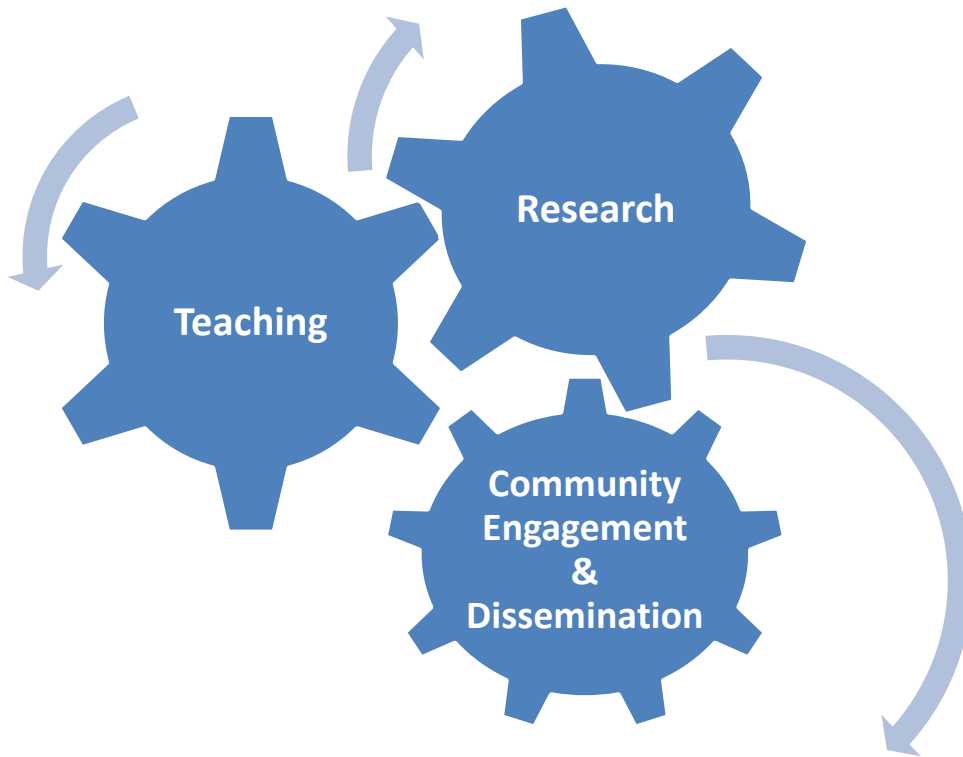


PROPOSAL FOR A UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CENTER FOR POVERTY PREVENTION AND ALLEVIATION



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Executive Summary

The University of Michigan Poverty Visioning Committee proposes the establishment of a Center at UM dedicated to the prevention and alleviation of poverty in the U.S. We envision a Center with three complementary and highly integrated components: (1) action-oriented, innovative, and participatory research, with a primary focus on fielding and testing large-scale interventions and programs that seek to prevent and alleviate poverty; (2) teaching geared to increase the number of students introduced to core content on poverty, to provide in-depth content on the prevention and alleviation of poverty to undergraduate and graduate students, and to prepare emerging scholars for successful careers in research, policy, and practice that significantly contribute to poverty prevention and alleviation; (3) a robust program of community engagement and dissemination that enhances the research and educational activities of the Center and communicates in an accessible way the findings and implications of poverty research to community stakeholders and policy makers. This multi-component approach, in combination with a focus on actions and solutions, distinguishes the proposed Center from other poverty-focused centers around the country. The Center's focus will extend to poverty in other countries to the extent that it provides insights for the U.S. context.

The Committee envisions an approach, at least initially, that centers on expanding economic opportunity, expanding educational opportunity, and improving health—broad goals that will involve several related “sectors” (e.g., transportation, finance, housing, etc.). Research will be interdisciplinary and informed by bi-directional learning relationships with community-based organizations. These efforts are expected to eventuate in transdisciplinary scholarship that incorporates knowledge from multiple disciplines into new approaches to address poverty. Poverty center fellowships to cohorts of faculty from different disciplines are proposed as one way to facilitate transdisciplinary scholarship.

Mechanisms to meet the Center's educational goals include experiential courses; a program of poverty simulation exercises that create opportunities for students to reflect on conditions faced by individuals living in poverty; an undergraduate certificate or minor program; a transdisciplinary pre- and post-doctoral fellowship program; a regularly-offered University-wide theme semester; and a high-profile guest speaker series. Engagement activities will include offering organizations and communities technical assistance and support for activities related to poverty prevention and alleviation, and collaborating with organizations and communities that are willing to offer UM students experiential learning opportunities, share perspectives, identify research/information needs, and assist with and participate in research activities. Numerous methods are identified for disseminating the Center's research findings to a broad set of audiences and constituencies. Center activities will be supported through funds provided by the Provost and external funds from public and private sources.

UM is well-placed to be a national and international leader in the prevention and alleviation of poverty because of its robust interdisciplinary environment; exceptional body of distinguished researchers with expertise in disparities in the labor market, health disparities, and processes linking schooling, educational opportunities, and educational attainment; and large contingent of highly-respected researchers and practitioners with extensive real-world community-based intervention and policy experience.

