 and has already generated a list of promising strategies, such as presenting SSRC services to incoming faculty during the beginning of the academic year through the Faculty Development Center (FDC), the publication and dissemination of quarterly newsletters designed for an audience of HSS faculty/staff, and twice yearly Lunch and Learn workshops sponsored by the SSRC.

### **III. Organizational Structure and Governance**

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

As stated previously, 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. Board members will serve a one-year term and augment the contributions of a parallel Advisory Board made up of members of the business and non-profit community as well as elected officials and members of the campus community more broadly. 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. Both boards meet twice annually and serve an “advisory” function to the center director and Associate Dean. Both boards have no direct influence over center functioning and do not contribute to the review process. However, the center director does rely on individual members in the day-to-day operations of the center. For example, members of the faculty-led Advisory Board may assist in the recruitment of a faculty member who has expertise in conducting focused group discussions to under-served 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**

The primary source of revenue generated by the SSRC comes from successfully completed contracts. In the past three fiscal years, (2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18), the SSRC has generated a total of \$4,397,036 in contracts with intramural and extramural agencies (See Appendix F for a list of revenue generated by year). Indirect costs, university facilities and administrative costs, comprise \$780,499 of the total funding issued to the center, 15% of which (or \$177,075) 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 revenue, the SSRC also receives indirect resources through the hours served by its interns. Over the past three years, the center has recruited approximately 20 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.

The Center staff includes the director, three managerial staff, six supervisorial staff and nearly 100 telephone interviewers and research assistants. Personnel employed at the SSRC, with the exception of the center director, are hired through the CSUF Fullerton Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC). The center director position, a full-time administrator position in the Management Personnel Plan, is funded through the college, the costs of which are partially offset by the IDC that is distributed to the College on an annual basis (\$177,075 over the last three Academic Years). Of the ASC positions, two are full-time benefited, one is a part-time benefited position, and the remaining are part-time unbenefited student employee positions. In the 2015/16 fiscal year, the center hired one CSUF faculty member as a special consultant for the Police Foundation project. 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 includes five offices, a reception desk and common area, a large room containing 24 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) work stations and two supervisor stations, and a break room. SSRC space also includes a conference room and small locked storage area for HR records. 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 three years averaged \$5,558 and included telephone usage, equipment leasing expenses, I/T software, postage and freight, physical plant work orders, general supplies, telephone usage and printing expenses.

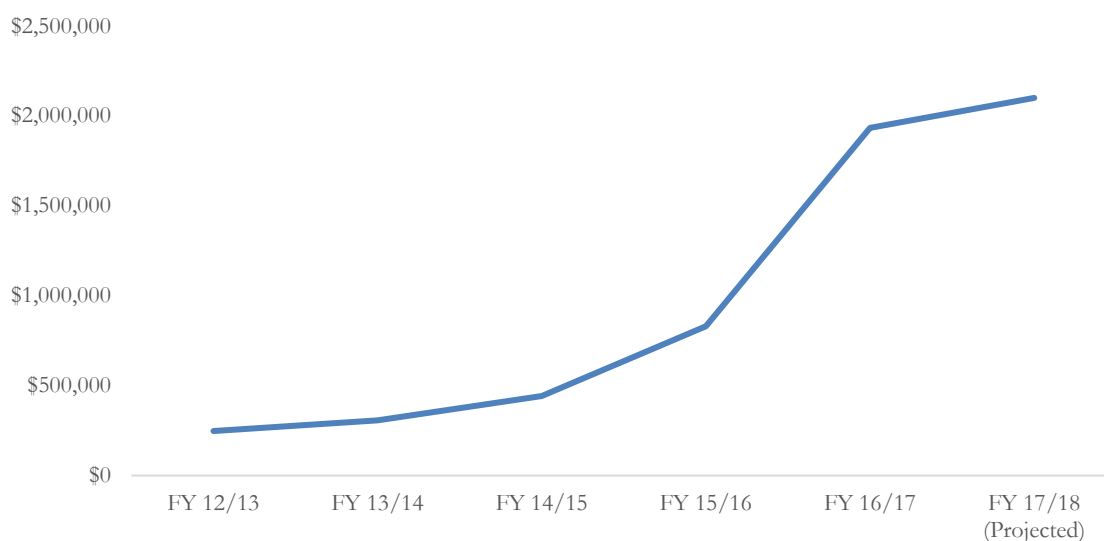
Considering the entrepreneurial success enjoyed to date by the Center director, the Social Science Research Center is highly sustainable. The Center is expected to experience significant growth in the next three to five years. Space is presently a constraint; however, the SSRC's telephone survey research lab will be profitably expanded in the upcoming fiscal year by adding a minimum of two CATI stations. Most recently, a second supervisor station was added in the CATI-Lab and upgrades to the SSRC's conference room were initiated. Reconstruction of the call center's stations is currently in the planning stage.

