

## Why a New Center for the Social Sciences?

By Daniel Yankelovich

From their beginnings in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the social sciences in universities have been pulled in two competing directions — the pursuit of scientific knowledge on the one hand; and on the other, the search for solutions to important societal problems. In this competition, the first direction -- pursuing scientific knowledge -- has prevailed overwhelmingly in American universities, a reality with far-reaching consequences

There are several reasons why university-based social sciences have come to prioritize scientific inquiry over practical problem solving. The main one, I believe, is the spectacular success of the natural sciences. Their triumph is one of humanity's greatest accomplishments. Emulating this inspiring model has proven too difficult for the social sciences to resist.

*The nation truly needs a number of university-based centers dedicated to solving urgent societal problems through effective social science methods.*

Other influences reinforce this one. It has proved easier to conduct scientific inquiry from a university base than to engage in messy social



**Daniel Yankelovich**

problems. Freedom to pick and choose one's own line of inquiry has been a boon to tenured professors in an era when individualism is more highly valued than communal endeavor. And it has been all too convenient to fall back on the rationalization that, if you wait long enough, science eventually leads to successful problem solving. In reality, however, this truism may not apply to the social sciences as much as it does to the natural sciences. Though the label of science is attached to both, the social and the natural sciences are far from identical.

My own professional experience has led me to a very different set of conclusions. I have devoted over half a century to applied social science research in a variety of fields such as

public opinion, social mobility, racial discrimination, poverty, mental health, addiction, consumer research, education, health care and how to strengthen self-respect and social cohesion. In all of these applications, I've worked with a range of academic studies in the social sciences. Many of them reveal useful insights, but with rare exceptions, they do not lead to practical solutions to problems.

The reason is fundamental. All share a set of premises that almost guarantee failure to solve real-world problems.

Most focus on a single discipline, e.g., economics or psychology or political science. In more than fifty years of experience I have never once encountered a serious societal problem that fit within the boundaries of any one social science discipline. Continued on p.2 →

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Most lack a compelling way to assess the relative importance of one influence over another (e.g., class size versus teacher training versus the role of the principal in assessing school performance). They do not select interventions strategically to suite particular situations. In short, they all lack a sound working knowledge of how the rules of problem-solving research differ from the rules of gaining scientific knowledge.

This situation may be tolerable as long as the nation is in good shape and can afford to subsidize the social sciences without obliging them to help solve important problems. But under current circumstances, with a polarized government in Washington, sluggish economic growth, and a lack of social cohesion, it seems to me morally indefensible not to apply social science knowledge and methodology to alleviate the stress to which the nation is currently exposed.

My purpose in launching the Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research is to encourage research designed to address some of the nation's most urgent problems, such as how best to:

- open up the clogged channels of social mobility,

- deal with mental health issues in a practical way without bankrupting the country,
- reduce health care costs in areas where social norms may be dysfunctional (e.g., end-of-life care)
- improve education performance and equality of opportunity for young people in underserved communities, and
- restore a sense of cohesion to American democracy and reduce polarization.

The nation truly needs a number of university-based centers dedicated to solving urgent societal problems through effective social science methods. At the moment, the inventory of urgent problems facing our democracy grows more daunting every year while our more than 5,000 colleges and universities all have social science departments that largely ignore these problems.

The new Center should not interfere in any way with faculty and students at UCSD who wish to pursue pure scientific inquiry. It simply adds another option for those who prefer the problem-solving direction. If the Center succeeds in its problem

-solving mission, the university will also have added a powerful new resource to its scientific knowledge-gathering capability. With a bit of luck, the university may happily discover that it has found a way to go in both directions at the same time.

*Daniel Yankelovich, a UCSD benefactor and associate of the Division of Social Sciences, has enjoyed a distinguished career as an analyst of public opinion. He is the co-founder and chair of Public Agenda, a public-interest advocacy organization. The Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research is dedicated to finding practical solutions to the nation's most urgent problems. Theory and application are fused as faculty, students and community members work across disciplines to narrow the opportunity gap in education, jobs, health care and more.*



## Emeriti Association creates a support group

As we emeriti age, some of us unfortunately become isolated due to the loss of a partner or a debilitating accident or illness. The Emeriti Association is starting a pilot project that will offer support by colleagues to those in need. Some examples of the type of support that may be provided are: calls, visits, phone/computer assistance, rides, advice, etc.