PROPOSAL FOR A UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CENTER FOR POVERTY PREVENTION AND ALLEVIATION

The University of Michigan Poverty Visioning Committee proposes the establishment of a Center at UM dedicated to research, teaching, and community engagement/dissemination regarding the prevention and alleviation of poverty. We propose that the Center be engaged in three types of work, each constituting a pillar or core component of the Center:

1. Action-oriented research, with a primary focus on the fielding and evaluation of large-scale interventions and programs that seek to prevent and alleviate poverty;
2. Teaching geared to increase the number of students introduced to core content on poverty, to provide in-depth content on the prevention and alleviation of poverty to students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and to increase training opportunities for junior scholars in the field;
3. A robust program of community engagement and dissemination that enhances the research and educational activities of the Center and that communicates in an accessible way the findings and implications of poverty research at the University of Michigan to community stakeholders and policy makers at the local, state, national, and international level.

We begin first by detailing the principles that we propose should undergird the activities of the Center, and then offer more detail on our proposals for the Center's specific activities in research, teaching, and community engagement and dissemination.

I. Unique Goals and Strategies of the Proposed Center – The Michigan Difference

Our goal is for the Center to be an international leader in identifying and testing new strategies for the prevention and alleviation of poverty. Thus, we propose that the Center's activities should not be primarily focused on basic research, which seeks to describe the causes, characteristics, and consequences of poverty. Such research is critical, and numerous researchers at UM are leading experts in the considerable body of basic research that already exists on poverty. Further, there are numerous centers at other academic institutions with a primary focus on basic research on poverty, making it difficult to differentiate a new initiative at UM from other existing efforts.

What can make a new center at UM a leader in the field is a focus on *action and solutions*, in *research, teaching, and community engagement/dissemination*. What types of programs can actively prevent poverty? What are the best ways to alleviate it? Our research agenda should be *transdisciplinary* and cutting edge, and the Center should become a place where policy makers, researchers, and community members instinctively turn when they want to know about the best strategies for tackling poverty. Transdisciplinary scholarship occurs when collaboration among investigators leads to “new conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem” (Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/trec/about-us/definitions/>). Through this work, it would further be our goal for the Center to be influential in effecting local,

state, and federal policy by illuminating strategies for addressing disadvantage that work and those that do not. Our teaching should involve students in the work of addressing poverty, rather than just understanding it (although a firm understanding is clearly a pre-requisite for action and the educational program we propose reflects that). Our planning and design of research and teaching activities should reflect deep understanding of the issues, needs, and assets of poor communities that derives from bi-directional and respectful relationships with community stakeholders. Our dissemination should clearly communicate the results of our action-oriented work to practitioners, policymakers, community-based groups, and individuals outside of the University.

We envision research, teaching, and community engagement/dissemination as complementary and integrated core components of the Center (Figure 1). This multi-component approach, in combination with our focus on poverty prevention and alleviation, distinguishes our proposed Center from other poverty-focused centers around the country. The strengths that result from this approach are discussed throughout this report.



Figure 1. Core Components of the Proposed Center

Figure 2 represents varying levels/types of integration that may exist between and among components of the Center. All activities at the Center should involve/integrate at least two components (e.g., # 1, 2, & 3), with the intersection of all three components being ideal (#4). In the latter instance, for example, the Center might (a) nurture, support, and disseminate research to test strategies for alleviating poverty that (b) involves students at various points in their careers (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral) through different mechanisms (e.g., seminars, internships) and (c) engages individuals most affected directly by poverty or the

community institutions and organizations whose main mission is to serve poor and low-income families and individuals or to help ameliorate poverty. This example captures the core aim of the

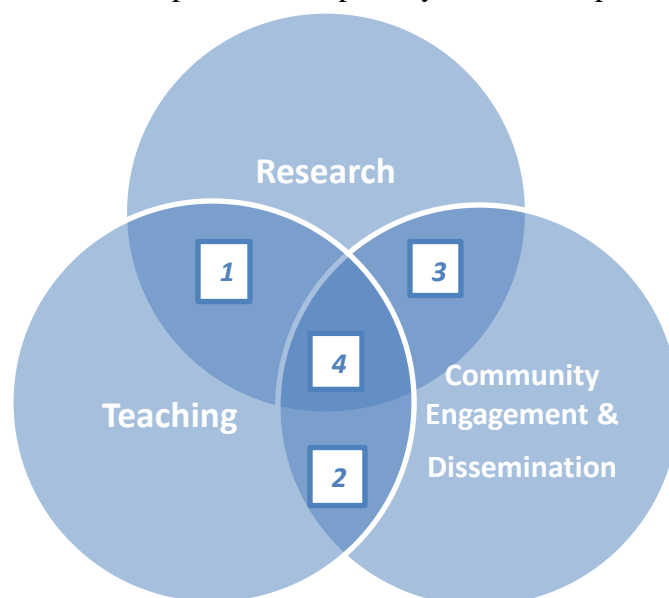


Figure 2. Levels/Types of Integration of Core Components of the Proposed Center

center—action that makes a positive difference in the lives of poor people, while also providing opportunities for significant and substantive learning and giving voice to those most affected by poverty or most engaged in poverty prevention and alleviation. Detailed descriptions of each of the core components of the proposed center are presented in the latter section of the report.