## V. Highlights and Accomplishments

Aside from the activities already detailed, the SSRC has seen a significant increase in total revenue over the last three years as depicted in Figure 1. During the last review period (FY 12/13, FY 13/14, and FY 15/16) the total revenue generated by the SSRC was \$996,735 and in the last three fiscal years it is projected to generate \$4,863,792: an increase of 79%. This increase can be attributed to the SSRC's success in several areas. Management level staff have developed a highly efficient work environment that SSRC employees at all levels benefit from. This environment not only helps students develop the transferrable skills they will need in their future careers, but also leads to a better overall experience for SSRC clients. SSRC has seen not only an increase in the rate of return clients over the last three years, but also an increase in word of mouth referrals.

As a result of these accomplishments, the SSRC has also grown its ASC Agency Account significantly. 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. It has also permitted a pilot of the proposed Lunch and Learn Workshops. The SSRC Brown Bag Series Presents: Using Data Visualization to Communicate Research to Practitioners was held on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in MH 40 (See Appendix F for flyer). SSRC staff, in consultation with the faculty lead Advisory Board, will be using the results of this pilot to improve upon the attendance for its next event (The title of the series was changed to "Lunch and Learn Workshops" after the pilot) scheduled for the fall of 2018. Funding in the SSRC's Agency Account is also used to obtain a subscription for a software tool that will be used to analyze qualitative data, send SSRC staff to professional development workshops/webinars, maintain the CATI Lab, hire more CATI supervisors, and bring on new project managers.

**Figure 1. SSRC has experienced a 79% increase in its revenue during the last three fiscal years.**



Finally, a robust SSRC agency account has 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 SSRC is very proud to have worked for over one year with Dr. Christie Gardiner on a proposal that was ultimately funded by the

Police Foundation. The SSRC was tasked with administering a lengthy survey to 958 law enforcement agencies from every state in the nation. This project is the largest and most comprehensive study ever conducted on the role of higher education in policing on a national level by a non-governmental entity. Other than NILECJ's 1978 "manpower in the criminal justice system" report, and BJS's LEMAS and the Census of Local and State Agency reports, it is the only known national study that has ever looked at higher education in small departments. Among one of the key findings of this study was the important role education plays in the leadership of law enforcement agencies. More specifically, Police Chief's/Sheriff's education level makes a difference in how an agency operates – the philosophy that guides the agency, the strategies it uses, the programs it implements, and the policies it adopts. Ultimately the SSRC strives to continue contributing to research that can ultimately serve the public interest.

## **VI. Planning and Strategic Outlook**

The SSRC has no formal strategic planning process in place although it has made progress integrating long term planning and vision statements into its key functions. For example, in 2014 the SSRC partnered with the College of Business and Economics' Small Business Institute (SBI) to host a cohort of five MBA students. For a small fee of \$500, this group of students conducted an internal focus, marketing analysis, and financial analysis of the center to inform strategic development efforts. The SSRC partnered again with the SBI to host a cohort of 5 MBA students who conducted an updated analysis of center functioning and provided a report containing recommendations to improve profitability and sustainability. The results of both of these efforts have been used regularly by center staff to improve center functioning. For example, the SSRC now administers a client satisfaction survey to each client once a contract is complete to obtain feedback that can be used to improve services offered or service delivery. Center staff have also developed other metrics to track center operations such as a post-training survey administered to newly trained interviewers to see where gaps in knowledge persist and an exit surveys administered to departing employees in an effort to improve the climate of the center as perceived by its employees.