Please contact **Mel Green** if you know of any Emeriti Association member who might appreciate some type of support from a colleague. It would be very helpful if you would indicate the nature of the problem and any emeriti who may know the person on more than a casual basis.

The members of the emeriti support group will then determine whether support is desired and if so, find someone willing to provide support. Names of those assisted will be kept confidential.

The support group members currently include: **Irma Gigli, Carol Plantamura, Arnold Mandell, Maxine Bloor, and Joel Dimsdale**. Additional volunteers should please notify Mel Green.

Mel Green

Email: [mgreen@ucsd.edu](mailto:mgreen@ucsd.edu)

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## America's Partisan Divide: Sharp and Deep-Set

By **Gary C. Jacobson**  
*Distinguished Professor  
 of Political Science*

Acute partisan conflict arising from the ideological polarization of the national parties is now a dominant feature of American politics. The series of prominent show-downs over fiscal policy between Democratic president **Barack Obama** and the congressional Republicans that has followed the Republican takeover of the House in 2011 represent the tip of the iceberg. Partisan disputes over matters large and small, personnel as well as policy, occur almost daily. Polarized parties, combined with divided government, have made legislative gridlock the normal state of affairs in Washington, overcome only when dire necessity compels short-term compromises to stave off disasters such as the default on the national debt or a government shutdown. Conflict and gridlock have damaged the public standing of everyone involved, for most Americans detest the partisan posturing, bickering, and stalemate that leave disputes and major problems unaddressed.

America's governing institutions are inherently prone to stalemate and, according to **James Madison**'s famous account in *Federalist 10*, designedly so. The bicameral legislature, presidential veto, and separate electoral bases and calendars of representatives, senators, and presidents were intended to thwart simple majority rule, and they always have. The Senate's requirement of a supermajority of 60 votes to overcome filibusters on most types of legislation imposes yet another barrier to action. Thus when the parties are deeply divided and neither enjoys full control of the levers of govern-



*Professor Gary Jacobson*

ment, acrimonious stalemate or unsatisfactory short-term fixes to avoid pending disaster become the order of the day.

To consider what, if anything, might alter this state of affairs, it is useful to have a clear idea of how it came to be. **The evidence, in my view, shows that elite polarization is firmly rooted in electoral politics and is therefore likely to remain until electoral configurations somehow change.**

The systematic evidence documenting the increasing partisan polarization in Congress is familiar to all congressional scholars from the analysis of scores based on all non-unanimous roll call votes taking during each Congress. These serve to locate each member for each Congress on a liberal-conservative scale that ranges from -1.0 to 1.0; the higher the score, the more conservative the members.

Two things stand out. First, of course, is that the congressional parties have moved apart; the ideological gap has widened from .568 to .845 in the Senate, and from .527 to 1.070 in the House over this period. The gaps for both chambers in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-12) are the widest ever observed in data going back to 1879. Second, Republicans have been responsible for most of the change (more than 80% for both chambers). That is, the growing ide-

ological distance between the parties is primarily a consequence of Republicans becoming more conservative not Democrats becoming more liberal. Both comparisons show the disappearance of the moderate centrists and the increasing ideological homogeneity of the congressional parties. The current partisan divisions in Washington are not peculiar to the Obama years, but rather represent the latest extension of a decades-long trend.

The congressional parties have been drawn apart by a diverse array of interacting internal and external forces, but the one essential factor has been the corresponding polarization of the congressional parties' respective electoral bases, which was itself in part a reaction to polarized national politics. Two major trends have given the congressional parties increasingly divergent electoral coalitions. First, the partisan, ideological, and policy opinions of American voters have grown more internally consistent, more distinctive between parties, and more predictive of voting in national elections. Second, electoral units into which voters are sorted have become more homogeneously partisan. That is, over the last several decades, changes in the preferences, behavior, and distribution of congressional voters have given the congressional parties more internally homogeneous, divergent and polarized electoral bases.

