

THE LANTERN

Tuesday, April 03, 2001
04/03/01

Current Issue:

[OSU one step closer to CURA](#)

By Miranda Zink

For Ohio State to be among the elite in the field of research studies, some believe it is necessary to have a hub for researchers to congregate.

One large step toward that goal was taken when the University Senate approved the Center of Urban Regional Analysis at its last meeting. Only approval from the Board of Trustees is needed for CURA to be a reality at OSU.

According to Morton O'Kelly, CURA project leader, the CURA will serve as an interdisciplinary center that will bring together faculty and graduate students to facilitate the research, teaching and outreach missions of OSU as they relate to urban and regional issues.

The center will begin conducting research on a local level in Columbus and the Central Ohio area, gradually branching to the whole state of Ohio, the Midwest, and then nationally. According to O'Kelly, a professor of geography, the center's ultimate goal is to reach across borders and go international.

"Graduate students will be able to benefit from the center by having more interdisciplinary activities such as round tables, meetings and focus groups and they will have more access to faculty who are conducting state-of-the-art research," O'Kelly said.

"The center will be positive not only for the faculty but also for graduate and even undergraduate students who are interested in that subject and research in that area," said Keith Alley, senior associate vice president in the Office of Research.

The state of Ohio will distribute approximately \$240,000 per year to CURA for urban related studies and programs. The Office of Academic Affairs will give the CURA \$150,000 per year for funding. Other funding has come from many different departments and units on campus that gave matching money, O'Kelly said.

Once approved, the CURA will be located in Derby Hall, but it may eventually move into Page Hall with other public policy interest groups once renovations are

completed.

“The purpose is to raise the profile of Ohio State’s research faculty in the area of research studies,” O’Kelly said.

“The University has many researchers scattered all around campus. This center should help the university get the word out about the excellent research that is being conducted at OSU,” O’Kelly said.

“Our aspiration is for OSU to become comparable to other urban centers such as Berkeley, University of Toronto, Minnesota, Rutgers and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which all have very successful facilities,” O’Kelly said.

O’Kelly believes the diverse group of faculty will be able to conduct research in many different areas of urban and regional policy. The CURA and faculty will be able to conduct research on the availability, affordability and relocation of urban housing. Faculty researchers will be able to measure and track suburban growth and transportation in cities. Researchers will be able to map statistics of many different aspects of a city and region, including crime and diversity patterns. Extensive research will also be conducted on the migration of new workers to Columbus and Franklin County.

According to the Senate agenda, the state of Ohio distributes funds to eight universities for urban related studies and programs. Most universities have urban centers to handle the distribution of these funds and to foster additional research in these areas. OSU has elected individual researchers and various cohorts via the Committee on Urban Affairs to distribute the funds. It is believed that opportunities for fostering additional research and the capacity to attract significant extramural funding have been hampered due to the lack of a more formal organization.

According to O’Kelly, the project for an urban center officially began in 1995 when the Committee on Applied Social and Public Policy recommended the importance and potential for an urban research center. In June of 1998, funding was recommended for an urban initiative. Since then, many support letters from department chairs were gathered and focus groups were conducted.

A search committee, chaired by Donald Haurin, associate dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, is in the process of looking for a director of the proposed CURA.

“The director must have an excellent scholarship record in the area of urban and regional analysis and a record of excellence in teaching and service.

“We are looking for someone interested in leading the center in terms of

growth and must express a vision for what the center will become in the future,” Haurin said.

The search committee hopes to complete the search for a director by the end of spring quarter, enabling the new director to join the staff for autumn quarter.

“We have been extremely pleased with the number of highly qualified applicants,” Haurin said.

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The Student Newspaper at Ohio State University

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