

International Institute of Sustainable Regional Economics (IISRE) Circle

The proposal is a result of an Okanagan Institute for Strategic Development (OISD) www.OISD.ca initiative launched in a Discussion paper in February 2004.

“A perfect functioning allocation mechanism in an economy is a utopia. A better functioning allocation mechanism in regional and local economies is not a utopia, but a better functioning society.”

The paper was submitted to OUC and Mid Sweden University www.mh.se resulting in ongoing discussions between OISD, OUC, and Mid Sweden University, and facilitated by OISD. The IISRE initiative has also been included in the Okanagan Partnership Initiative.

OISD Directors Ray Strafehl and Kell Petersen, who met yesterday with the VP Research, the Deans of Science and Arts, and myself representing the Department of Economics. As a result of this meeting, it was decided that the initiative might be best taken forward, initially at least, by the formation of a University Circle, to meet within the next couple of weeks and then into September and the Fall term.

The proposal is for an interdisciplinary and research intensive institute to locate outside of current departments, with facilities in the Okanagan and in Sweden, in partnership with Mid Sweden University, the private sector, and the governments of Canada, Sweden and the European Union.

As stated by Ray Strafehl of OISD and a specialist in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) growth, the purpose of the institute “is also to research issues and find solutions that hamper investment and development of small and medium size businesses – a problem in regions around the world”.

The research would result in the development of a new educational discipline that combines social science and natural science, and the development of new (IT) tools to assist both private and government sectors. We have identified a major European IT company interested in participating in this development, which could ultimately mean significant investment into the Okanagan region.” Initial contact has been made with OUC’s Economics and Computer Science departments, but other Social and Natural Science collaboration (especially IT) is desired.

Kell Petersen, OISD and a Scandinavian economist, explains further “Government is seeking new methods and systems to stimulate private investment in economic production in regional and local economies and prevent market failures. It is our analysis that this is an area where UBC Okanagan could provide research, resulting in the development of new methods and systems and allied education to private and government sector. It is OISD’s analysis that UBC Okanagan has the opportunity to break new ground by creating a unique institute in the world around research methods and systems to detect and address issues in the allocation mechanism, and provide allied advanced education. In short, this is the background to OISD’s initiative to form an International Institute for Sustainable Regional Economics IISRE (working name). Submitted to OUC and supported by OUC, involving cooperation with MSU in Sweden.

UNIVERSITY CIRCLES

It is our hope that the initiative will continue to be supported by UBC-O. It should also be mentioned that the IISRE initiatives ties in to the Intelliet development that was formed to address; information, investment, liquidity and institutional failure, that hampers investment and the development of particularly small and midsize businesses. The development approach involves a large European IT corporation with strong ties into the telecommunications industry. The objective is to locate research and development in the Okanagan, which would involve pilot installation in companies in the Okanagan. I can also mention that Intelliet has taken an interest in a small manufacturing company in Summerland that is functioning as “a pre-pilot” for research purposes. The Intelliet development also offers DRAO a potential development platform for wireless technology, along with possible world-class industry partners. The joint university IISRE initiative requires regional and local interest in the Okanagan, and support at both the private and government level.”

I myself - Peter Wylie - have some expertise, interest and research publications in regional economic development and I have tried to include on this mailing list those of you who might share interests in this area, as well as interests in IT and software development.

I am also attaching an OISD schematic of parallel discussions taking place with Mid Sweden University, (www.mh.se).

Please respond to me if you wish to be involved in the University Circle and explore further this initiative, with thoughts of an initial meeting within the next two weeks, and/or pass along to colleagues who you think might be interested. It seems to me to be an initiative well worth exploring, and may be of interest to UBC-O and the new OC in collaboration.

Peter Wylie
Department of Economics

The Process