The main source of this electoral transformation was the partisan realignment of the South. The civil rights revolution, and particularly the Voting Rights Act of 1965, brought southern blacks into southern electorates as Democrats, while moving conservative whites to abandon their ancestral alle-

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giance to the Democratic party in favor of the ideologically and racially more compatible Republicans. In-migration also contributed to an increasingly Republican electorate, which gradually replaced conservative Democrats with conservative Republicans in southern House and Senate seats. Conservative whites outside the South also moved toward the Republican Party, while liberals became overwhelmingly Democratic. The level of consistency between party identification and ideology thus grew across the board. According to American National Election Study (ANES) data, in 1972, self-identified liberals and conservatives identified with the “appropriate” party 71% of the time; in 2012, they did so 84% of the time. In the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), that figure exceeded 90%.

Party loyalty among congressional voters also increased over this period so the relationship between ideology and voting became much stronger. The shift among conservatives is particularly notable. In 2012, according to ANES, 89% of self-identified liberals voted for Democrats in the House elections, while 85% of conservatives voted for Republicans; in the national exit polls, the respective figures were 86% and 84%.

As a consequence of these trends, the ideological leanings of the parties’ respective electoral constituencies – defined as those voters who reported voting for the winning Republican and Democratic House and Senate candidates – have become increasingly divergent. In the 1970s, average ideological differences between the parties’ electoral constituencies were modest, about 0.5 points on the ANES’ seven-point liberal-conservative scale. By 2012, the ideological gap

had more than tripled in both chambers.

The growing divergence of the congressional parties’ electoral bases is even more striking in the aggregate voting data. The presidential vote in a state or district offers a serviceable measure of its relative political leanings. Back in the early 1970s, House districts won by Democrats and Republicans differed in their average presidential vote by only about seven percentage points, which was a low point for the post-war period. Since then, the gap has more than tripled, with most of the increase occurring since 1992. In 2012, Obama’s share of the vote in districts won by Democrats was on average 26 percentage points higher than in districts won by Republicans (66%, compared to 40%). A similar though less pronounced trend appears in comparable Senate data; the divergence is smaller because states tend to be more heterogeneous, politically and otherwise, than House districts. But in both chambers, the congressional party coalitions now represent constituencies that are far more dissimilar, in terms of their partisan composition, than they did in the 1970s.

After 1972, each party’s delegation represented a set of districts that were largely similar in their political leanings, although some Democrats did represent lopsidedly Democratic (largely urban and minority) districts. The Republicans and Democrats elected in 2012 represent much more politically dissimilar sets of districts. After 1972, 37% of House members represented districts where their party’s presidential candidate’s vote was below its national average; after 2012, only 6% did so. Comparable data from the Senate elections reveal the same pattern of change toward more polarized electorates.

One important consequence of these trends is that members of Con-

gress share few voters with a president of the opposite party, giving them very little electoral incentive to cooperate with him. According to the 2012 ANES, among the House Republicans’ electoral constituents – again, those respondents who said they had voted for a winning Republican – only 17% reported voting for Obama; the comparable figure for Senate Republican voters was only 8%, both lows for the period. By comparison, in the 1970s, an average of more than a third of the electoral constituencies of House and Senate members of the nonpresidential party consisted of people who had voted for the president. The overlap between the elected constituencies of the president and his own partisans in Congress now exceeds 91% in the House, 87% in the Senate. Party differences in electoral bases are strongly related to party differences in presidential support and roll call voting patterns so these trends have contributed directly to the growth in polarization.

The decline in shared constituencies between the presidents and opposite-party members of Congress reflects an increase in party loyalty and decline in ticket splitting among voters since the 1970s. Partisan defection rates reported in the ANES studies for House elections peaked at 24% in the 1980 election and for Senate elections at 22% in 1972. By 2012, the defection rates had declined to 10% in House elections, 11% in Senate elections, and the proportion of the congressional electorate made up of loyal partisans reached levels last seen in the 1950s. The survey also reported the lowest incidence of ticket splitting – voting for a Democrat for president and as Republican for U.S. representative or Senator

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or vice versa – for the entire six-decade ANES series. In the 1970s, a quarter of the House and Senate electorates reported voting a split ticket; by the 2000s, the average incidence of ticket splitting had fallen to 16% in House elections, 13% in the Senate elections. The rates for 2012 were 11% and 10.9% respectively.