II. The Proposed Center’s Approach to the Prevention and Alleviation of Poverty

Overcoming poverty undoubtedly requires a multi-faceted approach, and initiatives might place different emphases on different aspects of the problem. For example, a bipartisan group sponsored by the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute recently released a report, “Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security,” that focused on jobs, education and family as key areas for policy (AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). In “Pathways to the Middle Class,” Sawhill et al. (2012) focus on key markers for success at different stages of life, and highlight the need both for supports for strengthening families as well as key government policies, including high quality early education, K-12 reforms and increasing rates of college graduation. Yoshikawa et al. (2006) looks to combined cash transfers, early childhood development, and workforce development for parents as key strategies. These are examples of the myriad ways one might frame interventions to prevent and alleviate poverty.

For our part, we imagine the University of Michigan initiative will, at least initially, support efforts to overcome poverty by expanding economic opportunity, expanding educational opportunity, and improving health. We intend these areas of focus to be broadly interpreted and understand that many interventions to alleviate poverty will require cross-sectoral approaches.

For example, a focus on creating jobs with adequate wages might include transportation interventions to get people to those good jobs. Below, we present rationales for the proposed Center's approach to poverty prevention and alleviation.

A. Expanding Economic Opportunity

The need to expand the availability of work opportunities to low-income working-age adults has received considerable bi-partisan attention in recent years (AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015). Many jobs in the U.S. are low-wage, unstable, and offer few benefits, and accessing any job for those living in poverty can be difficult. Even as the economy has improved, the unemployment rate and labor force participation among low-educated workers—especially for those living in high poverty areas—remains high. For example, in Detroit, Michigan among working-age adults with a high school degree or less during the years 2010-2014, the unemployment rate was 30% and the employment-to-population ratio of this group was 39%. That means 61% of low-educated working-aged adults were jobless. Recent research finds that expanding work opportunity for low-income structurally unemployed individuals may yield numerous other positive benefits to participants and to society, beyond increasing wages, such as improved health and reduced involvement with the criminal justice system (Burdorf & Schuring, 2015; Heller, 2014; Redcross, 2012; van der Noordt, IJzelenberg, Droomers, & Proper, 2014). Thus, interventions that seek to expand economic opportunity for those at the bottom in the U.S. hold the potential to be particularly effective in preventing and alleviating poverty. With its collection of researchers with expertise in disparities in the labor market, the University of Michigan is well-placed to be a national leader in this area.

B. Expanding Educational Opportunity

Education, poverty, and socioeconomic mobility are closely linked. Official estimates find that while only 5% of adults aged 25 and older with a bachelor's degree were in poverty in 2014, 14.2% of those with a high school degree and 28.9% of those without a high school degree were below the poverty threshold. New evidence finds that the achievement gap between high- and low-income families is now far larger than the gap between white and black American children (Reardon, 2011). Thus, among low-income households, low-educational attainment reduces the labor market opportunities for adults, which in turn may reduce the likelihood of high educational attainment for their children. Education can improve labor market outcomes and may also improve numerous other outcomes that help individuals and families escape poverty. As a world-class educational institution, the University of Michigan is well-situated to intervene in ways related to expanding educational opportunities.

C. Improving Health

Health and socioeconomic position in the United States are also strongly related. Poor individuals are more likely to be disabled, have shorter life expectancy, suffer from acute and chronic diseases at higher rates, and experience more mental health challenges than their higher income counterparts (Singh & Siahpush, 2006). Poor and ethnic minority Americans are far more likely than other Americans to be exposed to environmental toxins, given that high-polluting industries tend to be clustered in low-income communities (Katz, 2012). The

University of Michigan, with its long-standing commitment to health sciences, is well-equipped to be a national and international leader in action-oriented research that seeks to improve health as a means of reducing poverty, and conversely, to improve population health and reduce disparities through poverty prevention and alleviation.

These three approaches/foci are intended to help organize and prioritize the center's activities. However, because individuals who are poor typically experience multiple adverse conditions and recurrent stressors and because the effects of poverty tend to cluster and interact with each other (discussed in more detail in the next section of the report), effective prevention and alleviation strategies will involve attention to other related sectors. As Table 1 shows, Committee members noted numerous domains that are critical to addressing poverty. However, all activities should have a clear and explicit relationship to the core foci in order to give the Center's activities cohesion.

Table 1
Core Approaches and Related Foci of the Proposed Center

| CORE APPROACHES | | |
|---|--|----------------|
| Expanding Economic Opportunity Expanding Educational Opportunity Improving Health | | |
| RELATED FOCI | | |
| Arts | | Food Security |
| Civil Rights | | Housing |
| Criminal Justice | | Transportation |
| Environment | | Finance |

III. Background

Lyndon Johnson's declaration of a "War on Poverty" in 1964 and the ensuing legislation echoed Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and called for the reduction of poverty infused with an emphasis on civil rights. The official poverty rate in the United States declined by 30% within five years of President Johnson's declaration (Haskins, 2013), but more than five decades after that declaration, it is still the case that a substantial proportion of Americans are poor. That is, they have incomes below the federal poverty threshold deemed necessary to meet the minimum requirements for basic living needs. The federal poverty threshold is a specific dollar amount (defined by cash income before taxes) that varies by family size and composition. It is the most common measure of absolute poverty.

