

**Executive Committee Meeting
Minutes of May 7, 2009**

Convener: Janiece Kiedrowski, Chair
Recorder: Cherie Williams, Secretary
Present: Area I: Rebecca Goodman, Tirzah Evege-Thompson
Area II: David Ballard, Leslie McCain
Area III: Mary Pitts, Gene Pohancsek
Area IV: Laura Yates, Jason Parker, Pam Rose
Area V: Nancy Battaglia, Calvin Worthy
Officers: Janiece Kiedrowski, Ann Marie Landel, Cherie Williams
Excused: Louise Lougen, Area V
Larry Labinski (ex-officio)

AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes of April 2, 2009
2. Report of the Chair: Call for Senatorial Nominations
3. Report of the Vice Chair
4. Guest Speaker: Kathryn Foster, Director for The Regional Institute: Urban and Regional Planning
5. Old/New Business
6. Adjournment

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes of April 2, 2009

The minutes were approved.

2. Report of the Chair – Call for Senatorial Nominations

The next meeting in June will be the last meeting of the academic year. Kara Saunders will be joining us to speak about the new student information system that is being planned. The meeting should last from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. We will look at Senatorial nominations at that time.

3. Report of the Vice Chair

Nothing to report.

4. Guest Speaker: Kathryn Foster, Director for the Regional Institute: Urban and Regional Planning

Dr. Foster has been with the Regional Institute since 2005, but has been on the UB faculty in the School of Architecture and Planning since 1993. The UB Regional Institute was opened in the fall of 1997 by Bill Greiner who was UB's president at the time. The mission of the Institute is to "promote regional excellence through research and policy intelligence to frame issues, inform decisions and guide change." The intent was to frame and bring policy intelligence to issues that were of relevance to our Buffalo-Niagara region which is a bi-national region. UBRI would provide data and bring good information together to shed light and illuminate those issues that impact the region. For the first eight years the RI was a unit under the Vice President for Public Service and Urban Affairs when Muriel Howard was still at UB. President Simpson and

Provost Tripathi wanted to push the pendulum to have the Institute do more research by asking our own questions, not simply responding and reacting to questions from clients. The administration suggested that the RI find an academic home and became a unit of UB's Law School in December 2005. Dr. Foster stated that this has resulted in a great marriage as the Law School is also involved with governance issues at the state and local levels. They are also involved with environmental and housing issues and have a great track record with civic engagement. The RI's Advisory Council is composed of members from across the University – the Dean of the Law School, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Architecture and Planning, Greg Michaelidis from the President's office and Marsha Henderson, Vice President for External Affairs. The Institute is currently located in Beck and Parker Halls on the south campus, but will be moving to the UB Gateway downtown in the M. Wile building.

Dr. Foster continued that the approach to the work done at the Regional Institute is to be independent, evidence-based and sophisticated in analysis and presentation. RI is very much about production values according to Dr. Foster. There are ten members on the staff and they work with various faculty members on specific projects. They are also assisted by graduate assistants. The budget in FY 08-09 was \$1,011,591.00 and almost all of it was soft money (76%). Dr. Foster spends a great deal of her time towards that effort. UB provides 24% of the funding that is used for some salaries. The rest of the money must be raised and it comes primarily from foundations, with some funding coming from local, county and state governments. The Institute focuses on governance of the bi-national region and beyond, the regional economy, demographic change (aging issues, women's issues, race and ethnicity issues) and bi-national regions, cross-border policy concerns and porosity of the border, to name a few. They are able to perform their work using data and information management tools, research and policy analysis, client projects and civic engagement. The Regional Knowledge Network is an on-line system that is available 24x7. This provides access to an array of data that is available about the Buffalo-Niagara region. It is accompanied by an on-line reference called the State of the Region Performance Indicators project. It has been on-line since the mid 1990's. Dr. Foster also indicated that there is a web site that provides information about projects that the Regional Institute is working on. These data management tools are also available to anyone seeking information about our region. The Regional Institute is working on enhancing the Regional Knowledge Network and is working on developing what they are calling the Informed Region. This project will help make our area the nation's most informed region by supplying data that will help policy makers make decisions, provide transparency and have accountability for these decisions.