Reflecting these individual-levels changes, the proportion of House districts delivering split verdicts – preferring the president of one party, the House candidate of the other – has fallen dramatically since the 1970s, reaching a remarkably low 6% in 2012. The same trend occurred in the Senate elections, although split outcomes remain considerably more common in statewide elections because states tend to have greater heterogeneity and a more even partisan balance than congressional districts. In 2012, only six states delivered split verdicts, and after the election, only 21 senators represented states lost by their presidential candidate, both lows for the period covered.

In sum, there is ample evidence that the constituencies represented by congressional parties have grown increasingly divergent in their political coloration and are now much further apart than they were prior to the 1900s. Moreover, current voting patterns give very few members of the rival party any electoral incentive to support the president – rather, the opposite. This leaves periods of divided government especially prone to conflict and stalemate, and a quirk in the electoral system now makes divided government much more likely, for it delivers House Republican majorities even when the Democrats are ascendant nationally.

**Republicans enjoy a major structural advantage in House elections because the party's regular voters are distributed more efficiently across House districts than are regular Democratic voters.**

**Although Republican gerrymanders reinforced this advantage through redistricting after the 2000 and 2012 censuses, it is nothing new, for its roots are demographic. Democrats win a disproportionate share of minority, single, young, secular, and gay voters who are concentrated in urban districts that deliver lopsided Democratic majorities, Republican voters are spread more evenly across suburbs, smaller cities, and rural areas, so that fewer Republican votes are “wasted” in highly skewed districts. During the past four decades, a substantially large proportion of House seats have leaned Republican than have leaned Democratic (“leaning” estimated as having the district vote for their party's presidential candidate at least two points above the national average for that year, or for mid-terms, for the previous presidential election). This structural advantage has grown more consequential over time with the increase in party line and straight-ticket voting among district electorates. The proportion of closely balanced districts (delivering presidential results within two percentage points of the national vote) has shrunk by nearly two-thirds since the 1980s and after 2012 was down to only 6.7%, a manifestation of partisan sorting; thus very few representatives (29 to be precise) now serve districts without a clear partisan tilt.**

The increase in the Republicans' structural advantage after the most recent redistricting was no accident. The Republicans' sweeping national victory in 2010 gave them control of the redistricting process in 18 states with a total of 202 House seats, whereas Democrats controlled the process in only six states with a total of 47 seats. Republicans exploited this opportunity to shore up some of their marginal districts, adding Republican voters where their seats were most

vulnerable and creating about 11 net additional Republican-leaning seats. Thus, although Obama won 52.0 of the major-party vote and nearly five million more votes than Romney, Romney nonetheless outpolled Obama in 226 of the 435 House districts, while Obama ran ahead in only 209. With party line voting extraordinarily high and split verdicts rare (Democrats won only nine districts won by Romney, Republicans won only 17 districts won by Obama), Democrats made little headway in the House despite Obama's solid national victory. Democrats actually won a majority of the major-party national vote cast for House candidates, their share rising from 46.6% in 2010 to 50.7% in 2012, but their seat share grew from only 44.4% to 46.2%. Partisan gerrymandering is routinely blamed for congressional polarization, but its contribution has been modest. And of course increasing partisan polarization in the Senate cannot be blamed on gerrymandering.

The Republicans' structural advantage means that Democrats are likely to remain a minority in the House for the rest of the decade. They would need a favorable national tide at least as powerful as the one they rode to power in 2006 and 2008 to pick up enough seats to win a majority under this configuration. Midterm elections rarely feature a national tide favoring the president's party, and it would be completely unprecedented for Democrats to gain the 17 seats they currently need to attain a majority in 2014. Normally, the president's party loses House seats at the midterm; in the three historic exceptions (1934, 1998, and 2002), the most it gained was nine. It is also unusual for a party to make significant gains after holding the White House for at least two terms. Only a Republican

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presidential victory in 2016 followed by a disastrous early presidency would seem to give them any hope of taking over.

