

8 April 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter of support for the CUIP's funding application to the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). I have read the application materials and have spoken with Dr. Saúl Neves de Jesus about the center's organization and goals. This is an exceptionally strong application and has my full support. Dr. Neves de Jesus has assembled a stellar group of Portuguese scholars and external consults, Under the group's leadership, the center strikes me as having a strong likelihood of success securing external funding and conducting important research at the intersection of basic and applied psychology.

First, some information about me. I received my Ph.D. in psychology in 1988 and have taught for over 32 years at the University of Florida, United States. I received a Fulbright fellowship to Katholieke Universiteit in Leuven, Belgium (2004), have held invited professorships at the Université Paris X (2006) and the Université de Savoie (2007), and was a resident fellow at American International Univ, Aix-en-Provence, France (2018). I have served as the director of graduate training in social psychology at the University of Florida, and for several years was the Research Director for the Southeast Center for Research to Disparities in Oral Health. I have served as an associate editor for *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* and serve or have served on the editorial board of numerous journals including *Personality & Social Psychology*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *Review of General Psychology*, and *Review of Health Psychology*. I have received over eight million dollars in funding from agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, the National Cancer Institute, and the Templeton Foundation. I have published over 150 peer-reviewed papers and chapters and have received multiple teaching, mentoring, and research awards. My work bridges basic and applied research and I have expertise in judgment and decision making and its implications for health. I specifically examine how people manage threatening information, which includes topics such as optimism, fluctuations in future outlooks, maintaining desired self-views, and gun violence.

For several years I was part of the leadership of a center on disparities in oral health. I thus know first-hand how centers can be catalyst for new ideas and research, and a focal point for graduate training. The CUIP will pool the efforts of numerous scholars from four different universities and thus can potentially accomplish far more than what any researcher or department could do at a single university. The team representing the CUIP looks impressive in terms of the productivity and accomplishments of the center. But a center built around psychology is likely to bring a huge return on investment.

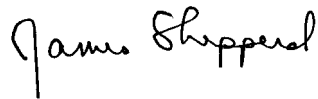
Psychology is a hub science. It provides the theory that many other academic disciplines (e.g., marketing, advertising, management, sport and recreation, political science, and nursing) use to guide their research. The primary aim of CUIP is to identify prevention and promotion factors for health and well-being. Put simply, the center aims to understand and guide behavior to solve human problems—to bring about tangible, lasting improvements in people's lives. And the potential is enormous. Psychologists are at the forefront of addressing real world problem such as how to help people quit smoking and exercise, recycle, sustain the environment, help others in need, and in general, live better lives. Although many psychologists do basic research, much of psychological research has immediate and obvious applications. Moreover, as someone who does both basic and applied psychology, I understand the speed with which basic research can be translated to application.

A goal of the CUIP is to have an international presence and impact. Members of CUIP team already have a history of international activity. But I anticipate that funding of the center will lead to dramatic increase in this activity. With a small infusion of the resources, the CUIP could become destination of international scholars seeking a place to spend a sabbatical collaborating on research, to do Fulbright research, or to send graduate students to receive training and assist with joint research projects. In a few months, a graduate student with whom I work will go to Algarve University for a year to do research in collaboration with members of the CUIP team. Her project examines positive, transformative experiences with an eye toward understanding how transformative experiences can promote well-being and benefit the environment. My university is providing money to defray some of her expenses, but funding of the Center could expand the number of international students who come to Portugal to do research in the future, and ultimately could lead to exchanges of faculty and students between countries pursuing collaborative research.

Portugal has an important draw; it is a breathtakingly beautiful country that many scholars want to visit. The funding of the CUIP could function as the impetus that entices research psychologists from around the world to visit and explore research opportunities. As such funding of the CUIP could pay dividends for years to come by making the four Universities comprising the center for collaborative, international research.

I am excited to be a consultant for the CUIP and look forward to engaging with the CUIP team in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Shepperd". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

James A. Shepperd  
Professor of Psychology