

# Letter from the Director



The Social Science Research Center has a long and proud tradition as a location for meaningful social science research for scholars on our campus and beyond. Its origins can be traced to the Social Science Round Table, a faculty group that began meeting shortly after World War II. This body's goal was to promote research in sociology, history, economics, political science, and other related disciplines. Its signal contribution was to advocate for the creation of a research organization to facilitate social science research on campus. From their vision and efforts grew the Social Science Research Center, which was formally recognized in 1950 as the University's first campus-wide research enterprise. Following this vision of a campus wide organization, the Center reports to the Vice President of Research and Economic Development and the Vice President for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

The Center, from its origin, has emphasized interdisciplinary research and the application of social science knowledge to the most critical problems facing the state, region, and nation. In addition to scholars on campus, the Social Science Research Center has become a place for scientists from other institutions to come and conduct research, study, and participate in the special environment of the Center. Collaboration across disciplines, across institutions, and even across nations is an essential feature of the Center's strategy of development.

Over the last 5 years, the Center's research programs have received over \$43 million dollars in financial support. Grants and contracts were awarded to Center scientists from over 80 extramural sources of funding, including many of the most prestigious research organizations in the nation. For example, our research is currently being supported by the National Science Foundation, National Institute of

Health, National Institute of Justice, USAID, and the Centers for Disease Control, as well as numerous other federal and state agencies. Foundation support is also important with substantial investments in the Center by the Kellogg Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and others. The amount of extramural support is among the largest for such social science enterprises nationwide.

Strong collaboration with academic departments has led to the establishment of several social science laboratories that greatly enhance the University's capabilities to carryout cutting edge research projects. The Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Laboratory was established as a joint effort between the Department of Sociology and the Department of Political Science and Public Administration in 1981. It is operating continuously as a facility for conducting rigorous academic social surveys and is responsible for hundreds of studies for projects housed at the University and beyond.

The Social Relations CollABortative is a joint venture between the Department of Psychology and the Social Science Research Center that focuses on experimentation and social relations. It is currently the home of the "The reasons for retaliation research project" that is funded by the National Institute of Justice. The Message Laboratory was recently initiated between the Department of Communications and the SSRC to lead in research on the science of science communication.

The Social, Therapeutic & Robotics Systems Laboratory (STaRS) is a joint venture between the Department of Computer Science and Engineering and the Social Science Research Center. STaRS conducts interdisciplinary research on the interaction between robots and humans and is currently funded by grants from the National Science Foundation.

The Civic Life Laboratory, our newest lab, is jointly sponsored by the Department of Communications, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, and the SSRC. It is utilizing experimentation of simulation games to study civic engagement and political polarization.

My colleagues and I are most appreciative of the fine support we receive from the leadership of Mississippi State University and are thankful for the opportunities that this fine institution has provided us.

Sincerely,

Arthur G. Cosby  
William L. Giles Distinguished Professor and Director