In the last year, management level staff have been meeting on a weekly basis to revisit the Center's vision, mission statement, goals, and objectives. These newly revised statements will be then used as the foundation for individual staff members to align their own work goals and objectives, which will be integrated into their yearly reviews. Additionally, these statements will be utilized in the development of a strategic planning process that will be reviewed and re-examined every five years in collaboration with both advisory boards. In the meantime, however, the center plans to focus on the following objectives in the upcoming three years.

1. Upgrading center infrastructure: The SSRC's CATI lab is now nearly twenty years old. In the next three years the SSRC will focus on upgrading the CATI Lab both physically and functionally. The latter includes upgrading hardware and software, digitizing information that is now collected manually, assessing whether adding one to three new CATI stations would improve productivity and offset the costs associated with the addition, and exploring Voice over IP options for reducing the cost of completing telephone surveys.
2. Expand the number of students served by the internship program.
3. Increase the number of management level staff by one full-time position.
4. Work with the College of Communications to identify and hire a part-time student to manage the Center's social media accounts.
5. With the support of the faculty-led advisory board, increase the number of meaningful collaborative partnerships the SSRC undertakes with HSS faculty.

## APPENDIX A

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

#### Goal 1

CSUF aims to provide innovative, high-quality programs and services that offer students broad educational experiences, facilitate lifelong habits of intellectual inquiry and prepare them for successful careers. We recognize that achieving these aims requires comprehensive and coordinated advising and actively engaging students in the learning process. A robust program of assessment will allow us to demonstrate student learning, document student achievement and be accountable to ourselves and to our stakeholders.

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

A critical measure of a university's performance is the effectiveness with which it employs its resources to ensure students meet their educational goals in a timely manner. Improving persistence of our students, especially in their entering year, is an important first step in this process. High-Impact Practices (HIP), those pedagogical and programmatic approaches that promote student engagement, retention and graduation, are integral to these efforts.

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

CSUF aims to become a model of faculty and staff inclusivity, diversity and engagement in order to better serve our diverse student population. To this end we will develop a Diversity Action Plan to cultivate an environment that honors differences in various forms – race, ethnicity, gender, age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs and status within the University. We will also develop effective processes and procedures to support recruitment, hiring, and retention, and increase professional and leadership development opportunities available across career stages.

A faculty member's ability to compete for external funds can have a large impact on their scholarly life, the probability of securing tenure, and the types of research opportunities they can offer to students. As a result of their experience, they can teach students about rigorous scientific surveys and what program evaluation entails, increasing the quality of the proposal they submit. The SSRC also provides an infrastructure for scientific data collection that faculty need in order to effectively compete for funding.

#### Goal 4

In an environment of decreasing resources, CSUF seeks to increase funds available to the entire campus community. Stabilizing our finances and securing revenue sources will allow us to invest in the success of our University, our students and our communities. Increasing alumni and community engagement is essential and will position the University to be more effective in meeting its mission. We recognize such efforts must be integrated, collaborative, innovative and purposeful.

In addition to serving as a fee-for-service entrepreneurial center, which generates revenue through overhead costs for the college and university, the SSRC employs and trains students. The SSRC, therefore, serves as a bridge between faculty and students, as well as students and the greater community, through its highly skilled research services for CSUF faculty and staff and off-campus clients. These connections build strong relationships between students, faculty, the university and the community leading to future research opportunities, increased skills for students as future job applicants, and an elevated reputation for the SSRC and university.