The Committee shares the concerns of many analysts about the adequacy of this measure of poverty. Most analysts agree that the poverty thresholds are too low because research consistently shows that families tend to need an income of about twice the federal poverty level to meet their basic needs (Cauthen & Fass, 2008). The official poverty threshold fails to account for many portions of a family's budget—noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid,

and food stamps), childcare expenses, or other work-related expenses—while also not considering rising standards of living and variation in family budgets by either different medical costs across population groups or the cost of living across the country (Gabe, 2015). These concerns led to the creation of the Supplemental Poverty Threshold, an alternative metric. Yet researchers continue to debate the best ways to capture poverty.

In 2014, 1 out of 7 (14.8% or 46.7 million) Americans were “officially” poor. Of the seven most populous cities in Michigan, two had poverty rates almost three times higher than the national poverty rate (Detroit, 40%; Flint 42%). Children under the age of 18 are overrepresented in the poverty population. In 2014, although children represented 23% of the total population, they constituted 33% of the people in poverty. During 2014, 15.5 million children—21% of all children in the United States—were poor (In Detroit and Flint, the child poverty rates in 2014 were 56% and 62%, respectively). Of these, 6.8 million (9.3%) lived in extreme poverty, defined as family income 50% below the poverty threshold (Children’s Defense Fund, 2015). About one in 10 children in the United States spends at least half of their childhood living in poverty (Fass, Dinan, & Aratani, 2009). Childhood poverty rates tend to be highest during the earliest and arguably the most formative years of children’s lives (i.e., birth to 3 years of age) (CLASP, 2013). Children in this age range are more likely to experience poverty than older children because their parents tend to be younger, have less education and work experience, and command lower wages than parents of older children (Cauthen & Fass, 2008).

A. Poverty and Low-Wage Work

Poverty and low-wage work go hand-in-hand in the United States. Official Census statistics find that in 2014 about two-thirds of American families experiencing poverty included someone who had worked during the calendar year. About 70% of people in families with children reside with someone who worked during the year. Even for full-time workers, roughly one in four jobs in the U.S. pays too little to lift a family of four out of poverty. Low-wage workers are concentrated in the service sector. Not only do such jobs pay low wages, but they are often subject to variable hours and seldom offer benefits such as affordable health care or paid sick time. “*Just-in-time*” scheduling practices peg a firm’s labor costs closely to demand, which explains why wide scheduling availability across days and shifts is a key qualification for getting and keeping a low-wage service sector job. Yet such instability in the timing of work can lead to problems with child care and family functioning (Edin & Shaefer, 2015).

The sectors of the U.S. economy populated by low-wage workers are now much bigger than those that are believed to provide stable, working-class jobs. Manufacturing now accounts for less than 10% of jobs in the U.S., with about 12 million jobs. In contrast there are about 15 million jobs in the retail sector and another 14 million in leisure and hospitality. Thus, the typical poor family is a working family, and low-wage jobs are not going away any time soon. Thus, action to prevent and alleviate poverty means action in the labor market—the two are inextricably linked (Edin & Shaefer, 2015).

The contribution of low wage jobs to poverty in America is underscored in international comparisons of poverty and work. Scholars use a measure of relative poverty to compare how the scale of poverty in the U.S. compares to that of other nations and to assess the relative

effectiveness of American social policy in fighting poverty. In these analyses, the poverty threshold is set at 50% of median (size adjusted) family disposable income in the respective country (i.e., disposable income includes all types of money income, minus income and payroll taxes, and including all cash transfers such as food stamps and cash housing allowances, and refundable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit-EITC). Analyzing data for 21 countries (primarily for the year 2000), Smeeding (2008) found that the poverty rate for all persons in the U.S. was the second highest of all nations (after Mexico) and the highest of all wealthy nations. A similar cross-national pattern was found for child poverty rates. The poverty rate for children under age 18 in the United States was more than 4 percentage points higher than the rate in any other wealthy nation.

Smeeding's (2008) analysis suggests that the America has higher rates of relative poverty than other wealthy nations because of two factors. First, the U.S. is significantly below other wealthy countries in levels of cash spending on the nonelderly and families with children. The U.S. spends about 3% of national income on benefits for these groups, whereas other wealthy countries spend at least 6% of national income on family benefits. Second, the U.S. has the highest proportion of workers in poorly paid jobs. Individuals in low-income households in the U.S. work more hours than do their counterparts in other peer western industrialized countries, but for lower-wages, on average. Single mothers in the U.S., in particular, work considerably more than their counterparts in peer countries. Antipoverty measures the EITC have helped the working poor during the past 15 years, but the U.S. simply does not spend enough to make up for low-wage jobs, hence, its comparatively higher poverty rate despite its wealth.

B. Poverty and Schooling

The disadvantages that poor Americans experience in education and schooling begin very early in the life course. Children growing up in poverty begin school at kindergarten in systematically lower-quality elementary schools than their more advantaged counterparts (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Throughout the K-12 pipeline, their schools are most often segregated along race and class lines and are simultaneously under-resourced (Johnson, 2012). The under-investment in their schools is not only registered in terms of inferior educational materials and facilities, but in terms of those resources most likely to influence educational outcomes (e.g., class size; pupil-teacher ratio; teacher quality) (Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994; Mosteller, 1995). Poor children most often find themselves in schools with high teacher turnover, and teachers who are the least experienced and have less competitive credentials (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002; Loeb, Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Peske & Haycock; Ready, 2008). Another challenge facing poor and ethnic minority youth is the lack of advanced placement classes—which deprives them of opportunities for higher learning and stronger preparation for college (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002).

