

23 March 2023

Dr. Joe Hamm
Faculty Supervisor, TRUSST Lab
Associate Professor, Michigan State University

Dear Joe,

Bill McEvily, Michelle Chambers, and myself have been asked to provide our assessment of your lab's activities for inclusion in your 2022 Annual Report. Bill McEvily, University of Toronto, has provided a letter that reflects upon the written materials and student presentations made on December 16, 2022. Michelle Chambers, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, has made comments on those student presentations. Here, I integrate their comments with my own thoughts.

Overall, we are confident that the TRUSST Lab is moving in a good direction to achieve its goals, which cover notions of vulnerability, motivation and power in the context of social and political trust. The student presentations were varied and interesting, showing dynamism among the lab, and a real commitment to extending the extant literature. The 2022 lab report sets out a strong and interdisciplinary structure, with the lab embedded in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office, and Michigan State University more generally.

VISION

To the best of our knowledge, TRUSST Lab is the only scholarly research center dedicated to advancing PhD-student led trust research. If correct, the Lab may want to 'lean into' this a bit more by explicitly emphasizing its distinctiveness in how it represents itself, particularly on the website, and the Lab may want to build out why this distinctive approach is so valuable (e.g., the impact of the Lab's resource are amplified across the students' scholarly publications, related outreach activities, teaching, and eventually their own mentorship of students). We were impressed with the approach the Lab is taking and we believe others will be as well.

We appreciate the dual operationalization of success (scholarly and practitioner) articulated in the Strategic Plan. Going forward, we would encourage the Lab to deepen each area of impact as the research unfolds. For instance, on the scholarly side there may be opportunities to broaden impact beyond individual publications through, for example, new measures, methodological advances, novel datasets, etc. Likewise, on the practitioner side, beyond individual research reports, there may be opportunities to develop research 'translations', toolkits, infographics, etc.

STRUCTURE

Given the interdisciplinary nature of trust research, we were excited to see that the composition of the Lab draws students from a number of different academic disciplines. Continuing to attract students from across campus will be of great benefit to the Lab and we would encourage you to consider academic areas with a tradition of trust research, but not yet tapped by the Lab (e.g., Eli Broad School of Management). Related, to

the extent that faculty in other academic units are engaged in trust research, there may be opportunities to engage them in Lab activities and scale up the Lab's impact.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The three primary foci of the Lab resonate strongly with our sense of theoretical topics at the forefront of trust research. We found the emerging ideas and findings challenging conventional views of *vulnerability* to be particularly novel and thought provoking, with considerable potential to garner scholarly attention and alter the trajectory of future research. We were also pleased to see the topic area of *power* emphasized since we view it as inherently related to trust, but largely overlooked in scholarly work. The topic is also very timely and the Lab's approach from the vantage of criminal justice is especially relevant. And, we see great potential in the topic area of *motivation*. Here too, scholarly attention thus far has been limited, but the Lab's projects are already hinting at some intriguing possibilities, several of which have the potential to challenge relatively 'rational' and 'functional' explanations for trust dynamics that have yet to consider more behavioral perspectives (e.g., motivated attribution). Taken together, the three foci of the Lab provide a diverse portfolio of projects with considerable potential to make an impact on the field of trust research.

PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Lab's three partner organizations also represent a diverse array of settings and issues where trust is highly relevant and consequential. We were encouraged to learn that the Lab is actively addressing some of our 'societal grand challenges' by providing the partner organizations with training, evidence-based research, and scholarly insights on pressing issues. Equally significant is the opportunity for the students in the Lab to interact with those on the frontlines and learn about their understanding of how trust may play a role in the challenges they face.

Finally, in our overall judgement, we are confident that the TRUSST lab is working to achieve its strategic goals.

Yours sincerely,



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