The Senate is no lock for either party, and the lineup for 2014 favors the Republicans. Democrats must defend 20 of the 33 seats up for election, seven from states won by Romney; Obama took only one of the 13 states that will have Republican-held seats on the ballot. But the Republicans' chances of picking up the six seats they would need for a majority depends on keeping the extreme-right Tea Party faction in check, at least in states that are not deep red. It may not be easy for Republican officials to avoid such nominations, because Tea Party sympathizers make up a majority of Republican primary electorates in many states. The Tea Party faction's views on such issues as immigration, abortion, same-sex marriage, global warming, and taxation makes them resistant to changes in the party's message that might expand its appeal beyond its conservative base. The Right's demonstrated capacity to punish incumbent Republicans in primaries discourages departures from party orthodoxy. Unless national leaders find a way to avoid fielding candidates whose appeal is limited to the party's most conservative voters, Republicans will continue to lose winnable Senate seats.

The Republicans' main problem, however, is at the presidential level. Explanations of Obama's reelection have rightly focused on his ability to attract the votes of growing segments of the electorate: young people, singles (especially single women), social liberals, the nonchurched, and ethnic minorities – Asian Americans as well as Latinos and blacks. Romney's coalition, in contrast, was overwhelmingly white, older, married, religiously observant, and

socially conservative, all shrinking demographic categories. The white share of the electorate, 88% when **Ronald Reagan** was elected in 1980, and 84% when **George W. Bush** won in 2000, was only 72% in 2012 and is projected to decline to less than two-thirds in a few more elections. Unless the Republican Party broadens its appeal to young, minority, secular, and women voters, it will have a hard time competing for the presidency.

The prognosis, then, is for a continuation of divided government featuring ideologically polarized partisan conflict, because the current configuration of national politics favors electoral realities that are unlikely to change soon. It would take a major electoral upheaval for Democrats to take over the House. The staunch conservatives who dominate the Republican House coalition are firmly entrenched in safe districts where their intransigence is admired rather than scorned, so a general Republican shift to the center is unlikely (and any such shift would inspire primary election challenges from the Right to those who took part), Political necessity may force Republican leaders to allow the party to be rolled on occasion – Speaker **John Boehner** has recently allowed three bills to come to the floor that were opposed by most Republicans but passed with a majority of Democratic votes – but only when blocking the legislation would have been much worse for the party's reputation than allowing it to go forward. The reality is that a large majority of the voters responsible for electing the current House and Senate Republicans strongly oppose Barack Obama, his party, and his policies; and therefore Republicans in Congress have little incentive to compromise or cooperate with Obama or congressional Democrats on anything except under dire political necessity. Political necessity may prove decisive on a

few issues – immigration reform has made some bipartisan progress because the more pragmatic Republican leaders see a bleak future for their party if they cannot win more support from Latino voters – but not on most of the national agenda.

The 2012 election underlined another source of partisan division: the increasingly divergent demographics of the party coalitions. In the newly elected House, women and minorities outnumber white males in the Democratic caucus for the first time in history, while nearly 90% of the Republicans are white Christian men. Of the record 102 women taking seats in the House and Senate in 2013, nearly three-quarters are Democrats, as are 23 of the 28 Latinos, 40 of the 41 African Americans, all 11 Asian Americans, all six openly gay or bisexual members, and 36 of the 37 who profess a religion other than Christianity. The incoming class of freshmen includes 40 new members who are female, ethnic minority, non-Christian, or gay (some in multiples of these categories); only five of them – all women – are Republicans. The 2012 elections basically reiterated the partisan status quo – Democrats picked up six seats in the House, two in the Senate – but the demographic mix of the incoming members points to a strong undercurrent of continuing and profound change in the makeup of Congress. The growing demographic differences between the party coalitions reflected in their rival congressional delegations can only add to ideological polarization in American national politics.

For the time being, then, the electoral connection portends continuing partisan polarization and policy gridlock, with all of the ugly consequences we have been ob-

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-serving for the past several years. Change could come from several directions. If the Obama administration falters, Republicans could take full control of the government after 2016, breaking the stalemate. Whether such a victory would also shrink the ideological gap between the parties is very doubtful. Any Republican presidential candidate whose positions might appeal to moderate Democrats and independents will have a very hard time winning the nomination from a Republican primary electorate dominated by the tea partiers and social conservatives (extensively overlapping categories). A nominee acceptable to the party's dominant right wing, even if victorious, would have little prospect of bridging the partisan divide and could expect all-out opposition from the remaining Democrats, replicating the Republican strategy after 2008.

