Research and Consulting Committee  
Wednesday, April 15, 2015  
12:00 p.m.  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Warren Falberg (chair), James Russell, Brian Carley, Michelle Blair, Jeff Kerstine, Caroline McKinney, Brandon Zureick, Michael Jones, Brad Evans, Julie Heath, Adrijana Kowatsch and Jaclyn Smith.

I. Welcome
Warren welcomed everyone to the meeting, including members joining in by phone. He highlighted the Center’s original agreement with the University which lists research activities for the community and business clients as one of the main charters of the Center. In that vein, he invited everyone present to think about prospects that could be identified for the Center’s research division, and those that the trustees could set up a meeting with and accompany the Center staff to.

The Committee then got an update from Jaclyn Smith, Marketing Director, about the collateral materials being developed that are to aid the business development process for the Center’s research team. The collaterals consist of a sales folder to include general information on the research division (mission, type of work, research team bios), coupled with an industry-specific one page document that is to highlight a prominent client for whom a project was successfully completed. This case study document got some feedback from the committee to include an impact statement (not only that the work was done, but how it affected the client’s business, operations, project etc.), along with a testimonial including pictures of prominent business leaders. Another suggestion from the committee is to stay away from highlighting politically-charged projects. Lastly, to develop marketing pieces that include messages about the Center’s access to wage and employment data (selling point), and to have sales materials for clients who don’t neatly fall into one of the major industries (to accommodate, flexibly, project that may be unique – accounting firms, management consulting firms, capital venture groups).

**ACTION ITEMS:** Jaclyn to complete the collateral set with the above suggestions in mind. Circulate to the committee. Committee members to take 5 business days to weigh in on revisions.

II. Financial Update:

Michael Jones updated the committee on the list of current and past projects. Through March, the revenue booked is at $339,206.51, through the end of the fiscal year an additional $120,789 is guaranteed to be invoiced, for a total of $459,995. Including the pending prospects, it is likely that the revenue for the fiscal year will finish at $535K-$550K, against a $575K goal.
Michael pointed out that a number of economic impact studies were completed in the year, but also that a number of projects were around tax forecasting and tax analysis. Roughly 40% of clients are repeat clients. **ACTION ITEM: Michael to identify in future reports which clients are repeat clients.** The Center’s deliverables to the clients always include a white paper report, a presentation by the research staff of the results to the client (and their leadership teams), and in certain instances, providing custom-designed reports and infographics. Brian Carley suggested that the profit margin on those latter projects should be high, but the Center is not quite there yet. The team does spend considerable time on projects that require a custom report. All of the Center’s projects are under $100,000 and the majority even under $50,000. It is worth considering whether the focus for business development could shift more in the direction of securing those types of large projects. The competition then, as it was pointed out, likely consists of large consulting firms with national reach.

Discussion shifted toward strategies for growing the list of potential clients.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- **Brad to meet with all trustees of the Center, one on one, to bring them on board with the research capabilities, and develop a profile of the trustees’ own network and business connections to understand who can provide an introduction to a potential client.**

- **Michael and Brad to re-approach United Way via a connected trustee (UW and EC). Mark Cinquina and Shawn Kelley can be helpful, as well as a number of individuals who are friends of the Center and are on UW board. Two items to discuss: possible focus for “good of community” research our new GA may be able to do, and the Center’s capabilities re program evaluation and ROI work.**

- **Brad to work on meeting with top accounting firms (EY, Deloitte, PWC, Plante Moran about Center services complementing their consulting work). Dinsmore Law firm also has as consulting practice, as does KMK.**

- **Julie to arrange a meeting with Denise Driehaus for possible research work and connections in Columbus (coordinating UC Gov’t Affairs office).**

- **Look for professional associations of frequent clients (conferences or meetings of School Business Treasurers, City Managers (municipalities), etc. which take place in Columbus).**

- **Reestablish a relationship with Gov’t Strategies, as well as Matt Davis (formerly of the Chamber) who is attempting to begin his own consulting business.**

- **Brad to connect with the Cincinnati Chamber for data needs coming out of their strategic planning process.**
III. Two additional items were discussed:

1) The Center will likely benefit from additional Graduate Assistants next school year, to work a combined 30 hours per week on “good of the community” research and data projects. In addition to the suggestions provided in the meeting materials, committee offered suggestions for a broad focus, to include: poverty related issues (regional focus on the cliff effect, generational poverty issues, gender nature of poverty). The likely outcome of that work for the community would be policy influence and shift, NOT additional business clients (Dave Phillips is a great consultant on this topic); another suggestion of focus is education (disparity, factors contributing to high school dropout incidences); yet another is around jobs (30,000 openings and 130,000 individuals “looking;” skills mismatch, business talent needs, jobs reallocation rates, mobility within and across employment sectors) – possible spillover clients would be Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, etc.; one other suggestion are issues and data needs around the bold goals of the United Way; lastly, two suggestions: transportation (CVG and other transportation providers/concerns, etc.), data needs relative to the issues of transportation, AND innovation (innovation tech transfers, work coming out of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, and numbers and training of software engineers locally.

**ACTION ITEM: EC staff to follow up on these ideas and decide on focus of work. Report at the next committee.**

2) State-wide presence and competition with Cleveland State. This is an expressed, articulated desire by the team. More statewide presence is predicated on someone (or multiple individuals) advocating and lobbying on the Center’s behalf with key decision makers for state contracts. This requires Board involvement (**ACTION ITEM: See previous action item related to Brad meeting with Trustees; also Julie following up with Denise Driehaus and coordinating with the UC Govt. Affairs reps**). Michael indicated the Center continues to offer data, in kind, to key personnel at JobsOhio, attempting to provide the same, if not higher quality of service as their current vendor, Cleveland State.

The meeting was adjourned.