

*Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences:
Who We Are and What We Do
26 April 2011*

The Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) was established in 1954, and has hosted generations of scholars and scientists who come for a year as Fellows. Books such as *Freakonomics* have been written here, and former Fellows include 22 Nobel Laureates, 14 Pulitzer Prize winners, 44 winners of MacArthur "Genius Awards," and hundreds of members of the National Academies. Building on our foundations, we are turning outward, to become an ***idea incubator – a place where ideas are generated, put to use in solving important problems, and communicated to industry, government, and the world at large.*** As technologies have become smarter, and as globalization, immigration, and other social changes move apace, behavioral science has become increasingly important for predicting future developments and understanding their impact. The Center is a place where innovative thinkers step outside boundaries, challenge assumptions, and show how behavioral science can change the world.

What Is Behavioral Science?

Behavioral science seeks to determine why people think, feel, and behave as we do. For example, studies have illuminated why it is so hard to induce people to save for retirement or eat better so that they will be healthier. In those cases, the value of a reward drops off sharply when it will arrive increasingly far in the future, partly because emotional associations are not activated by future rewards. Careful studies have now been reported on topics ranging from decision-making to motivation to imagination and creativity to social interactions and social issues. For instance, the relatively poor performance of African Americans in college has been shown to vary with the degree to which they attribute adversity to themselves versus the nature of the challenges – and when such attributions are focused on the nature of the challenges (by a simple one-hour intervention), African Americans perform dramatically better.

The CASBS Advantage

CASBS is in a unique position to help us use behavioral science to address real-world problems.

First, we are filling *a need*: Intuition and common sense cannot solve all problems that involve human beings. An enormous amount is now known about thoughts, feelings, and behavior – what triggers them and how to modify them. But much of this information has been kept locked up in academic journals. *There is a need for an organization to make this information accessible, relevant, and effective.* We free this information and put it to good use.

Second, *we are qualified* to fill this need: We not only can draw on Fellows currently in residence at the Center, but also on more than 1,500 former Fellows – who are certifiably among the most productive and creative researchers in the field. Moreover, because we are part of Stanford, we have access to the wide range of expertise on this faculty.

Third, we have *the resources* to succeed: CASBS has a 196,000 sq ft hilltop campus, which overlooks the center of Stanford University. Each Fellow has a separate office (we have

54), and has access to well-equipped conference rooms, a conference hall, the world-class Stanford University libraries, and various services.

Idea Generation

CASBS has its finger on the pulse of behavioral science and provides a unique source of insights into its future directions. For example, incoming Fellows study public opinion surveys, mass political behavior, Chinese vs. European taxonomies of scientific disciplines, the nature of fear, artificial Intelligence and cognitive science, computational social science; trust and persuasion, innovation, and econometrics. Various activities involving Fellows promote idea generation:

"Looking Ahead" Presentations are biweekly symposia that consider the major roadblocks to progress in a field and discuss the most promising ways to address these issues.

"Research Crosstalk" Symposia discuss related cutting-edge research in different areas.

Distinguished Lectures are delivered every quarter by a former Fellow, leading academic, or industry expert.

Behavioral Science Summit, in collaboration with the American Psychological Society, is a "Davos-like" event for behavioral science that we will host every summer (starting 2012).

In addition to these formal events, the daily lunches provide an opportunity for serendipitous interactions, which often have led to flashes of insight and inspiration.

Using Ideas to Make a Difference

CASBS is not just a place where great ideas are formulated. We also put ideas to use in solving important problems, primarily via two mechanisms:

Impact Networks are groups that use behavioral science to address a specific real-world problem and implement a solution within 2 years; for details, please see the Appendix.

Center Institutes are networks of scientists and scholars, coordinated by CASBS, that analyze the bases of large-scale problems; for details, please see the Appendix.

Communication and Outreach

We invite members of corporations, government agencies, and the public to be involved in the Center by joining one of our Affiliates Programs:

Patrons of the Center Program. Companies or individuals can become Patrons of the Center; membership entitles a representative of a company or the individual to attend "Looking Ahead," "Research Crosstalk," and "Distinguished Lecture" events, as well as to view these events live on the web and access them later in an archive; to attend quarterly receptions with the Fellows; and to attend the annual Behavioral Sciences Summit.

Strategic Partners Program. Members of established companies or startups that can benefit from behavioral science are eligible to have a representative in residence at the Center. Strategic Partners receive all of the benefits described above, plus lunch daily in the main CASBS dining room with the Fellows; access to office, conference, and meeting space; a mentor expert in a relevant field; and meetings with world leaders in behavioral science who can, if interested, link directly with the strategic partners.