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**Subject:** Review: Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Evaluation Studies  
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**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Eric:

All University-level centers/institutes are expected to be reviewed four years after initial establishment, and every four years thereafter. Some long-established ones are also a part of this process going forward.

Over the past several months, the Council on Academic Affairs completed a thorough review of the **Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Evaluation Studies**.

At its meeting on October 2, 2024, the Council voted to support continuation of the Center – no follow up reports necessary. The next full Council review will occur in **2028**.

Thank you for the diligence and professionalism with which you prepared the self-study, responded to the Committee's requests, and then addressed questions and comments from the full Council membership.

The Council is grateful to Professor Sue Sutherland and her subcommittee colleagues who conducted the review.

If you have any questions, please contact Sue (Sutherland.43) or me.

Randy



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# Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Evaluation Studies Review Report

## CAA Subcommittee A Members

- Sue Sutherland - Chair
- Carlos Castro
- Wendy Hesford
- Ashley Swisshelm

## Rationale for Review:

The Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Evaluation Studies (Center for HOPES) submitted a self-study report to the Council on Academic Affairs in accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-5-36. This rule calls for a regular review in order to ensure cost-effective and successful stewardship of university resources and provision of valued and productive services to the University.

The Center for HOPES undertook this self-study during the 2023-2024 academic year. This self-study covers academic years 2018-2019 to present (2023-2024).

## Review Process:

Subcommittee A received and reviewed the Comprehensive Self-Study report to gain insight into the Center and its activities over the five-year period from 2018-19 to 2023-24. Upon completion of this review, a list of Center administration and key stake holders were identified to gain insight about the operation of the Center. The list of individuals that engaged in a discussion about the self-study and operation of the Center included:

Center for HOPES Administration:

- Dr. Eric Seiber – Faculty Director (20% FTE)
- Anne Trinh – Associate Director of Business Operations
- Morgan Spahnie – Business Operations Manager III

Center for HOPES Oversight Committee:

- Rob Greenbaum – Associate Vice Provost for Academic Programs, Professor and Associate Dean for Curriculum John Glenn College of Public Affairs
- Carol Smathers – Associate Professor, Extension Field Specialist, Ohio Farm to School Program Director

College Dean

- Karla Zadnik – Interim Dean of the College of Public Health, Interim Executive Vice President and Provost.

A minimum of two subcommittee A members were present at each of the interviews, which lasted between 30-55 minutes.

Upon completion of the discussions, the chair of subcommittee A compiled the report and received input and feedback from subcommittee A members.

### **Review Findings:**

Subcommittee A found the Center for HOPES self-study to be thorough, providing a wealth of information, and clearly addressed all five required areas for review: Mission, Faculty and Student Involvement and Contribution, Administrative Structure and Responsibilities, Budget, and Evaluative Criteria and Benchmarks. Discussions with the key stakeholders provided additional insight into the importance and operation of the Center for HOPES.

#### **I) Mission of the Center for HOPES:**

The Center for HOPES has evolved its mission over time to focus on supporting health equity and social justice through rigorous and innovative policy research and evaluation. Several key activities and achievements that demonstrate the Center's commitment to its mission:

- **Externally Funded Projects:** The Center has participated in 26 externally funded projects, including significant contributions to Ohio's COVID-19 response and partnerships with organizations like Humana and Columbus Public Health.
- **Community Engagement:** The Center has emphasized community engagement, particularly through initiatives like the Social Determinants of Health Speaker Series and the Ohio Syringe Services Programs Conference.
- **Educational Contributions:** The Center has developed educational programs such as the Evaluation Certificate for Public Health and Social Services Professionals and has provided practicum placements for students.

Overall, the Center for HOPES is actively fulfilling its mission by engaging in impactful research, fostering community partnerships, and contributing to health equity and policy evaluation.

The Center for HOPES aligns with the mission of Ohio State University and the College of Public Health (CPH) by supporting the university's land-grant mission through community engagement, health equity, and a public health impact. The Center collaborates with partners to co-develop and lead projects that address public health challenges, applying research to meet community needs that has a local and national relevance. The Center focuses on health equity, which is a core aspect of CPH's mission, and serves as a bridge between the university and the community, enhancing the impact of research on public policy. The Center also addresses the social determinants of health, which complements the more clinical approach taken by other university entities.

#### **II) Faculty and Student Involvement and Contributions**

Dr. Eric Seiber serves as the Faculty Director (20% FTE) and provides strategic direction, administrative oversight, and contributes projects that support the Center staff financially. He currently leads the Center's economics and healthcare financing projects.

