



July 5, 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Council on Academic Affairs (CAA)

From: CAA Subcommittee D
Professor Rebecca Andridge, Chair
Professor W. Randy Smith, Vice Chair
Professor Eric Bielefeld

Re: Review and Recommendation for the Nationwide Center for Advanced Consumer Insights

CAA Subcommittee D provides this report and recommendation for action to CAA regarding the review of the Nationwide Center for Advanced Consumer Insights (hereafter, 'NCACI') that was completed in June 2023.

Review Process

The Academic Center Guidelines as established in Faculty Rule 3335-3-36 Centers and Institutes, Review of University Centers, guided the review process. The specific process for the review of the NCACI was as follows:

- An initial meeting occurred on February 6, 2023 with NCACI Director Ralph Greco, professors Smith and Eric Bielefeld, and leaders of the other Centers/Institutes that were to be reviewed in 2023 to provide an overview of the Center/Institutes review guidelines, provide specific instructions for the preparation of the self-study document, to address initial questions, and to discuss the projected timetable for development of the self-study reports.
- The self-study report was prepared by Director Greco and colleagues and delivered to CAA in Spring 2023.
- CAA Subcommittee D reviewed the self-study report and appendices during Summer 2023.
- Two separate synchronous (Zoom) meetings were held on June 27, 2023 to discuss the self-study report, one with NCACI Director Greco and one with Dean Anil Makjia of the Fisher College of Business (hereafter, 'FCOB'). Both meetings were attended by Profs Andridge, Smith, and Bielefeld from CAA.
- This memorandum report was developed and finalized by Subcommittee D and delivered to CAA leadership, NCACI Director Greco, and Dean Makhija.

Review Findings

Subcommittee D found the self-study report to clearly address all five of the required review elements (Mission, Faculty and Student Involvement and Contribution, Administrative Structure and Responsibilities, Budget, and Evaluative Criteria and Benchmarks). The discussions with Director

Greco and Dean Makhija were very positive and centered on the strengths of the Center and how its mission has evolved over time.

A brief summary of each of the five pillars of the review is below.

1) Mission

- The NCACI was established in 2008 as a joint venture between OSU and the Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company (hereafter ‘Nationwide’). At the time, Nationwide did not have a well-developed analytics division, and the NCACI was created to provide a link between individuals engaged in analytics at Ohio State – primarily students – and Nationwide.
- The original agreement between OSU and Nationwide stated that the NCACI aimed to *“Provide OSU faculty, staff and students with practical experience while engaging in seminal research leading to publishable results.”* After the first five years, this mission was modified (in 2013) to focus on students (not faculty), based on failed attempts to engage faculty (see next section for details).
- The focus area of the NCACI is *“critical thinking skills and rigorous problem formulation methodologies in the conduct of insurance and financial product research.”*
- The original concept of the NCACI was that the Center Director would oversee students (GRAs) working on projects provided by Nationwide. Today, students work on projects from Nationwide, but under the direction of experts at Nationwide, as Nationwide now has an in-house analytics group.
- Though not explicitly stated, an important component of NCACI’s mission is to monetarily support students via tuition and stipends. This mission is clearly being met (see the next section for details), and the reach of the Center is University-wide.

The NCACI is fulfilling its mission to provide financial support and an enriching real-world research environment for students from across the University.

2) Faculty and Student Involvement and Contribution

- In the early years of the NCACI, approximately 5-7 students were supported per year, all of whom were graduate students (GRAs). In the coming academic year (2023-2024), the NCACI will support 20 GRAs and an additional 20 undergraduate students. All undergraduate students supported by NCACI are Federal Work Study students.
- Impressively, students supported by the NCACI come from across the University. In the next year, graduate students from Business, Statistics, Psychology, English, Political Science, Linguistics, and various Engineering Departments will be supported. All GRAs have tuition and monthly stipend paid for by the Center.
- Students are supported for one year at a time, with no promise of additional support. However, the vast majority of students perform well and have their contracts renewed yearly until graduation.
- Students are directly supervised by an Executive in Residence, who is a Nationwide employee. This individual is provided an office on the Columbus campus.
- Faculty involvement in the NCACI is limited, for several reasons. Early attempts to engage faculty failed, in part due to the inherent mismatch in the type of research conducted by OSU faculty (e.g., theoretical research leading to journal publications) and the type of research conducted by experts at Nationwide (e.g., practical research leading to white papers).

Additionally, Nationwide has grown an in-house analytics organization, reducing the need for faculty experts in analytics from OSU to be involved in Nationwide projects.

- The Center Director, Ralph Greco, is the only OSU faculty member engaged in the Center, for reasons described above. His role is entirely administrative; he does not provide any skills transfer to Nationwide.
- Neither Director Greco nor Dean Makhija expressed any concerns about the limited faculty involvement. Dean Makhija stressed that Centers at FCOB vary in terms of the level of faculty and student involvement, and NCACI is a strong part of the college's portfolio of Centers.
- Dean Makhija told the subcommittee that a strength of NCACI is that it gives FCOB a chance to serve the rest of the campus (through supporting students from across the university).

The subcommittee was impressed with the number of students currently supported by the NCACI and how this number has grown over time. The subcommittee was not concerned with the lack of faculty involvement, given the strong student support this Center provides.

3) Administrative Structure and Responsibilities

- The Center Director is a part-time role and has a dotted line relationship to Dean Makhija. One full-time staff position (Center Manager) reports to the Center Director.
- The Center Manager (OSU staff member) is responsible for the day to day operations.

The subcommittee found the administrative structure to be appropriate.

4) Budget

- NCACI is fully funded by Nationwide Insurance.
- Each year, NCACI and Nationwide agree on the number of student positions for the next year, thus setting the budget for that year.
- OSU does not ask for more than one year of commitment at a time from Nationwide. Neither Director Greco nor Dean Makhija expressed any reservations about this system; it has worked historically (for 15 years) and they see no reason it will cease working in the future.

NCACI is financially self-sufficient; there seems to be little to no risk financially to the University given how the budget is set yearly by Nationwide.

5) Evaluative Criteria and Benchmarks

- The NCACI uses the number of students supported as their primary evaluation metric. As previously mentioned, this has grown from 5-7 in the early years to 20 GRAs in the coming year.
- A topic of discussion with the subcommittee were other potential metrics that could be used to evaluate the NCACI. Some suggestions are to track the diversity of supported students (along multiple dimensions of diversity, including race/ethnicity, gender, first generation status, home college, etc.) and to track the job placement of supported students. Additionally, the number of student applicants (and diversity of the pool) could be used as a metric as well.

- The self-study states that the Center “partially meets” their evaluative criteria. This is based on the original (2008) agreement that stipulated faculty involvement. Given the shift in focus since that time, the subcommittee felt that this is a somewhat harsh assessment and that the NCACI is meeting expectations that align with their current focus.

The NCACI meets the metric of number of students served. The subcommittee recommends they add additional metrics to capture additional information about the student body served by the Center.

Overall Summary and Subcommittee D Recommendation

Based on review of the self-study, a meeting with Director Greco, and a meeting with FCOB Dean Makhija, CAA Subcommittee D feels that the NCACI:

- a) is successfully fulfilling its mission (as revised in 2013 to focus on students),
- b) is impressive in supporting a large number of students from across the Columbus campus,
- c) is self-sufficient financially with a reasonable administrative structure,
- d) should be promoted as a success story to a wider audience across the University.

The subcommittee recommends to CAA that NCACI continue its operations and be reviewed on the standard cycle.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RR Andridge', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca R. Andridge, Ph.D.
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The Ohio State University College of Public Health
Chair, CAA Subcommittee D