

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) completes its first half-century as an organized research program on MSU's campus, it has become apparent that both our Center's mission and its mode of operation have been fundamentally changed. The research issues facing social science are now so profoundly complex that their solutions demand the combined resources of multiple disciplines, multiple professions and multiple institutions. Throughout this year's annual report this new emphasis on alliance building and partnerships in research is markedly evident.

During the previous twelve months, great strides have been taken in joining our research program with that of a number of other significant institutions. Last August, a strategic alliance was established between the nation's largest rural health service provider, North Mississippi Health Services (NMHS) and the SSRC. Dr. Jeffery Barber, President and CEO of NMHS, Dr. Ken Davis, Chief Medical Officer of NMHS and MSU's President Malcolm Portera signed the strategic alliance with Dr. Robert Altenkirch, Vice President of Research at MSU presiding over the ceremony. SSRC's Associate Director, Dr. Beth Wells-Parker has taken the lead in this new important relationship as our liaison to NMHS. The first steps have been taken to establish a series of joint research endeavors. During the year, pilot projects and research proposals were jointly carried out by scientists and professionals from both organizations. Projects dealing with cognitive science applications for patient quality, implications of cognitive impacts of chemotherapy in breast cancer patients and studies of organ donation were begun. In addition, a broad based assessment of the NMHS service area was conducted and presented to the leadership at NMHS. These significant additional impacts only hint at the possibilities for making significant contributions to our knowledge about health through our affiliation with this outstanding medical facility.



Dr. Malcolm Portera, President, MSU; Dr. Art Cosby, Director, SSRC; and Mr. Mike Lightsey, Associate Director, SSRC on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the SSRC

Last March a Collaborating Center agreement was formalized between the Center for Child Health Research (CCHR), an independent affiliate of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the SSRC at MSU. The ceremony for this new alliance included commentary by Dr. Errol Alden, Deputy Director of AAP, and Dr. Robert Greenberg, Chair, Board of Directors of the CCHR. President Malcolm Portera represented MSU. Dr. Linda Southward presided over the ceremony and has been appointed liaison for the SSRC. A number of significant joint research activities are already underway. These include joint sponsorship of the 2001 National Social Climate Survey for Tobacco Control, the establishment of a jointly sponsored Children's Rural Health Consortium, two successful research proposals funded by the Agency for Health Quality Research that focus on 1) expanding the research infrastructure for health quality in the Mississippi Delta and 2) identifying areas of the country not currently served by Pediatrics Research in Office Settings (PROS). A signature joint venture for the future is the establishment of the Atlas of American Children.

Another important and, hopefully, enduring collaboration is being developed between the Facolta' di Scienze dalla Formazione of the University of Catania, Italy, and both the SSRC and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at our University. An agreement is underway in which we will jointly promote the identification of research problems, collaborate in research endeavors, exchange faculty and students and jointly analyze and report research. Dr. Giampaolo Catelli at the University of Catania and Dr. Domenico Parisi at Mississippi State University have been taking the lead in developing this important program. During the year, Dr. Catelli brought 40 wonderful Italian students to our campus for a series of research seminars. Drs. Martin Levin, Greg Dunaway and Domenico Parisi served as research exchange professors to Catania. We are anticipating an increase in this exchange program in the forthcoming year.

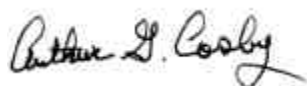
The success of the SSRC relies primarily on the expertise and talents of its scientists. The past year has seen a dramatic increase in the number of research fellows affiliated with the Center. Forty-five SSRC Research Fellows now constitute the core of our programs. Additional expertise has been brought to the Center by new Research Fellows: Dr. Carolyn Adams-Price in Lifespan Development and Gerontology, Dr. Robert K. Atkinson in Educational Psychology and Cognitive Processes, Dr. Lionel J. (Bo) Beaulieu in Community and Rural Development, Dr. Troy Blanchard in Civic Institutions-Residential Segregation and Crime, Dr. Jerilynn (Lynne) Cossman in Medical Sociology and Demography, Dr. Ronald Cossman in Geography and Geographic Information Systems, Dr. Virginia Fee in Childhood Pathology, Dr. Kristine Jacquin in Neuro Science and Psychotherapy, Dr. Linda W. Morse in Instructional Systems and Educational Psychology, Dr. Paige Tompkins in Educational Research and Statistical Analysis and Dr. Stuart Usdan in Health Education and Health Promotion. This new group of scholars greatly expands the capabilities of the Center to meaningfully address a greater range and number of important research topics.

During the fall semester of 2001, the SSRC was truly fortunate to have Dr. Clyda S. Rent, President Emerita of Mississippi University for Women, join us as a Research Fellow. Dr. Rent brings critically important expertise to our Center. Her numerous appointments to national and regional educational and philanthropic organizations set the stage for many new alliances and partnerships. Dr. Rent has agreed to review the Center's potential for additional contributions and growth, especially in regard to partnerships with national foundations.

Also during the year, three Honorary Research Fellows were recognized for their substantial contributions to the development and advancement of social science research. Dr. Robert Altenkirch (Vice President for Research/MSU) has played a leadership role in establishing social science research as one of the major defining aspects of research on our campus. Dr. Giampaolo Catelli, Professor of Sociology, Rural Sociology and Social Methods of two major Italian universities, Universita' Cattolica del Sacro Cure di Piacenza and the Universita' degli Studi di Catania has enriched the intellectual climate and enhanced our perspective on international issues through his leadership in establishing exchange programs of research and instruction. Dr. Robert Greenberg, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics, University of New Mexico School of Medicine, has shared his vision of combining professions, disciplines and institutions as a means of addressing profoundly complex research issues. The contributions of these three outstanding individuals have had a major impact on the direction and development of the SSRC.

We also recognize the superb support that social science research at the SSRC receives from the leadership of the University. President Malcolm Portera and Vice President for Research Robert Altenkirch have consistently assisted us in expanding our scope of high quality research relevant to the needs of the state and the nation. Their encouragement, along with the fine efforts of Mississippi's Washington, D.C. delegation, made the new RHSSI possible. Likewise, the support of Dr. Vance Watson of MAFES has been of great value in helping us take advantage of new opportunities for meaningful social science research. My colleagues recognize their important contributions and stand ready to assure them that the University's investments are well placed.

At a more personal level, the SSRC is a special place to me where there are unparalleled opportunities for significant social science investigation. I consider myself blessed to have such opportunities. As importantly, superb colleagues, outstanding co-workers and bright, energetic students all make social science research at the SSRC a satisfying and rewarding endeavor.



Arthur G. Cosby  
Director and Professor