## APPENDIX B. List of Center Clients (Fiscal Years 15/16 – 17/18)

Sponsor Name	Total Funding	Total Direct Cost	Indirect Costs
Air Resource Board	\$483,559	\$371,968	\$111,591
California Baptist Church	\$3,921	\$3,921	\$0
California State University, Dominguez Hills	\$32,621	\$25,093	\$7,528
California State University, Fullerton	\$20,402	\$18,935	\$1,467
California State University, Monterey Bay	\$1,668	\$1,668	\$0
Children and Families Commission of Orange County	\$3,000	\$2,400	\$600
Children's Home Society of California	\$18,591	\$15,399	\$3,192
Children's Hospital of Orange County	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$1,000
City of Stanton	\$53,625	\$48,750	\$4,875
Dr. Kholi	\$2,240	\$2,240	\$0
EVALCORP	\$34,308	\$27,447	\$6,861
Gannett Fleming, Inc.	\$84,893	\$65,302	\$19,591
Groundwork San Diego	\$93,171	\$71,670	\$21,501
Harder+Company Community Research	\$307,449	\$249,323	\$58,126
Irvine Foundation	\$84,998	\$65,383	\$19,615
Loma Linda University Children's Hospital	\$16,922	\$13,017	\$3,905
Mayors Fund for Los Angeles	\$43,200	\$33,230	\$9,970
Mid City Research	\$189,805	\$146,004	\$43,801
Mineta Transportation Institute	\$120,818	\$96,596	\$24,222
Orange County Department of Education	\$10,000	\$7,693	\$2,307
Palomar Community College	\$29,125	\$22,404	\$6,721
RP Group	\$32,676	\$25,135	\$7,541
Sonoma County Junior College District	\$2,542,700	\$2,143,406	\$399,294
Texas A&M University	\$8,608	\$7,485	\$1,123
The California Endowment	\$25,000	\$21,739	\$3,261
The Police Foundation	\$29,969	\$23,053	\$6,916
University of California Santa Cruz	\$118,767	\$103,276	\$15,491
	\$4,397,036	\$3,616,537	\$780,499

## **Appendix C. Internship Brochure**



## THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Social Science Research Center was established in 1987 to provide research services, such as sampling design, data collection, and program evaluation to campus and community organizations and research support to CSUF faculty and staff. As a university-based center, the SSRC is fundamentally concerned with providing high-quality research services utilizing state-of-the-art hardware, software, and methodology. The Center assists non-profit and tax-supported agencies and organizations to conduct methodologically sound studies to answer policy-relevant research questions. The motto of the Center is, "Applied Research in the Public Interest."

The SSRC supports the preeminence of learning at CSU Fullerton by providing training and instructional opportunities, as well as employment, related to the conduct of applied social research. The Social Science Research Center subscribes to the principles expressed by the American Association for Public Opinion Research "Code of Professional Ethics and Practices" and is a member of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative, a status that shows a commitment to openness and transparency in research.





CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
FULLERTON

# 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.



**Matthew Xia**  
Former SSRC Intern

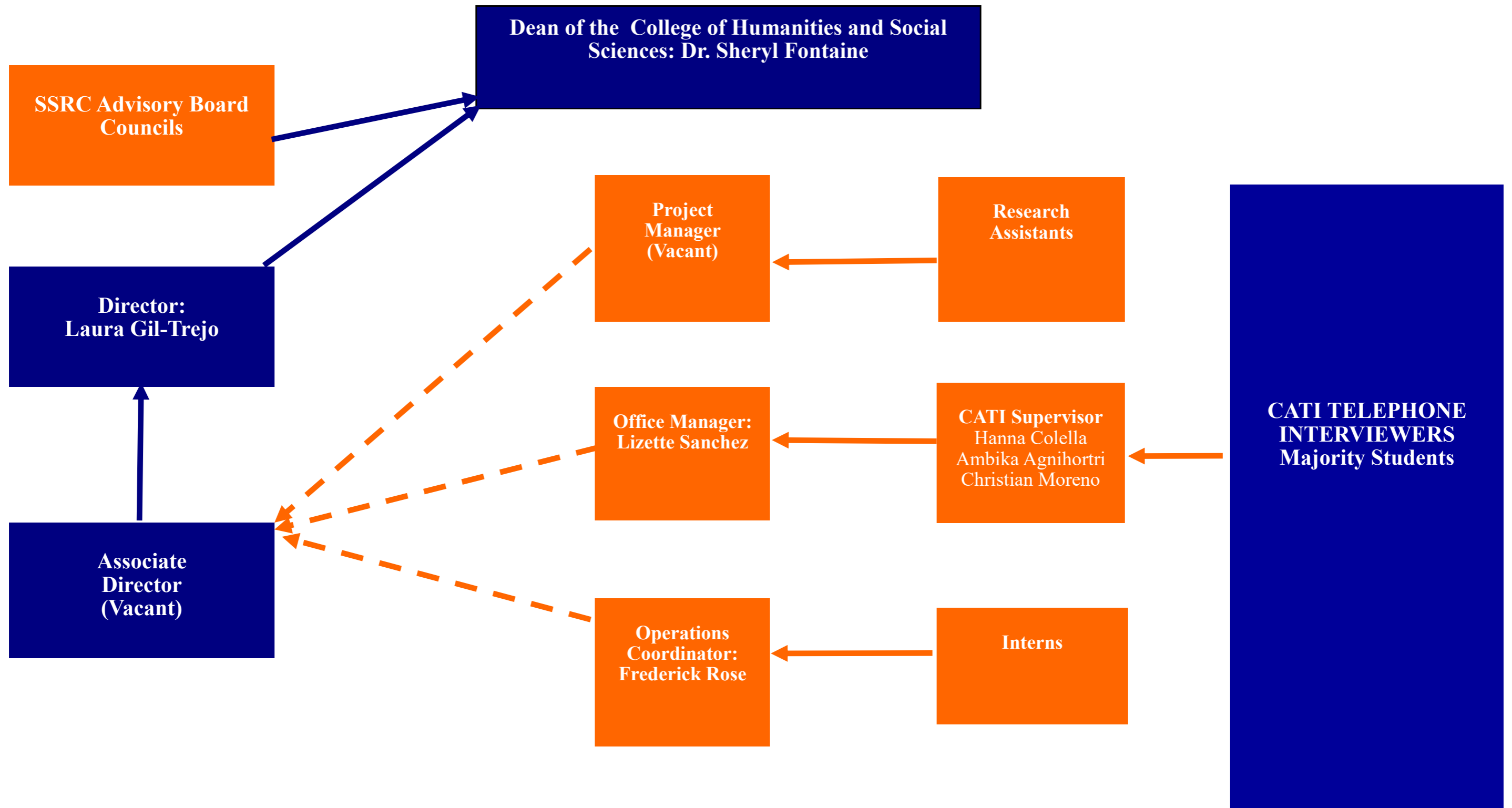
“Right now my job’s industry would be market research with a side of big data. Having the SSRC’s internship on my resume really allowed me to frame my experiences to my job interview. I was able to discuss all the different kinds of survey methodologies the SSRC uses (CATI, web surveys, Qualtrics) so 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.

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!”

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

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>College/ Division</b>	<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Funded/ Awarded</b>
15/16	Engineering and Computer Science (ECS)	Program evaluation	\$5,610	NO
15/16	CSUF Facilities Management	Needs assessment	\$8,438	NO
15/16	HSS	Assessment	\$6,688	YES
15/16	CSUF Department of IT	Data analysis and report production	\$1,500	YES
15/16	Public Administration and Justice	Data collection	\$29,969	YES
16/17	Chancellor's Office	Survey administration	\$95,515	NO
16/17	ECS	Program evaluation	\$600	NO
16/17	College of Business and Education	Data analysis	\$2,239	YES
17/18	Public Administration and Justice	Data collection	\$31,851	NO
17/18	College of Engineering and Computer Science	Program evaluation	\$3,000	NO
17/18	Public Administration and Justice	Assessment support	\$610	YES

# APPENDIX E. Organizational Structure of the Social Science Research Center



**APPENDIX F. Funding for Latest Three Years of Operation**

	<b>FY 2015/16</b>	<b>FY 2016/17</b>	<b>FY 2017/18</b>	<b>All Years</b>
Direct Costs	\$698,722	\$1,703,527	\$1,214,288	\$3,616,537
Indirect Costs	\$131,212	\$376,190	\$273,097	\$780,499
Total Costs	\$829,934	\$2,079,717	\$1,487,385	\$4,397,036