Proposal Status | MAIN

Organization: Washington University

Review #6

Proposal Number:	1152472
NSF Program:	Political Science
Principal Investigator:	Montgomery, Jacob
Proposal Title:	Collaborative Research on Ensemble Methods for the Prediction of Political Outcomes
Rating:	Good

REVIEW:

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

The intellectual merit of this proposal is to develop open-source software for implementing the recent statistical methodology developed by Raftery and his colleagues. In addition, the researchers propose to apply this statistical methodology to political science problems especially in the area of International Relations. Given that no new methodology is proposed here, the value of this proposal is to offer applied researchers easy-to-use statistical software to implement cutting edge statistical methods and apply them to substantive problems. The main question for the NSF panel seems to be whether they should support the research project that mainly focuses upon the dissemination of statistical software for implementing the existing methodologies. While I think this is an important goal, I would have liked to see the proposal to consider the development of new statistical methods and/or more novel substantive applications. One way for the researchers to achieve this might be to work either with the methodologists (like Raftery who developed the original methodology) or substantive researchers who can motivate the applications of the methodology (rather than an array of illustrative examples as given in the proposal).

The lead researcher has a great and long track record and I am sure that he will be able to successfully put together a number of articles from this project. The junior researcher is just starting out his career but I am certain that he will be able to contribute to the proposed software development.

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

The impact of the proposed research will depend on how successfully the researchers will be able to show the effectiveness of the methodology through the applications. While as pointed out in the proposal, predictions are gradually becoming popular in the social sciences. On the other hand, the large portion of social science research still focuses on causal inference rather than predictions and so for this reason the impact might be limited. However, the development of statistical software should facilitate the use of statistical methods.

Summary Statement

In sum, this is a well-thought research proposal written by a team of well-respected senior and promising junior researchers. The project has a potential to have some impacts on applied research in political science through the dissemination of statistical software. The weakness is that the proposal lacks the originality (both in methods and substance) and may face the difficulty of reaching a greater audience to the extent that social scientists focus upon causal inference.

Back to Proposal Status Detail

Download Adobe Acrobat Reader for viewing PDF files

National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22230, USA
Tel: 703-292-5111, FIRS: 800-877-8339 | TDD: 703-292-5090

Privacy and Security