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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE
FROM THE DESK OF ART MARKMAN

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

To the members of the IC² Community:

As you may know by now, I am stepping down as Executive Director of the IC² Institute on December 31, 2021. I have taken on a new role as Vice Provost of Continuing and Professional Education and New Education Ventures here at UT. I am pleased that Craig Watkins from the Moody College of Communications will succeed me as director effective January 1. He will bring his expertise on innovation in media and his deep interest in diversity and technology to move the institute forward.

My primary goal as Director was to focus the institute on a goal that would enable the resources of the university to
We engaged faculty by supporting over 18 research projects that explored issues in Texas and beyond. Many of these faculty also participated in our weekly research meetings that provided a forum for the discussion of research methods and findings.

We increased our involvement with students through two key programs. First, we launched student challenge competitions to allow students to work in teams to solve economic development problems. The George Kozmetsky Memorial student challenge (funded from generous gifts from Jordan Scott and Nadya Scott) was run three times as a competition among student teams across UT. Last year, we also initiated March Economic Madness—an interscholastic competition.

The second significant student engagement was Home to Texas in which first- and second-year undergraduates from small communities around the state went home for the summer with a paid internship and the chance to participate in class that taught them to interview key community leaders. In the three years that we have run this program, over 90 students have participated in internships.

Of course, the institute had to find a way to address the COVID pandemic. In the Summer of 2020, we quickly engaged students to provide an economic snapshot of communities around the state. We used those initial community discussions to launch Regional XLR8, a strategic-planning workshop in which community leaders were taught to think regionally to explore collaborations that might help invigorate their communities.

This range of programs simply would not have been possible without the engagement of a large number of people. The staff at IC² worked hard to allow the institute to pivot to its new focus. The faculty advisory board helped spread the word about the work across the university and also evaluated the many research proposals that were submitted. The external advisory board gave key suggestions, financial support, and connections to people who could help us to achieve our goals. I am deeply grateful to them all.

Although I am stepping out of my role as director, I intend to remain involved in the research and programs at the institute. I look forward to seeing Craig Watkins implement his vision as he increases the impact of IC² at UT, in Texas, and around the world.

Hook ‘em.

Art Markman

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**EMPOWERING STUDENTS**

**CHANGING THE WORLD STARTS AT HOME**

*Home to Texas* is the flagship summer internship and leadership development program that engages undergraduates from *The University of Texas at Austin* with their home communities through paid internships and curated research experiences. The IC² Institute, the College of Undergraduate Studies &
**MARCH ECONOMIC MADNESS**

The final round of March Economic Madness, UT's inter-scholastic team competition, took place on March 27, 2021. Four student teams from UT Austin and UT Permian Basin presented their proposals to address problems of small or remote communities. Team Lufkin was named this year's grand-prize winner with $25,000 award. Applications for 2022 will kick off in January. All schools and universities are invited to take part.

**GEORGE KOZMETSKY STUDENT CHALLENGE**

On October 23rd, 2021, nine teams of students from 13 schools and colleges on UT Austin's campus came together to showcase their innovative solutions for small and rural communities of Texas. The teams grappled with ways for their selected community to integrate a preventative health care initiative that makes sense for the needs of the citizens. The 2021 GKSC winners were the teams representing the communities of Alice, La Grange, and Van Horn.

**CONGRATULATIONS to the IC² 2021 FACULTY RESEARCH PROGRAM Awardees**

For this funding round, IC² awarded five research proposals that propel the Institute’s mission to better understand and support human-centered economic development through rigorous research across different thematic areas.
Assessing Black Social Well-Being in Rural Texas

The Texas Rural Indicators Project is a collaborative partnership between the Institute of Urban Policy Research and Analysis (IUPRA) and the LBJ Urban Lab at the University of Texas at Austin. The purpose of this collaboration is to direct policy and research attention to Black rural communities in Texas. Wright, Pedigo, and Lowe will examine the economic recovery of Black rural Texans from COVID-19 while at the same time informing a larger body of research regarding the long-term economic, health and social trajectories of this population. It will rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods to address gaps in the literature, inform public policy, and develop specific economic development strategies for observed communities.

Disaster Continuity for Businesses & Communities in Rural Texas: Investigating Infrastructure, Communication, & Planning Needs

Disasters, including floods, fires, weather events, and hurricanes, are frequent in Texas. They affect both large and small businesses and highlight the vulnerabilities of infrastructural systems such as power, water, and broadband connectivity. While some disaster-recovery resources are available for businesses and communities in Texas (e.g., Government Land Office, FEMA, SBA), small, rural communities often lack the resources to plan for and respond to disasters. Stephens, Faust, and Strover focus this research on the Gulf Coast region of Texas and use an interdisciplinary approach to understand the social and technical aspects of disaster-resilience efforts needed to help small businesses and communities in Texas.