On the research and policy analysis side, the Regional Institute deals with actionable research for those constituencies who need to make informed decisions. The most visible way to do this is through policy briefs. One policy brief that the Institute produced recently was "How Does Western New York Vote?" The Institute is also capable of producing regional intelligence reports when a topic needs additional information than a policy brief could provide. Another project that the Institute is involved in is called "Building Resilient Regions". This is part of a national network of people thinking about what it means to be a resilient region. How resilient is Buffalo-Niagara and what are the drivers that could make our area more resilient? This project is funded by the MacArthur Foundation. The Institute is also working on "What if...?" investigations. Much of the research looks back at trends and patterns and compares a current outlook against where we have been either physically or socio-economically. The Regional Institute wants to shift the way policy makers think about research and ask them the "What if...?" questions. Dr. Foster used the following examples: "What if the average temperature of this region increased by two degrees?" or "What if they took down the Skyway?" or "What if we reduced teen pregnancy by half?" They want people to start thinking and imagining how to get to those outcomes and what the implications of those outcomes could be.

Dr. Foster said they are thinking very seriously about “The Well-Governed Region” series that will look at behind the scenes issues that trouble public policy making. There is a National Science Foundation grant going in soon on data transformation. The numbers and data do not mean anything unless you can translate them into knowledge that people can use.

Projects are always numerous, Dr. Foster indicated. Most of the money that comes into the Regional Institute comes in through project work. The UBRI is no longer able to provide these services without a fee attached. Some of the projects they have worked on or are working on are:

- Alternatives to Incarceration
- South towns Tourism
- Reaching for Excellence: Community Visions for WNY Health Care (how well does the system meet the needs of the citizens)
- BOCES Strategic Planning
- Pathways to Progress: Women and Girls of WNY (will be released in September 2009)

What is in the works? The UBRI is working with Chemung County on a Highway Service Sharing project to remove duplication of services. The EOC and the COE are working with UBRI on a project called “Career Pathways in Life Sciences”. This project will help ensure that people of all levels of the spectrum will have opportunities to work in the biosciences fields if our region becomes a center for these types of employment opportunities.

The Regional Institute is also involved with civic engagement. The Institute sponsored a symposium on change for its 10th anniversary. They looked at the changes that occurred in our region over the last decade. Last year they invited Edward Glaeser, a noted Harvard economist, to speak in Buffalo about an article he had written called “Can Buffalo Ever Come Back?” The RI also works with the Census Bureau and will be working with a variety of groups for the upcoming census to accurately count people. What’s in the works? The Institute is looking at hosting a fall forum to showcase their new home downtown and provide information about the Regional Institute and what they are doing. The Regional Institute really wants to do an annual assembly on what we know and don’t know about the region, especially what we don’t know that we need to know said Dr. Foster. She also shared information about a multi-mode project they are working on called “The Region’s Edge”. It is meant to answer the question: “What does it mean to be a bi-national region in a global world?” The project combines data and information management tools (database of cross-border stocks and flows) with research projects that take the border barometer. The Niagara Ten is a group of ten communities, five in Southern Ontario and five in the United States, that are working together to come up with an agenda of their priorities for working together. There are occasional briefings to put the data together and discussions with policy makers who care about the effectiveness of the border. They are also working to create protocols that can be used by both the Canadian and U.S. researchers so that common definitions can be used for data and more accurate comparisons can be made across the border. Additionally they are working to redefine the global city region up to Toronto which is the major powerhouse of cities in Canada and has international prominence. Dr. Foster wondered what this could mean for Buffalo and Western New York.

The last project Dr. Foster described is called “Better by Degrees” and it pertains to how WNY leverages its higher education sector for greater regional prosperity. There are 22 colleges and universities in our region who are often competitive with each other for students, funding and visibility. UBRI has worked with this group for a year and put together a number of studies, analyses, and a web site so that they begin thinking as a higher education group, not individual institutions. The Oshei Foundation may provide funding. The Institute has created a cross-region database on higher education performance and research has focused on the economic impact of the WNY higher education industry. They have done a comparative analysis of higher

education status by region. The Institute is currently working on a new web site called Buffalocampus.com. Phase II may provide additional research and projects. Dr. Foster concluded her presentation by saying that UBRI will be moving downtown in August. The move will provide the Institute with enhanced visibility and opportunities. The floor was opened for questions.

