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SAC Report

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IAI Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)
Report to the Conference of the Parties
June, 2012

SAC members (2012-2013): Frank Muller-Karger (Chair), Claudia E. Natenzon, Jose Marengo, Ramón Pichs Madruga, Walter Baethgen, Carolina Vera, Hal Mooney, Rodolfo Dirzo.

2012.2013 IAI SAC Accomplishments

1) CRN proposal review, selection, and project implementation: 10 international CRN3 teams in place (see the directorate report for a listing of projects)

The SAC completed the review of a first round of CRN3 proposals, with the selection of 8 projects presented to the CoP in July 2012. Given that most if not all of these proposals had weaknesses in developing the linkage between the Social/Human Sciences and Natural Sciences, the SAC worked on developing concrete recommendations for the IAI Directorate for strengthening each team.

In addition, jointly with the IAI Directorate, the SAC promoted and implemented a second round of CRN3 proposals. A second CRN3 call for proposals was issued 27 August, 2012. The IAI received 26 full proposals; this list was first downselected to 11 proposals after an in-depth review by the SAC and the IAI Directorate. A full peer- and panel-review process of 11 proposals was conducted, and 2 (two) proposals were finally selected. Again, the issue with the proposals received for the second round was lack of attention to the IAI Strategic Goals and in particular weaknesses in developing the Human Dimensions in the proposal.

In this way, the SAC provided active and deep review of over 110 proposals over the last year in order to provide the region with the best interdisciplinary, international teams possible. A total of 10 teams is now in place; some of these are still undergoing budget negotiations as the IAI Directorate and the SAC work with the Principal Investigators to strengthen the Human Dimensions aspects of each project.

The review and feedback to the international CRN3 teams is an on-going process, and discussions on guidance to the CRN teams continues through the IAI Directorate.

The SAC has developed a list of some of the “lessons learned” on how SAC reviewed CRN3 proposals.

The SAC has recommended that external reviewers should be compensated in future reviews. Also, the SAC recommends establishing mini-grants for proposal development; having “commissioned” proposals with investigators from CRNs.

Co-funding arrangements:

The IAI Directorate and SAC have developed substantive agreements for international co-funding of IAI projects. Specifically, the CONICET from Argentina and FAPESP in Brazil have offered substantial co-funding of CRN3 projects.

The SAC encourages CoP members to explore co-funding of IAI activities that address relevant regional issues that require the diversity of scientific views on both the social and natural sciences that international regional teams can bring to bear on regional problems.

2) SAC membership: A looming problem.

Per IAI statutes, the CoP needs to have a SAC with 10 members. The SAC remained a body that was short two members throughout the entire 2012-2013 period of operation.

The SAC requests appointment of a full complement of members to the SAC. These should be established scientists who:

- have published extensively on the natural and social science of the region in peer-reviewed journals
- have ample experience in international research collaborations in the region,
- will provide unbiased scientific advice to the CoP and to the IAI Directorate,
- will help to further develop and implement the IAI Strategic Plan
- will work with teams of scientists engaged in the IAI CRN, other regional science efforts, capacity building, and developing linkages between science and policy in the region.

In June 2013, four (4) SAC members will have their terms expire. A total of six (6) vacancies will open in the SAC in June 2013.

The SAC requests that the CoP nominate, select, and appoint six (6) highly qualified scientists to fill these vacancies at its June 2013 meeting in Montevideo. The SAC also suggests that some of the vacancies be exceptionally re-filled by current SAC members whose final terms are expiring, in order to guarantee some continuity over the coming year of significant transitions for the IAI.

On 7 August, 2012, the IAI Director requested nominations from the Conference of the Parties for the IAI Science Advisory Council (SAC). The meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Virginia, June 2012, highlighted very specifically the requirement to augment the expertise of the SAC membership in terms of human dimensions, with particular interest in scientific expertise in public health. The SAC also looks for geographic, gender, and ethnic balance in seeking nominations for the open seats on the SAC.

Present SAC members (2012-2013): 8 members (expiring terms in **bold**)

Frank Muller-Karger (Chair, 2008-2011, 2011-2014)

Claudia E. Natenzon (2010-2013, / term expiring; available for re-appointment)

Jose Marengo (2011-2014)

Ramón Pichs Madruga (2007-2010, 2010-2013 / term expiring)

Walter Baethgen (2008-2011, 2011-2014)

Carolina Vera (2007-2010, 2010-2013/ term expiring)

Hal Mooney (2007-2010, 2010-2013/ term expiring)

Rodolfo Dirzo (2011-2014).

By discipline:

- 2 climatologists
- 1 economist
- 1 oceanographer
- 2 biologists
- 1 social geographer
- 1 agronomist

3) Implementation of the IAI Strategic Plan:

The IAI SAC made significant progress in implementing the IAI Strategic Plan. Particular emphasis was placed in focusing CRN3 teams and projects, and IAI Training Institute activities on and regarding the interaction between the Social and Natural Sciences.

SAC members are preparing an analysis of the gaps in research in in human dimensions that remain in current funded projects, identifying areas of synergy so that the SAC can advise the directorate about the needs and gaps that need to be addressed.

4) Looking into Future Earth: (<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>)

The IAI SAC is actively engaged with the IAI Directorate in developing a strategy for using Future Earth as an organizing theme for the IAI. This process has been identified by SAC members as a framework for the overall strategy to link natural and social sciences.

As explained in the International Council for Science (ICSU) website for Future Earth (<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>): “Future Earth is a new 10-year international research initiative that will develop the knowledge for responding effectively to the risks and opportunities of global environmental change and for supporting transformation towards global sustainability in the coming decades. Future Earth will mobilize thousands of scientists while strengthening partnerships with policy-makers and other stakeholders to provide sustainability options and solutions in the wake of Rio+20.”

5) IAI Restructuring and the SAC role:

The SAC has provided advice and support to the IAI Directorate and the Executive Council as needed in the process of developing the new IAI administrative structure. As the IAI Directorate Office moves to Montevideo, the SAC stands ready to work hand in hand with the various IAI offices. Of particular importance is that the IAI SAC expects full integration of its strategic and operational efforts with the new IAI Science Liaison Office in Brazil.

The IAI SAC expects to be informed about the activities of these various offices. The SAC will also help as needed in facilitating the interaction between these offices, defining and carrying out research agendas of the IAI, and will work with the international research, applications and education communities and with the public in general to make the integrated IAI offices a success.