

A&S Strategic Research Planning Initiative - Town Hall for Social Sciences (Feb 27, 2024)

Facilitated by: Laura Galloway and Cheryl Wagner

Introduction + Slideshow Presentation by Laura Galloway

- I. Overview of Strategic Research Planning initiative:
 - a. “The initiative will assess our strengths, benchmark our performance, and articulate a vision for what research excellence looks like in A&S, and will recommend specific actions to achieve it and measure progress over the next 5-7 years.” “Expand the impact and size of our research footprint.”
- II. Introduction of the steering committee, divisional representatives, and research cores. Stated focus of the Strategic Research Planning Initiative
 - a. Identify focal areas of strategic investment
 - b. Identify constraints: changes in practice and resources to enable success in research, scholarship and creative practices
 - c. \$25 million set aside in upcoming budget to support outcome of this initiative
- III. The process is faculty driven – ideas collected from faculty across divisions, then shaped by steering committee to form a plan to present to the dean. Process to date:
- IV. Faculty focus groups to gather thoughts on constraints and on areas of research strength (one per division)
- V. Survey to
 - i. a) determine areas of strength and opportunity
 - ii. b) assess constraints
- VI. Town halls to discuss survey responses in areas of opportunity
- VII. Survey Results:
 - a. 619 A&S faculty invited to take survey – anyone with research in their job description
 - b. 51.2% response rate
 - c. 34.2% response from Social Sciences
 - d. **Social Sciences faculty ranked the biggest constraints to their research in 4 categories. These findings will be used by the Dean to identify where to invest this spring.**
 - i. **Resources: Seed money for projects**
 - ii. **Infrastructure: Pre-award staff support**
 - iii. **Collaboration/Communication: Speaker series**

iv. Equipment/Training: Additional spaces for research

- VIII. Focal Areas for Strategic Investment: open-ended questions grouped by 3 themes that emerged in the survey analysis. These themes emerged from the Social Sciences faculty. The goal of the town hall is to build out these ideas – do these themes resonate? Are they exciting?
- a. Science & Technology Studies
 - b. AI & Society
 - c. Interdisciplinary Research
- IX. Some areas already being invested in – not included in discussion today

Open Comment Period Facilitated by Cheryl Wagner:

- I. *Science & Technology Studies*
 - a. STS already exists
- II. *AI & Society*
 - a. Proposal for center for language and AI – opportunity to define what it will be. Brings together people from different departments – inviting many perspectives. Co-opting AI. Thinking about AI as a social form, using language to study
 - b. Can it be broadened to include all types of media? News, social media, etc.
 - c. I'd like to see a global perspective on AI – not just US – how it's playing out other places
 - d. Program previously proposed on big data and machine learning – collaboration between CS and Dean's office, social scientists, statistics
 - e. Collaboration with SDS?
 - f. Political science varieties of capitalism research: how AI could disrupt ways of life, jobs, economy, etc. effects many different sectors of society/societies
 - g. We could use this theme to address research inequality – of all types – as a broader topic.
- III. *Interdisciplinary Research*
 - a. What does this contain?
 - b. Invitations for people to talk about these configurations – a lot of exciting and surprising work here
 - c. Already interdisciplinary opportunities at UVA – labs etc.
 - d. Gathers people together for research, but doesn't tend to last – difficult to find collaborators excited to work together – communities, larger groups
 - e. Migration issues – labor, climate, political
 - f. Multimodal methodologies, race diaspora, indigeneity

- g. Environment in society / environment and community / environment and economics
 - h. Epistemology of researchers is very important – to prevent quantitative overbearing qualitative research as has often happened
 - i. Desire to work with people who have similar epistemologies
- IV. Additional comments:
- a. Questions about how the survey was conducted and analyzed
 - b. Faculty noted that they feel research isn't supported in the division
 - c. Q: Are these themes settled? Is there more room to define them? A: This meeting is to get input on if these themes resonate with your division. They are not final.
 - d. Environmental Initiative is focused on replication and high impact – not as many resources for other research in environmental issues ex: environmental anthropology
 - e. Service burden is getting in the way of research time
 - f. Lots of existing excellent qualitative research already being done
 - g. Past successful prioritizing with Mellon Foundation – each dept wrote out their “dream hire” - this led to high participation and tangible results in hiring and labs
 - h. Idea to look at past summer funding grants / research proposals to see trends