



Office of the Provost

John McCarthy

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Distinguished Professor

April 6, 2020

Professor Lisa Chasan-Taber
Interim Director, Biostatistical Consulting Center
School of Public Health and Health Sciences

Dear Professor Chasan-Taber,

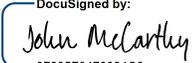
Thank you for submitting your self-study for the Biostatistical Consulting Center. After reviewing your submission and the additional information received via email, the Evaluation Committee for Centers & Institutes recommended continuation of your center for one year and reevaluation again next year in order to allow for further time to assess the focus of the center— either a service center or a research center – and set-up new activities accordingly. We agree with this recommendation.

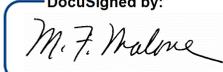
Attached are further comments from the Committee as well as the list of committee members. Complete information about the Center/Institute self-study and evaluation process can be found on the following website:

<https://www.umass.edu/research/engagement/centers-institutes/review-centers-and-institutes>

The next self-study report for the Institute for the Biostatistical Consulting Center will be due September 2021. Electronic self-study submissions may be sent to vcre@umass.edu. We will be sharing the results of the review with the Faculty Senate and the UMass President's Office, and will be in touch again in fall 2021. But please do not hesitate to reach out to AVCRE Nieswandt, if you have any questions or concerns.

With best wishes,

DocuSigned by:

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John McCarthy
Provost and Senior Chancellor
for Academic Affairs

DocuSigned by:

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Michael F. Malone
Vice Chancellor for Research and
Engagement

Cc: Anna Maria Siega-Riz, Dean, SPHHS
Susan Hankinson, Associate Dean for Research, SPHHS

Name of Center or Institute: Biostatistical Consulting Center

Evaluator 1: XX

Evaluator 2: XX

Evaluation Criteria

1. Does the Center contribute to the mission of the campus?

Yes. The Biostatistical Consulting Center's (BCC) mission is (1) to increase the probability of grant funding, thereby increasing the research portfolio of SPHHS faculty; (2) to improve the statistical analysis component of manuscripts, masters' theses and doctoral dissertations of faculty and graduate students; and (3) to provide an environment in which biostatistics graduate students can gain practical experience and further develop their skills under the guidance of Biostatistics faculty.

The BCC is a core resource for the SPHHS, designed to ensure statistical support for researchers of different levels and to forward research and training missions of the School. The unique feature of the BCC is that both faculty and graduate students provide statistical consulting. Lower billing rate graduate students provides a cost-effective solution for researchers.

The BCC contributes to the campus strategic plan to "Establish UMass Amherst as a partner of choice in advancing and applying knowledge and innovation for the betterment of society." The Center also aligns with and supports several major campus strategic priorities (2018-23): "strengthening of graduate education and expanding research and scholarly impact". The goals of the BCC also contribute to the mission of the SPHHS "To optimize the public's health and quality of life through innovative education, research, outreach, and practice using approaches that integrate the core areas of public health and health sciences."

2. Has the Center been successful in meeting its own goals and objectives?

Yes. There are currently 3 tenure-track faculty and 1 part-time biostatistician engaged in the BCC consulting projects. The BCC reports 10 projects that were ongoing over the past year and 2 publications emanating from this activity. Out of these 10, in 6 cases service was provided to faculty in UMass and other institutions, in two cases to both faculty and graduate students and in two cases to graduate students.

3. Does the center have adequate financial resources for continued operations?

Yes. The BCC does not have Campus or SPHHS level funding. However, it was successful in bringing more than 44K of external funding in 2019 in a form of grants, contracts and fee for service. The BCC expenses over the same period were around 36K and consisted mostly of general operation costs, stipends and travel expenses. Thus, the current BCC financial structure is sustainable. Existing funding is not enough, however, to support a position of a part-time or full-time BCC Director. The BCC requested 50% Director of the Center, but this request was not supported by the SPHHS. Currently BCC is exploring a potential joint-Director position with the Department of Mathematics & Statistics.

4. Has the Center effectively leveraged campus resources? External funding secured?

Partly. The BCC does not have financial support at the level of Campus or the SPHHS. However, it is successful in securing external funding. BIOEPI department has developed a new BCC model, which should further increase the BCC efficiency, productivity and its revenue. This model includes hiring of

the BCC Director, development of better billing policy, two tier rates (UMASS and federal vs. external), and the development of 1-credit biostatistical consulting course, which will provide doctoral students additional practical training in addressing real world statistical problems. One current challenge of the BCC is to find support for the half-time Director position from resources available on campus.

5. Is the user/client/beneficiary community appropriately sized to fulfill its mission?

Yes. The center handled 10 projects in the last year; many of them were external (non-UMass) projects. Given that Massachusetts is one of the world biggest hubs in medico-biological research, the user community today is limited mostly by the capacity of the BCC and competitiveness of the BCC service rates. According to the new rate structure, developed by the BIOEPI department, the BCC rates are competitive.

6. Are users/clients/beneficiaries getting sufficient value?

Yes. The BCC reports 10 projects and 2 manuscripts as a result of its activity in 2019. This amount of service will likely be significantly increased, as the new model of the BCC will be implemented.

Committee conclusion:

Considering the mission and activities of the Biostatistical Consulting Center, the evaluation committee questioned and inquired with the interim director whether the center would be more aligned with a service center than a research center. The interim director responded that the biostatistics group is currently revisiting the BBC goals and mission. Based on this response the committee recommends a one year extension of the center and review again in the 2021/2022 cycle.