C. Poverty and the Physical and Social Environment

Income poverty, especially if it is persistent, is often accompanied by a multitude of negative events (e.g., eviction, termination of utility service) and ongoing conditions (e.g., substandard housing, poor diets, poor health care, unmet medical and dental needs, proximity to toxic waste dumps, ambient air pollution) that operate concurrently and often precipitate additional

difficulties. In addition, poor neighborhoods are often dangerous neighborhoods. Michigan has the dubious distinction of having two cities (Detroit and Flint) consistently in the top 5 most violent cities with over 100,000 residents based on per capita violent crime from the Uniform Crime Report (In 2015, Flint dropped below 100,000 residents and is no longer included in the Report, but in 2012 it had the most violent crimes per capita—2,700—of any city over 100,000 in the U.S.).

Studies of environmental quality find that exposure to toxins, pollution, poor-quality housing, and other environmental hazards is more prevalent in low-income and minority communities than other communities. This is true in rural and urban settings. While disamenities such as freeways, derelict industrial facilities and wastes are prevalent in such communities, parks, hospitals, grocery stores, good schools, and other amenities are few (Agyeman, 2005; Bullard, 2000; Checker, 2005; Corburn, 2005; Schlosberg, 2007; Taylor, 2014; Walker, 2012). Michigan mirrors the rest of the country in the prevalence of these phenomena. Poor communities often lack hospitals and adequate health care facilities, as well as healthy, affordable food outlets (Budzynska, et al., 2013; Levkoe, 2006; Lovell, 2010; Rose, 2011; Saldivar, Tanaka & Krasny, 2004; Taylor & Ard, 2015). This is very evident in rural parts of the state like the Upper Peninsula as well as in urban areas such as Detroit, Flint, Ypsilanti, and Benton Harbor. Rates of extreme forms of food insecurity have increased across Michigan by nearly 4% in the past decade and the state's overall rate of food insecurity is higher than the national average (Taylor & Ard, 2015). Frequent utility shutoffs in Michigan cities (like Detroit) are leading researchers and policymakers to study and understand energy poverty (Reames, 2016) and water poverty (Butts & Gasteyer, 2011).

D. Poverty and Ethnicity

Poverty disproportionately touches the lives of ethnic minorities. Institutional barriers deriving directly from historic and current racial and ethnic discrimination (e.g., restricted educational opportunities, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, housing patterns in relation to the location of jobs) are implicated in the strong links between ethnicity, the incidence and persistence of poverty, and physical and social environments associated with poverty. In 2014, the poverty rate for American Indians/Alaska Natives, African Americans, and Hispanics was 28.3%, 26%, and 24%, respectively, compared to 10% for non-Hispanic Whites (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015; US Census Bureau, 2015). Even more glaring is the racial/ethnic disparity in persistent poverty. For example, national longitudinal research that tracked the time spent living in poverty during childhood (birth to age 15) among children born between 1970 and 1990 found that 41% of African American children lived in poverty for more than half of their childhood, compared to 6% of non-Hispanic White children (Fass et al., 2009). Ethnic minority children have higher rates of persistent poverty due to a higher prevalence of other risk factors, for example, higher rates of single parenthood and lower levels of parental education and earnings (Fass et al., 2009; Gabe, 2015).

Poor American Indians/Alaska Natives, African Americans, and Hispanics are more likely to live in high poverty areas than non-Hispanic Whites who are poor. For example, over the 5-year period 2009-2013, among poor African Americans, nearly half (48%) lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 30% or more, and one-quarter (25%) lived in “extreme” poverty areas

(poverty rates of 40% or more). In contrast, among poor non-Hispanic Whites, over half (53%) lived *outside* of poverty areas, whereas only about one quarter lived in areas with poverty rates of 30% or more (Gabe, 2015).

Poverty and racial segregation have relegated African Americans to some of the most industrialized and dilapidated environments. They are disproportionately exposed to polluted air, water, and soil, a reality often termed “*environmental racism*.” The most polluted ZIP code in Michigan, surrounded by coal burning, oil refining, steel production, salt mining, is in a southwest pocket of Detroit that is 85% African American, the majority of whom are poor (Atkin, 2014). Lead exposure from various sources is greatest in poor communities where housing stock is old and where lead pipes and lead paint are abundant. The poisoning of Flint’s drinking water is raising awareness about the ways in which poverty, residential segregation, race, and class intersect to result in unequal environmental outcomes and long-term intergenerational effects that will make it difficult for affected individuals to transition out of poverty (Virginia Tech Research Team, 2016).

E. Poverty and Child and Adult Well-Being

Scholars have found robust evidence linking family-level poverty to a vast array of negative child and adult outcomes. On average, children growing up in poverty experience poorer physical and mental health, have lower cognitive skills, and perform less well on numerous indicators of academic achievement (e.g., test scores, grade retentions, course failures, placement in special education, high school graduation rate, completed years of schooling), compared to children who never experienced poverty (for reviews see Huston & Bentley, 2010; McLoyd, 1998; McLoyd, Mistry, & Hardaway, 2014). Persistent poverty is found consistently to have more adverse effects on children’s cognitive functioning, school achievement, and socioemotional adjustment than transitory, short-term poverty (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; McLeod & Shanahan, 1996).