Building Rural Journalism: Leadership & Training

The focus of this proposal is a program to supply rural Texas with a much-needed pipeline of newsroom and publishing leadership — trained not just in newsroom practices but also in business innovation within the context of their specific communities. This proposal is crucial to the health of rural Texas because it addresses issues central to IC²’s mission: entrepreneurship and innovation in rural journalism; small business development, especially at the mom-and-pop newspaper owner level; and workforce retention and development, through a much-needed succession plan for rural papers, which in many cases have been the social and cultural heartbeat of small Texas communities for more than a century. Boosting rural journalism leadership boosts rural economic recovery and resilience.
This study focuses on mental health care delivery and the management of chronic co-morbidities to evaluate healthcare accessibility and efficacy in rural Texas. The patterns of telemedicine adoption, implementation, and adaptation across Texas spurred by the pandemic are not well understood. The work will focus on mental health care delivery and the management of chronic co-morbidities, specifically diabetes, to understand the potential and challenges in using remote delivery strategies to manage long-term diseases in rural populations and marginalized communities through a mixed-methods approach. This project brings together an interdisciplinary team of researchers from Communications, Sociology, Latino Population Health, and Decision Science. It allows us for building new research on the shared focus of understanding mental health crisis and systemic inequities with an eye toward building resilience among healthcare workers and community members, to the overall effective delivery of healthcare in rural Texas.

**Project Organizational Resiliency: Domestic Violence Impact & Measurement**

Project Organizational Resiliency will investigate the economic and social impacts of domestic violence and COVID-19 on Texas communities with a focus on mid-size, rural, and remote communities. By taking a future-oriented approach grounded in science, this project will bring communities together to strengthen domestic violence service networks, produce evidence-based recommendations, and create tangible tools in the form of a Playbook, all of which will prepare communities to better navigate circumstances and shocks to come.

The IC² research community continues to grow through the Faculty Research Program, weekly Research Lab meetings, cross-campus collaboration and partnership, and connecting to our partners who support and utilize the research for their impact. We invite researchers to connect with us.

**RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS**

*Regional Economic Recovery Research- Report Series*

Community Perspectives on Economic Development- In summer 2020, researchers at the Bureau of Business Research at the IC² Institute at the University of Texas at Austin surveyed 7000 Texas residents of small cities and towns across the state as part of the Regional Economic Recovery Initiative (RERR). Currently, we have released six mini-reports with thematic analysis ahead of the Full Report planned for spring 2022.
Florence C. King Foundation to explore economic development trends and strategies for West Texas and the Permian Basin. In this analysis, we highlight the West Texas region, in particular, to explore regional variation. The findings illustrate different perceptions of impact between urban and rural Texans.

**Theme 2 – Resilience & Recovery in Rural Texas Communities**

How can we make rural Texas communities more resilient in the face of economic stress, disasters, and population decline? How do rural residents themselves think about their capacity for community economic recovery? Continuing the presentation of findings from the Bureau's 2020 survey of Texas communities about their economic development priorities, we highlight, below, attitudes about community resilience, unmet needs, and ways to improve local economic conditions.

**Theme 3 – Entrepreneurial Intention Greater in Urban than in Rural Texas**

Among the survey questions that we asked rural and urban Texans in the summer and fall of 2020, we included questions about their attitudes toward entrepreneurship for clues about how likely our participants might be to start or own a business. In light of the COVID pandemic, we wanted to ask urban and rural Texans about their current entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions. Our findings show that Texans living in urban areas have greater interest and enthusiasm to start or own a business when compared to Texans living in West Texas or rural areas.

**Theme 4 – Gaps Between Satisfaction and Importance**

Here, we present survey findings from a set of questions about how residents value broad categories of community assets and what that might mean for prioritizing community investment. This is especially important with the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan which includes hundreds of billions of dollars in targeted investment in many of the community asset such as broadband, infrastructure, and healthcare. We asked urban and rural Texas residents about how important 18 different community assets were to them in the towns where they live. We also asked about their satisfaction, in hopes that the gap between satisfaction with existing assets and importance of those assets in a future decision might reveal an economic development need that might be prioritized ahead of others.

**Theme 5 – Community’s Priorities Among Economic, Quality of Life Project Ideas**

Communities who aspire to sustainably develop their community in ways that improve their economy and enhance their quality-of-life face constrained choices about which projects have the best fit for their community. What are the priorities that a community might consider? Should communities focus on economic development, improving quality of life, enhancing basic community services, or should communities try to address multiple areas with the projects that they choose? What are the trade-offs? To what degree are a community's priorities aligned relative to these choices? We present findings about a set of possible economic and quality-of-life project ideas.

**Theme 6 – What Drives Relocation: Origin, Destination, or Both**

Most literature on residential mobility looks at relocation either within or between communities as people pursue different life opportunities, with research in the field focusing primarily on the push and pull factors that prompt a person to relocate, the mechanisms that structure this decision-making – employment, lifestyle, life-stage and individual psychology, and the outcomes of relocation on the individual and community levels. To look beyond this binary measurement, we employed a conjoint choice-selection experiment on respondents in this rural Texas survey that replaced products with communities.