Nancy Battaglia suggested that Meals on Wheels volunteers could provide census services in return for payments that could be made to their capital campaign. Dr. Foster thought that was a great suggestion because Meals on Wheels' volunteers get into places that many census takers do not have access to. Dr. Foster was not sure how this would work but said she would check into this for Nancy.

Cherie Williams asked Dr. Foster to describe what the staff did for the Institute and whether there are other colleges and universities around the country that have units that do work like UBRI. Dr. Foster replied that she is the Director and there is also a Deputy Director who is trained in both law and political science. There are two staff members who provide IT support both internally to the institute and externally for other projects. A staff member directs the regional initiatives and also is in charge of communications like press releases. Another staff member supports the GIS function. There are three policy analysts, one focuses on a bit more research, one on projects, and one on financial issues. Additionally, there is a staff member who does graphic and information design and web design as well. A program assistant provides administrative support for the Institute. She is anticipating a staff shortage over the summer and would entertain having other staff at the University work temporarily at the Institute if they have a skill set to share and there is excess capacity in an area. UB is not the only university who provides this service. Harvard University has the Rappaport Institute that cares about greater Boston. Princeton has an urban and regional research center for New Jersey. The University of North Carolina does urban and regional research that is broader in scope than just North Carolina. A number of universities who are aware of their public relations image and are large employers often think about doing this. UB has worked very hard to have an imprint in this area and this region is a great place to study. Some of the issues we study here (i.e. cross-border issues) have relevance in other parts of the world. Cherie asked if we were the only SUNY institution to do this. Dr. Foster responded that New Paltz just opened a small shop to do local government research. SUNY Albany has a government law center and a separate entity called the Rockefeller Institute which is a bit distinct from Albany.

Pam Rose asked if UBRI has any pending projects that addressed health care issues. The Health Sciences Library is participating in the Go Local project to put a presence for Upstate New York on the National Library of Medicine Medline Plus website of which UB is a part. When a consumer uses this web site to search a particular medical condition they see a Go Local icon where they can enter their zip code to see what resources are available in their community that deal with this medical condition. The Health Sciences Library is collaborating with Doug Frank. Pam wondered if they could also collaborate with UBRI. Dr. Foster responded that she invites and welcomes this type of collaboration and will continue the discussion with Pam off-line. She commented that the health care systems in Canada and the U.S. are very different. They do have compatibility issues with health care data between the two countries. The big project right now in UBRI that is being funded by Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York does not include Canada. The Regional Knowledge Network did attempt to put some data cross-border, but it was difficult to do this with health related data. The Community Health Foundation asked UBRI to determine how well the health care system was performing for people asking questions like: "Are clinics open at night?" or "What happens when a child is sick?", "Do you have the ability to access good health care?", "Are there gerontologists in your area?" There will be a report card coming out in July and it will describe fifteen health care indicators that this foundation wants to track over time. They are looking at leverage and choke points.

Gene Pohancsek asked whether UBRI would ever receive residuals for data they have provided to organizations or governments that they have taken back to their communities and realized savings from using it. Dr. Foster said this doesn't exist. In the beginning they committed to giving the data/information away. Universities are in the business of giving away knowledge. That is the enterprise even though it takes resources to do this. How do you get people to pay for a public good? Local governments look at UBRI as a resource. She would love to get a portion of grant money that organizations have secured because of the data provided by UBRI.

Tirzah Evege-Thompson commented that she belongs to several organizations where membership is considered extremely valuable. She suggested that UBRI use a membership structure to garner fees. People would pay for data that they need. She suggested looking at data that has the most value and charge for that. Dr. Foster replied that this is such an issue for UBRI. She is not sure how to set a price point on this. This is public data. They do get feedback on who is using the site. She thought Tirzah's suggestion was an interesting concept.

5. Old/New Business

The Executive Committee met with Provost Tripathi for one hour for a discussion of the current budget situation. That portion of the meeting was off the record.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.