Individuals who experience poverty during childhood are substantially more likely to be poor as adults than those who never lived in poverty during childhood. The risk of being poor as an adult is especially high if childhood poverty was persistent. Data indicate that among 20-year-olds who spent some time in poverty as children, 12% of those who spent less than half of their childhood in poverty were poor, compared to 46% of those who were poor for more than half of their childhood. A similar pattern was found linking poverty during childhood and poverty during middle adulthood (30- and 35-year olds) (Fass et al., 2009). Family income in early childhood is predictive of both hours worked and earnings throughout individuals’ late 20s and early 30s (Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2010).

The socioeconomic mix of children’s neighborhood also matters for development. Having a larger proportion of affluent neighbors is associated with higher levels of cognitive functioning during early childhood, independent of family income, perhaps because of higher-quality kindergartens (e.g., Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994). Researchers also find that, independent of family income, adolescents who grow up in affluent neighborhoods or neighborhoods with a higher percentage of affluent families complete more years of school, have lower school dropout rates, and are less likely to have a teenage pregnancy than adolescents from

similar families who grow up in poor neighborhoods or neighborhoods with proportionately fewer affluent families (Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Foster & McLanahan, 1996; Harding, 2003).

Social class continues to be the most robust predictor of educational achievement and attainment, with children growing up in poverty evidencing the most depressed educational outcomes (Murnane, 2007). These depressed outcomes are demonstrated as early as pre-school, with low-income children demonstrating less fluency than their higher-income counterparts on measures of mainstream linguistic, literacy, and numeracy skills (Black, Hess & Berenson-Howard, 2000; Lee & Burkham, 2002; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). Children who start school significantly behind their peers on such measures not only fail to close these gaps, but gaps of these kinds actually grow over time. The result is that children living in poverty underperform on standardized tests at all educational levels (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2005) and lag behind in high school completion and in college matriculation and graduation rates (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Levine & Ndiffer, 1996).

Although we have longstanding evidence that a range of social environmental influences (e.g., heightened household stress; less frequent and elaborate verbal interchanges between mother and child; access to lower quality child care; childrearing practices that are out of sync with the norms and expectations that are privileged in schools; violent neighborhoods; toxic environmental conditions) impair poor children's ability to perform competitively on common indices of cognitive and social-psychological development that coincide with and predict high achievement in school (Black et al., 2000; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 1997; Campbell, 2001; Garbarino, 1995; Kim-Cohen, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2004), the academic underperformance of low-income youth is especially compromised by their limited access to quality education (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

Poverty is strongly associated with poorer physical and mental health in both adults (e.g., higher incidents of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, hypertension, arthritis, diabetes, obesity, ulcers, cancer, psychiatric disorders) and children (e.g., higher rates of low birthweight, elevated blood lead levels, hospital admissions, disability days, chronic illnesses such as asthma) (Adler & Newman, 2002; Wood, 2003). Factors that contribute to the link between poverty and health include increased rates of health risk behaviors (e.g., cigarette smoking, physical inactivity, poor diet, substance abuse), increased exposure to environmental toxins, greater exposure and vulnerability to stress, and reduced health care access and utilization (e.g., Adler & Newman, 2002). As one glaring example of these links, Wayne County includes the most polluted ZIP code in the State of Michigan and has the highest number of pediatric asthma cases in the state (Atkins, 2014). Detroit had the highest rate of asthma in the country in children from birth to age 5 and from ages 6-11 (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2011-2012; Keet et al. 2015). In addition, Detroit ZIP codes have rates of hospitalization for asthma that are 3-6 times higher than the state as a whole (Milton, 2014).

Poor health and poor growth in children, including elevated blood lead levels, can lead to low school achievement through deficits in cognitive functioning, behavior, and activity, and increased absenteeism and school failure (Crook, 1995). A recent longitudinal study of health in over 250 low-income families found that 68% of the families were comorbid, that is, both

mothers and children had multiple concurrent physical and mental health problems. Family comorbidity was associated with cumulative disadvantages anchored in mothers' educational histories and unstable low-wage employment. Mothers often neglected their own physical and mental health needs to meet the economic and health care needs of their children and other family members, which often resulted in them being fired or leaving their jobs (Burton & Bromell, 2010). Childhood illness is strongly related to health in later life (Case, Fertig, & Paxson, 2005), and a history of poverty persistently affects self-rated health, regardless of elevations in income in later years (McDonough & Berglund, 2003).

IV. Description of the Core Components of the Proposed Center

We envision research, teaching, and community engagement/dissemination as complementary and integrated core components of the Center, setting the stage for concerted action by UM. A description of each of these components is presented in below.

A. *Research Core*

Research on poverty is being conducted in many schools and departments at UM. This research adopts a variety of perspectives and methodologies, and scholars producing this work often work wholly independently and are even unaware of each other. At the same time, various community organizations are adopting innovative approaches for addressing poverty. Yet, despite the research here and elsewhere, and despite these efforts in the field, poverty persists at unacceptably high levels, often subjecting generation after generation to lives of lack.

