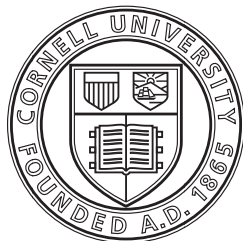




SUMMARY OF THE 2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Cornell University

This report summarizes annual achievements in the three primary programming areas of the Institute for the Social Sciences (ISS) at Cornell:

- The three-year **Theme Projects**, which bring together faculty from across Cornell to explore a promising research topic together
- The new **Faculty Fellows Program**, which provides funding and course relief for assistant and associate faculty in the social sciences
- The biannual **Small Grants program**, which provides funding for cutting-edge faculty research

## Theme Projects Active During 2008-2009

### **Persistent Poverty and Upward Mobility, 2008-2011**

*Chris Barrett, Team Leader (Applied Economics and Management)*

The Persistent Poverty Project completed its first year, which is its planning year, in June 2009. The results of their planning include arrangements for a full schedule of campus events to be held during 2009-2010: a domestic poverty forum, two international conferences, two workshops, a University Lecture by William Julius Wilson, and a seminar series with over 10 guest speakers. A video of the April 2009 kick-off lecture previewing these events and explaining the motivation for the team, given by team leader Chris Barrett, is available in the Poverty project's video archive. Attendance for this standing-room only event was largely composed of the project's 100+ affiliates from over 25 departments and programs. During their first year, the team also sponsored a student research competition, funding one undergraduate and ten graduate student awardees. These students will present about their research as a part of the events planned for 2009-2010.

### **Judgment, Decision-Making, and Social Behavior, 2009-2012**

*Ted O'Donoghue, Team Leader (Economics)*

The JDSB Project, selected during spring 2009 by the Social Sciences Internal Advisory Council, will begin its three-year term with a one-day team planning retreat on July 30, 2009. The JDSB team includes twelve faculty members from seven departments (Economics, Government, Human Development, Johnson Graduate School of Management, Law, Policy Analysis and Management, and Psychology) spanning four colleges and schools (Arts and Sciences, Human Ecology, Johnson Graduate School of Management, and the Law School). During the 2009-2010 academic year, the team will plan the activities described in their proposal.

## Retired Theme Projects

The largest legacy of the inaugural ISS theme project, The Evolving Family (2004-2007), is the Cornell Population Program founded in 2008, which continues to develop demographic research and training at Cornell with support from a large number of units at Cornell and a NICHD five-year R-24 infrastructure grant.

This year members of the Networks Project (2005-2008) continued their search for external funding, revising their proposals to respond to the changing priorities of NSF. During this year, David Easley and Jon Kleinberg also submitted a completed Networks textbook manuscript to their publisher. This book is the companion text to their co-taught 200-level Networks course that they developed while in residence at the ISS. In its third year

during 2009-2010, this course, cross-listed in four departments, continues to grow. This year it had over 350 students from all seven colleges.

Members of the Contentious Knowledge Project (2006-2009) moved forward this past year with their many book projects, including a compilation of papers presented at the project's 2007 Diffusion workshop. The team also has a collaborative volume in the works that pulls together the different strands of research associated with the project.

## **Faculty Fellows Program**

During Fall 2008, the inaugural ISS Fellows Program, with the support of 6 colleges, 10 departments, and the PCCW, provided 11 promising assistant and associate faculty members with a semester of teaching leave, a residency at the ISS, and \$10,000 in unrestricted funds so they could focus on their individual research activities. The fellows report that the two areas they spent the bulk of their funds on were research assistance and travel to meet with collaborators, interview subjects, or present work. The most commonly cited intangible benefit the fellows cited was the physical and mental space to think, write, and start new work. They described the partial protection the fellowship gave them from pressing teaching and departmental service coupled with a non-departmental office and no additional fellowship responsibilities beyond a weekly social lunch as a "true gift" and "the most generous aspect of this program." The second primary intangible benefit that the fellows cited was the relationships they developed with each other as junior social science faculty from different disciplines. They described how their lunch conversations had direct impact on their research foci, methods, and use of technology, as well as gaining insights to bring back to their own home departments regarding similar institutional challenges.

## **Small Grants Program**

During the fall 2008 and spring 2009 semesters, 49 proposals for small grants were received, of which 26 were funded. The amount requested in these two funding rounds was over \$550,000; awards totaled \$175,240. The average funding per project was \$8,134 for fall 2008 and \$5,673 for spring 2009. Generous support for this program was provided by the Office for the Vice-Provost for Research.

Updates from the fall 2007 round of funding, in which 8 small grants were awarded, show that recipients have subsequently secured \$328,000 in external funding.

## The Institute for the Social Sciences

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