The Center currently has 33 faculty and staff affiliates from 8 Colleges across campus. These faculty have contributed to the Center's activities through grant and contract proposal development, project consultation, and development of interdisciplinary university and community initiatives.

In addition, the Center has previously engaged with 4 PhD, 1 Masters, and 4 undergraduate students during the review period, and currently has 1 affiliated PhD student. These students work with the Center team on both internal and external projects and 9 of the 10 students included in the self-study were paid through Center projects.

#### *Grant Contributions*

During the review period the Center has been involved in 26 distinct awards ranging in scale from \$5,800 to \$66 million. The Center has increased external funding from \$25,000 in FY 2018 to \$1.4 million in FY 2023. The Center has collaborated with faculty in 11 different colleges at OSU. Most unique project was onsite support at Ohio's COVID -19 Emergency Operations Center for 16 months in 2020-2021, including 50 presentations to state agency leaders.

#### *Publications*

During the review period, Center staff contributed to 27 published manuscripts as authors. These publications contribute to both the research and service mission of the Center and the University. In addition, students affiliated with the Center have contributed to 10 of the publications.

### **III) Administrative Structure and Responsibilities**

The Center for HOPES was approved by the OSU Board of Trustees in 1994 as the Center for Health Care Policy and Research and was inaugurated in 1998 at the Center for health Outcomes, Policy, and Evaluation Studies. Between 2004 and 2018, the Center has eight directors and interim directors and by 2018 the Center was largely inactive, with one part-time staff research. Dr. Eric Seiber was appointed as Director of the Center for HOPES in July 2018 and relaunched the Center with a new focus on community engagement and health equity in the context of OSU's land-grant mission.

The current Center's operational team consists of:

- Faculty Director (0.2 FTE)
  - Dr. Eric Seiber
    - Provides overall strategic direction, budgetary oversight, builds strategic relationships, recruits senior research staff, and serves as PI for a portion of the Center's project portfolio

- Associate Director (Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives (1.0 FTE, 50% supported by internal funds)
  - Anne Trinh
    - Leads
      - Center administration
      - Community and partner engagement
      - Management of the Center’s portfolio of contracts, grants, and research projects
      - Development of research and dissemination plans to elevate community-engaged science for improving health equity.
- Center Manager (1.0 FTE, 50% supported by internal funds)
  - Morgan Spahnne
    - Supports or leads:
      - Center administration
      - Research management
      - Evaluation of Center operations and guiding process improvements
      - Staff hiring and onboarding
      - Continuity of operations and financial sustainability
      - Grants application and planning
- Associate Director (Director of Research)
  - Currently vacant
    - Provides technical oversight for Center projects and contributes new funding opportunities in alignment with the Center’s mission

The Center has also been productive in conducting impactful research, especially related to COVID-19, and has established itself as a valuable resource for community-based participatory research.

Center for HOPES Oversight Committee consists of 7 faculty members from 5 stakeholder colleges. The oversight committee meets once per semester. These meetings consist of reporting out Center activities, soliciting advice on challenges facing the Center, and obtaining input on prospective initiatives.

#### **IV) Budget**

Since 1998, the Center of HOPES has transitioned from solely internal funding sources to largely external sources and currently, the Center generates more than 8 external dollars for every dollar from internal funding.

*Internal Funding:*

The Center receives the following internal funds on an annual basis:

- \$163,265 PBA funding from OSU (OAA) routed through the College of Public Health
- \$5,000 (approximately) per year from an endowment

And has recently also received:

- \$12,000 one-time payment from the College of Public Health
- \$100,000 development funds from the Humana corporation to pursue our mission of health equity in health insurance literacy

Of note, the Center generates indirect cost recovery from grants and projects that is retained by the College of Public Health (\$305,000 in FY 23).

#### *External Funding:*

External funding has grown from \$23,600 in FY 2018 to \$1,015,000 in FY 23. These funds are used to support the salaries of Center staff. All external funding pursued by the Center is anchored in their mission. The Center maintains a diversified portfolio of projects, actively collaborating on or leading 26 initiatives from 2018-2023 ranging from large-scale team science proposals to service contracts with smaller community partners.

In FY 23 the Center's OAA funding was used in the following ways:

- \$126,399
  - Support 1.0 FTE of staff administrators (50% each for the Associate Director and Center Manager)
- \$22,659
  - 5% effort for the faculty Director's academic year and two off duty/summer weeks
- \$30,000
  - Travel and staff professional development
- \$5,000
  - HR services
- \$3,000
  - IT services and computer equipment
- \$5,000
  - Other expenses

Expenses over the \$163,265 was covered by a one-time \$12,000 from CPH, endowment funds, and development funds.