These three observations underlie our conception of the research that the new Center should undertake and support. Specifically, the Center will:

- Focus its research on the **prevention and alleviation** of poverty in the United States, much of which will involve the fielding and evaluation of large-scale interventions and programs;
- Conduct research that embraces and encourages **action-oriented collaborations with outside community-based organizations**;
- Strive to create a research environment that produces a new understanding of poverty prevention and alleviation especially through **transdisciplinary** efforts.

Myriad levels of intervention are included in this conception (e.g., intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, policy, legal system). In short, interventions could be those that directly affect individuals or those whose effects are broadly systemic in nature. We envision research that encompasses three main "sectors" including economics and livelihood, education, and health, while considering related sectors such as housing, food, transportation, environment, civil rights, criminal justice, and the arts.

In sum, the Center will strive to make significant progress, actually implemented, in disrupting the cycle of poverty by lowering both the disciplinary barriers within the University and between the University and those attempting poverty-alleviations efforts in the real world. The three research-related goals of the Center are discussed in more detail below.

1. Prevention and Alleviation of Poverty

Notable work has been done to document the prevalence of poverty, its effects on family structure and children, the demographics of poverty, the extent of income inequality, and similar considerations. While this work is important, it will inform, but lie outside, the purview of the Center. Instead, the central focus of the Center will be the prevention and alleviation of poverty, and amelioration of the effects of poverty, through policies, programs, and practices that increase opportunities and remove barriers. This focus reflects a commitment to address the root causes of poverty and implement and evaluate practicable remedies to deal with them.

The possible types of research that we envision the Center supporting include:

- Interventions, programs, or policies that attempt to prevent individuals and families from experiencing poverty (e.g., by increasing job opportunities, providing income supplements to working families, providing living wages);
- Interventions, programs, and policies that attempt to break generational cycles of poverty by providing various kinds of educational and material resources to children living in chronic and/or deep poverty;
- Interventions, programs, and policies that improve the major contexts within which poor children develop and families navigate (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, housing, finance) and help reduce the effects of poverty on those experiencing the effects of poverty;
- Forecasting / predictive analysis (e.g., simulation models of the potential impact of policy and other types of interventions);
- Research that illuminates the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, and other indicators of social position influence how people experience poverty and the implications of these characteristics for developing successful interventions, programs, and policies.

See Appendix B for an example of a research project in the early stages of development that could be considered for support by the proposed center *if carried out by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from distinctly different disciplines (and ideally from different units on campus)*.

2. Action-Oriented Collaboration with Outside Organizations

Certain organizations on the frontlines are testing and adopting promising approaches to poverty alleviation. At other times, they may act as appropriate agencies for delivering innovative services suggested by research and allowing theories and ideas to be implemented and tested.

The Center will encourage and support research that is action-oriented, innovative, and participatory in nature—that is, designed, implemented, and evaluated with input from and active engagement of external partners, practitioners, policymakers, and/or communities. The Center should only support research that can lead to implementation and measurable outcomes. Below are two examples of how the Center might collaborate with outside organizations to conduct research relevant to poverty prevention and alleviation.

Organizations like Health Leads work with clinics and physicians to fill “prescriptions” for items including coats, heat, healthful food, or housing for those who cannot easily afford them. This is an example where an existing collaboration between a nonprofit organization and medical providers is actively working to address the social determinants of health. Research by the University might extend such a collaboration to study the health benefits of this arrangement, the improvements in adult patients’ job prospects children’s school attendance, and the typically undocumented cost-savings and other economic benefits from fewer emergency room visits and, more generally, patients who are healthier due to attention being paid to their economic circumstances. The policy implications from this could include developing better insurance mechanisms that redistribute cost savings to the advantage of providers and governmental and/or private insurers. This is an example of conducting research that supports and extends work currently under way involving community-based organizations.

Some low-income individuals suffer from having incomes and expenses that are unpredictable and inconsistent over time. Thus, in addition to having little money overall, they may have a small excess of money when they do and do not need it, but too little when a significant unforeseen expense arises. Formal banking products—traditional savings accounts or checking accounts—are not at all suited to their needs (see Barr, 2012). Informal services, such as payday loans, perpetuate being in debt. Research can be conducted at the Center to better understand the financial lives of these individuals, including documenting their incomes and expenses over time, and then developing and testing new financial products to determine their effectiveness in easing the burden of poverty. This is an example of research conducted jointly with representative citizen groups and with industry (possibly banking and technology) to address real, neglected needs of the poor.

3. Transdisciplinary Research Efforts

Research undertaken and supported by the Center will be interdisciplinary, with the expectation that these efforts will eventuate in transdisciplinary scholarship. Given the robust interdisciplinary environment at UM, we propose that the new Center seek to make transdisciplinary research its focus, bringing together faculty and students from across units. Research projects supported by the Center should work to actively incorporate knowledge from multiple disciplines into new solutions to address poverty.

Whether done by individual researchers or research teams, much poverty-related research at UM is conducted from the perspective of a single discipline. As the examples above begin to suggest, addressing poverty through a number of disciplinary lenses simultaneously can be advantageous.

Many possibilities exist to build on work informed by a single discipline. One can seek insights from related disciplines (cross-disciplinary) or work on a common problem with others from related disciplines, each scholar drawing on her own background (multidisciplinary). A more complete unification seeks integration of (interdisciplinary), and in the extreme, a new disciplinary framework drawn from formerly distinct disciplines (transdisciplinary). As an example, bioengineering is part biology, part engineering, but a discipline distinct from either.

