

Summary of Internal and External Review Team Reports
The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
Fall 2006

The following summarizes the findings of the internal and external review teams that conducted reviews during the Fall semester of 2006.

The Institute was founded in 1997 to fulfill certain objectives (summarized and paraphrased from the Self Study): to attempt to bridge the gap which often exists between scholars and practitioners when questions related to important public policies are studied/debated; to serve as an institutional catalyst whereby new studies of important public policy issues can be amplified by policymakers and the results disseminated to the relevant public; to bring university-based researchers and practitioners together to study important public policy questions from an objective, scholarly, and non-partisan or bi-partisan perspective; to disseminate the results of scholarly studies to the makers of public policy, the mass media, to public opinion leaders, and to the public at large in order to inform and enhance the political dialogue in Illinois and in the United States; and, to provide mass media practitioners with timely, systematic/objective studies of the most important public policy issues that comprise the national agenda.

Strengths Identified by the Internal Review Team

The outstanding variety and breadth of programming that the Institute has provided indicates that staff members take the mission seriously. Even after the death of Senator Paul Simon, for whom the Institute was created and named, staff members have continued to host many, many distinguished and learned guests on campus, inviting the University community and the public at large to join in the discourse on current national and state policy issues. The Institute remains fiscally sound due to the continual efforts of Senator Simon and the current Director to maintain and increase the endowment which supports programming. The Institute has also funded some research projects for non-Institute faculty and provided several policy oriented classes through Institute staff.

Challenges Identified by the Internal Review Team

The current University policy restricting the use of program or individual names on letterhead and in brochures and Institute publications has limited the Institute's visibility. Rather than capitalize on the Simon name, using it to draw more attention to the Institute and the University, the current policy negates this potential advantage. The Institute's endowment fund, held by the SIU Foundation, earns less interest than most individual investors can earn when safely investing their own funds. This means that there is less endowment income to use for projects. The building housing the Institute, although remodeled when the Institute moved in, now is in need of basic maintenance to insure that it remains one of the most attractive settings on campus.

Observations of the External Review Team

The Institute has "gotten out of the blocks" very well and this is an usually fast beginning for such an endeavor. This reflects the work ethic of Senator Simon which is continued today by the current Director. Given this excellent beginning, the team recognized some important and challenging issues as the Institute inevitably moves from the Simon-Lawrence era to a more

institutionalized future. The team listed several “dualisms” which shape these challenges: domestic vs. international focus; Illinois vs. national focus; practitioner emphasis vs. sensitivity and services to scholars; full-time staff vs. part-time staff affiliated with other campus units; current size of the Institute vs. expanded size including support staff; speakers vs. research/programs/reform; journalism emphasis vs. ties to the College of Liberal Arts; current leadership vs. need for transition; and institute independence vs. integration into the University.

Further observations include: the critical issue of fund-raising and building the endowment as well as ensuring that the University recognizes the Institute as the great asset it is; how the Institute will address its role of promoting scholarship within the University; the need to determine a focus for the Institute in the short and long term rather than continue to embrace the wide and eclectic interests identified by Senator Simon (which may be unrealistic for an Institute this size); the need to address the obvious tension between the Institute’s focus on big-name speakers as opposed to less visible projects involving SIUC personnel; and the move from a nearly autonomous operation when Senator Simon was present to a better fit within the University structure that will allow the Institute and the University to build a better working relationship to ensure the future of the Institute at SIUC. The team stressed that the meshing of the Institute into the greater University would be immensely advantageous to SIUC, a fact that may not be fully recognized by the University.

Recommendations of the External Review Team

The Institute should consider expanding its size to include part-time and temporary positions from various university units. The Institute may want to use some Institute funds to support research projects at SIUC. These grants could be awarded competitively and the resulting “Simon Scholars” would present their work or use the funding to find external grants. This would increase involvement from other campus units in Institute projects. A second recommendation suggested adding an associate director for international affairs to keep the Institute’s international programming vibrant. The Institute does a good job of involving SIU students in its programming, but could do more to extend this outreach, perhaps with departmental student organizations. The Institute should consider expanding the number of advisory boards beyond the original Board of Counselors. A campus advisory board made up of faculty and students would bring new perspectives to the Institute and a high-level, big-name advisory board could complement the Board of Counselors and bring new support to the Institute.

The team had two final recommendations. First, the University should change its policy on the use of the Institute name and Senator Simon’s name in order to promote the Institute. As the team said, not allowing the expansive use of the Paul Simon name is “truly counterproductive for both the University and the Institute”. “Simply put, the current policy is nuts, and it makes the Institute personnel, from top to bottom, wonder about both the commitment and savvy of the University.” The final recommendation raised the need for the Institute and the University to address together, the inevitable change in Institute leadership. The team suggested the formation of a small committee, chaired by Dr. John Jackson, with various stakeholders from the University. The most important issue facing the Institute in the near future is naming the next director when Mike Lawrence is ready to step down.