From the opposite direction, a Democratic takeover of the House

would require a considerably greater shift in voting patterns than a Republican presidential victory, and it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which congressional Republicans allow themselves to botch things so extravagantly that a national tide sweeps them from power in 2014 or 2016. It is easy to imagine the Senate changing party hands, possibly more than once, over the next several elections, but unless one party wins a filibuster-proof majority of 60 – a rare and unlikely occurrence – the Senate's rules will continue to facilitate unrestrained minority obstruction. Recent efforts to amend these rules have come to naught, although it remains conceivable that the minority may someday exhaust the majority's patience.

As I see it, the only reliable source of change would be an electorate that punishes extremism and intransigence and regards moderation and compromise at the polls. There is no sign of this happening at present. Those moderates who do manage to

get elected are the first to exit when national forces create headwinds; a large majority of the centrist Democrats elected to the House in 2006 and 2008 – virtually all of them from balanced or Republican-leaning districts – were gone after 2012. The fate of the moderate Blue Dog Coalition of House Democrats is indicative: resignations, retirements, and defeats reduced its membership from 57 to 27 in 2010 and further to 14 in 2012. If voters actually prefer moderate representatives they have a peculiar way of showing it. Thus for the foreseeable future, the challenge will be to make government work despite an electoral configuration that continues to promote divided government and polarized politics.

*This is an abbreviated version of Jacobson's "Partisan Polarization in American Politics: A Background Paper" (Presidential Studies Quarterly December 2013) omitting notes and graphs.* ❖

## Anecdote

By Sandy Lakoff

In trying to explain to my class on the government and politics of the Middle East the role of the Israeli collective-farm movement in the early years of statehood, I first called their attention to **Mel Spiro's** classic study, *Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia*. In that book, I pointed out, Mel had elucidated both the pros and cons of this experiment in communal living. Then I illustrated one of the problems by telling an old Israeli joke about the ultra-radical Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz that was so determined to do away with everything bourgeois that it abolished the raising of children in separate families. Instead, the kids were reared collectively so as to promote a Spartan-style communal solidarity. The joke had it that one of the boys so raised went to his mother in despair. He told her he had fallen in love with Dina, but his father told him he couldn't marry her because she was his sister. "I got over her," he went on, "and fell in love with Chana, but once again father said I could not marry her either because she too is my sister." To which his mother replied, "My son, marry either Dina or Chana, you are not your father's son."

(Thanks to Edie Parti)

The Montana Department of Employment, Division of Labor Standards claimed a small rancher was not paying proper wages to his help and sent an agent out to investigate him.

GOVERNMENT AGENT: "I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them."

RANCHER: "Well, there's my hired hand who's been with me for three years. I pay him \$200 a week plus free room and board. Then there's the mentally challenged guy. He works about 18 hours every day and does about 90% of all the work around here. He makes about \$10 per week, pays his own room and board, and I buy him a bottle of bourbon every Saturday night so he can cope with life. He also sleeps with my wife occasionally."

GOVERNMENT AGENT: "That's the guy I want to talk to -- the mentally challenged one."

RANCHER: "That would be me."



**EDITOR'S NOTE**

For all the years I have been editor of *Chronicles*, my friend **Jeff Calcara**, talented in computer graphics (as also in music), has done the formatting. Although seriously ill, he managed to do our last issue with his usual ingenuity and creativity. He is now away getting treatment. Like all his friends, I hope fervently for his recovery. I am immensely grateful to Suzan Cioffi, who edits the UCSD Retirement Association newsletter and is the EA's invaluable Executive Director, for formatting this issue.

**Chronicles**

Newsletter of the UCSD Emeriti Association



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**Mark your Calendar!****Professor Emily Roxworthy**

"Performance Studies to Digital Humanities:  
Adventures in Interdisciplinarity"

Wednesday, April 9, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

**Judith Dolan, Ph.D.**

Head of Design

"Theatre, Costume & Design"

Wednesday, May 14, 4- 5:30 PM

All events to take place at the

— Green Faculty Club —

## Emeriti Association Annual Business Luncheon

Wednesday, June 11th

11:30 AM - 2:15 PM

Members - \$25, Non-members - \$30

**Professor James Fowler**

**"Big Data and Big Experiments  
with Millions of People"**



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