#### ***Sustainability and Budget Challenges***

Center for HOPES staff serve a key role in leading and sustaining the Center through continuity, community relationships, and diversifying the funding portfolio. However, it could also lead to a budget shortfall if external funding decreases resulting in a reduction in permanent staff and decreasing the Center's relationship with the community and funders.

The Center ended FY 23 with 5.5 months of payroll in short run and strategic reserves. The Center target is to maintain 4 to 6 months of payroll in case reserves.

The Center has received approval from the University to operate as an Earning Unit in 2023, providing streamlined mechanism for non-research contracts.

The Center is working within its budgetary constraints by diversifying its funding sources and maintaining strategic reserves to ensure financial stability. In discussions with the Center staff, it was clear that budget concerns weighed heavily and that the staff were working diligently to develop consistent revenue streams. In this vein, Subcommittee A suggest that the staff develop a proposal to submit to the College of Public health for additional support for the Center's operation.

## **V) Evaluative Criteria and Benchmarks**

The Center outlines 5 goals and how they have met these goals and benchmarks during the review period.

1. Increase awareness of OSU community about health policies
  - a. Conducted seminars and relaunch of digital presence and working on a new website launch in 2024
2. Enhance the scholarly approach to the study, analysis, and evaluation of health policies and health outcome issues
  - a. Continual growth in contract/grant funding to support expansion of the Center and generated revenue for the College of Public health
  - b. Increase external funding from \$25,000 in FY 2018 to \$1.4 million in FY 2023
  - c. 26 grants and contracts led or supported by Center staff
  - d. 27 publications authored or co-authored by Center staff
3. Promote multidisciplinary health outcomes, policy, and evaluation studies
  - a. Collaborations with faculty in 11 OSU colleges
  - b. Developed and submitted multiple health equity proposals with range of external partners
  - c. Secured \$100,000 gift from Humana Corporation for health equity research
4. Enhance graduate, professional, and community education on understanding health outcomes, policy, and evaluation studies
  - a. Promote involvement among graduate students
    - i. 9 paid student research assistants
    - ii. 1 volunteer student research assistant
  - b. Developed a new online Evaluation Certificate for community partners
5. Provide assistance to local, state, and federal government officials and agencies charged with developing solutions to health policy issues
  - a. Support statewide initiatives
    - i. Collaborated with 7 state agencies
    - ii. Onsite support to Ohio's COVID-19 Emergency operations Center
    - iii. Center Director appointed to Ohio Governor's Economic Roundtable (2021-present)

- b. Community Partnerships
  - i. Collaborations with more than 11 community partners

The Center has established three new criteria for performance along with objectives, initiatives, and success metrics. The new criteria are as follows:

1. Establish a new Insurance for Equity Initiative
2. Expand business, marketing, and communication plans
3. Secure multi-year Center grant funding

### **Key Stakeholder Discussions:**

In the discussions with the key stakeholders, the following points were raised:

- **Strong Leadership and Staff:**
  - Dedicated and diverse staff, who are passionate about community engagement and health equity. The Center has skilled, committed staff members who excel in community engagement and health equity research.
  - The Director has built a staff-centric model that values the contributions of each team member. The team has successfully transitioned from being reliant on one person to a model where professional staff play a central role, enabling smoother succession planning.
- **Productive Research:**
  - The Center has also been productive in conducting impactful research, especially related to COVID-19, and has established itself as a valuable resource for community-based participatory research
- **Funding:**
  - As a Center that relies on soft money, especially to support core staff who are key to their operations, securing sustainable operational funding is a significant challenge. The Center does not benefit financially from its research funding due to indirect costs not returning to the Center
  - The College of Public Health could consider incentives for interdisciplinary collaborations and grant acquisition.
- **Leadership transitions and Support:**
  - Frequent changes in leadership within the College of Public Health have been destabilizing. However, the current leadership has been very supportive of the Center.
- **Political landscape:**
  - The external political environment, especially concerning health equity, poses challenges for the Center.
- **Increasing visibility and partnerships on campus:**
  - The Center should aim to collaborate within the university with a goal of establishing stronger partnerships across departments or other Centers or Institutes to enhance interdisciplinary work and funding opportunities.
- **HOPES as a Resource at OSU:**



- The Center is an underutilized resource at OSU with great potential for growth.
- Current leadership in the College of Public Health is very supportive of the Center, but there is concern over the impact of future leadership changes and the need for clearer guidance on its role as a university Center.

**Summary**

Subcommittee A determines that the Center for HOPES:

- Is fulfilling its state mission
- Is working within its own budgetary constraints
- Is meeting its own evaluative criteria and benchmarks

Based on this review process, Subcommittee A recommends that the Center for HOPES continues its operation as a University Center.