**ADDITIONAL RESEARCH**

Economic development in rural Texas: A study of heritage, assets, barriers, and stakeholders in six rural communities
Under the rubric of Sustainable Community Development (SCD), researchers go into a community, talking to people from different backgrounds and walks of life, you can get a much better sense of the community’s promise and possibilities. Over summer 2021, Dr. Clay Spinuzzi and Drake Grossi led a team of graduate researchers including Andrew Booth, Mac Scott, Tristen Hooker, Vanessa Lopez, and Nigel O’Hearn on Texas-focused qualitative research that dug deeper into six communities to better understand what truly drives and/or prevents economic development.

**Supported by grants from NSF and the Office of the Texas Governor, BBR continues work on examining the impacts of labor exploitation and sexual assault**

BBR research estimates that labor exploited by human traffickers is worth $600 million a year in Texas, and child sex trafficking alone costs the state $6 billion a year. For almost a decade, the Bureau has worked with scholars from the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in developing a line of research on the economic and social impact of labor exploitation and human trafficking in the state. From benchmarking the extent of human trafficking in Texas in 2016 to an in-depth study of child sex trafficking in 2019, BBR researchers have pushed the scholarly boundaries of human trafficking research in remarkable ways.

**Exciting new BBR paper under review on human-centered economic decision making in Texas**

We analyzed survey data from 5,487 residents of 85 Texas communities, including rural communities, small towns, medium-sized cities, and the five largest urban centers, to model the influence of the degree of urbanity and rurality of a community as well as residents’ social position, values, and their satisfaction with local assets. The paper’s central argument is that a wide range of factors impact how community members think about their needs and thus should be considered in any community development process. This human-centered approach to looking at how these factors impact economic and quality-of-life development project preferences will support the adaptation of community development decision-making processes to the conditions of each community.

**The Price is Right: An Orders of Worth Analysis of Positions on Housing Prices**

In this pilot study, the researchers investigate how community leaders in a rural Texas small town argue about economic development. To study this, researchers examine 33 semi-structured interviews collected by undergraduate interns and analyze this data using Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot’s Orders of Worth framework.

**PUBLICATIONS**


**SMALL-BIZ.XLR8**

Small-biz.XLR8 concluded its flexible training and support program empowering entrepreneurs to create actionable growth strategies for their businesses. The
relationships among peers, regional business experts, and links to funding groups.

HUB TRAINING
This September, IC² Institute launched the Readiness Training Program for Historically Underutilized Businesses (RTP for HUBs) in the Austin-Round Rock MSA. This broad-based and innovative program seeks to significantly enhance the capacity of HUB companies to bid competitively on both public and private sector procurement opportunities. Public contracting is the point of entry into the formal business world for many minority- and women-owned businesses.

BEST PRACTICES SERIES LAUNCHED
PARTNERS & UT FACULTY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE & EXTENSIVE RESEARCH

We speak with partners who are driving change for small communities: featuring Ellen Ray (Still Water Foundation, Texas Rural Funders), Joseph Kopser (Grayline Group), Dr. Craig Watkins, and Dr. Steven Pedigo.

In our Roundtables, we convene faculty experts around key issues impacting smaller communities: "Broadband as a Utility," featuring Prof. Sherri Greenberg, Dr. Kenneth Flamm, and Dr. Sharon Strover; and "The Role, Reality,
View our YouTube channel to watch other videos. More to come in 2022!

BLOGS & NEWS

HOME TO TEXAS 2021 STUDENT BLOG SERIES

Leadership in Texas communities has never been more important as our state is in transitions both demographically and economically. Leaders are critical setting strategies to ensure communities grow and thrive during change. As Texas grows more diverse and youthful, a leadership transition is on the horizon. Read more

COMMUNITY LEADERS SPEAK

Community Leaders Speak is a series of writings prompted by the discussions during IC² Regional XLR8 Program which convenes 150 leaders from 58 communities across all regions of Texas, September – October 2020. As a part of the IC² Regional Economic Recovery Initiative, Regional XLR8 is a new type of “accelerator” that helps communities rethink recovery, take strategic action, and build resilience. During this intensive 6-week program, leaders actively engaged in full & regional group discussions around human-centered approaches.
WHAT DOES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOOK LIKE IN RURAL TEXAS?

When we hear “economic development,” we often think of new plant openings, education programs, or tourism initiatives. But it can also mean figuring out what a community already has—its heritage, its assets—as well as the barriers that are currently keeping the community from capitalizing on those. Read more

BUILDING A RESEARCH COMMUNITY, Graduate Student Perspectives

This year, three UT Austin doctoral students, Ademide Mabadeje, Kara Takasaki, and Drake Gossi have contributed in unique and meaningful ways to our mission to understand better how communities can grow and thrive.

As an interdisciplinary research unit of The University of Texas at Austin, the IC² Institute calls upon various members of the UT Austin community to contribute to discussions, research, and analysis of findings. Hear their unique perspectives and read more on their IC² involvement and research.

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON IC² WORK WITH SMALL
The IC² Institute is committed to its mission of human-centered economic development through our research and programs. For more information, ways to sponsor and support, or collaborate, please contact Riffat Manasia, Director of Strategy & Engagement at info@ic2.utexas.edu.

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