Given the intractable nature of poverty, we believe research that ultimately will produce the strongest results in preventing and alleviating poverty will span and bridge disciplines to generate new ways of thinking. Thus, the Center should support and foster such research. This research should be interdisciplinary, at the very least, and ideally transdisciplinary. We are mindful of the difficulty of generating truly transformative approaches given the constraints of time and structures in the University, but believe that such approaches are necessary to effectively address poverty.

4. Mechanisms

University researchers affiliated with the Center will, of course, submit proposals for external funding from a variety of public and private sources. In addition, the Center will award substantive grants to support major, innovative, action-oriented research directed at poverty prevention or poverty alleviation. Proposals should be for projects promising significant results and application rather than those more appropriately funded by small seed grants (e.g., \$10-20K). These criteria should govern applications for support:

- Only submissions by research teams will be considered.
- All teams should have a minimum of three investigators.
- At least three distinctly different disciplines must be represented. Neither of these pairs, for instance, would be considered distinct: finance and accounting; biomechanical engineering and mechanical engineering.
- Research proposals must justify why an integration (more than a simple collection) of distinct perspectives is necessary to conduct the research
- Preference will be given to proposals that meaningfully include parties outside the University (policy makers, community-based organizations, companies, or other organizations or individuals) that are partners in implementation and/or evaluation.
- Preference will be given to proposals that meaningfully include students from all levels in the research process.

The Center will support these projects through a mix of funds. For the first few years, some funds will be provided by the Provost. Our expectation is that research produced during this period, together with other activities, will be attractive to outside foundations as well as philanthropists who wish to support the goals of the Center. Ideally, an endowment will be raised that allows the Center to support and sustain its infrastructure and some of its research activities.

We envision various ways that the research proposals that the Center supports might originate. The State of Michigan or other parties might contract with the Center to conduct research on a particular issue. In other instances, faculty members might write proposals that respond to a

broad request for proposals issued by the Center. In addition, proposals might arise in a “bottom-up” fashion from faculty or community organizations outside of a formal call for proposals.

The Center can serve another important role in supporting research by helping with indirect costs associated with research grants. Research teams might be deterred from applying for certain external awards because the granting organization fails to cover indirect costs at the level the University normally requires. Researchers exploring funding in this category whose proposals also meet all the qualifications for Center-funded research, might apply to the Center to receive some “cost sharing” in regard to indirect cost recovery. Researchers seeking such support would have to be members of the Center and apply for such cost-sharing funding *before* their proposal was submitted, not after it receives outside funding.

It is important that the Center encourage and actively support meaningful, ongoing, face-to-face interactions among poverty researchers from different disciplines who might not ordinarily interact with or even know of each other. One way of doing so would be to create the established faculty-version of “*cluster hiring*.” A group of current faculty members from different disciplines could be granted “Poverty Center Fellowships,” forming a research cohort. This would provide one-course up to full-time teaching release for a single semester or an entire year. Applications for a Poverty Center Fellowship would be judged using the same criteria governing the research the Center funds: the necessity to work with others outside one’s home discipline to produce action-focused research with the potential for true impact. All applications would need to specify how teaching release would be put to use consistent with the research orientation of the Center. This might include, but is not limited to: writing transdisciplinary position papers; submitting outside grant proposals that would be less likely to be developed and undertaken without a Fellowship; or cultivating deep relationships with potential community partners. All Poverty Center Fellows would meet regularly, hold cross-cutting discussions about poverty with each other and, ideally, also with outside practitioners. Faculty members who are not Fellows would be invited to join these conversations. University of Michigan faculty members could also arrange to take their sabbaticals or other leaves (awarded or funded through other sources) at the Center.

Non-UM scholars might receive financial support from the Poverty Center to visit the University for a period of time as an *outside* member of the cohort of Fellows. More ambitiously, the Center may seek to work with other units to hire outside faculty from different disciplines to form a cohort with strong affiliation to the Center and with each other.

5. Constraints and Growth

Research centered on other countries will be supported to the extent that it provides insights for the U.S. context. In the early years of the Center, a broad spectrum of research will be supported, focused on economics and livelihood, education, and health, and related sectors. In subsequent years, the research focus may be intentionally sharper and narrower based on experiences, knowledge gained, successes in prior years, changes in the policy landscape, etc.

The Center will base its research funding decisions on the promise of quality scholarship that makes a difference in lives. We expect that investments with this focus will lead to funding from government, outside organizations (or individuals) and other resources, thus supporting the Center's growth.

B. Teaching/Education Core

We propose an educational program that would offer both introductory and advanced educational content in poverty to UM students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. We propose the following goals for the teaching/educational component of the initiative:

- To increase the number of UM students who have been introduced to key issues regarding the causes and consequences of poverty;
- To provide in-depth, community-based experiential educational opportunities regarding poverty prevention and alleviation strategies and programs to “engaged” students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels;
- To expand transdisciplinary training opportunities in the area of poverty prevention and alleviation to prepare emerging scholars for successful careers in terms of research, policy and practice that significantly contribute to poverty prevention and alleviation.

We propose that Center staff be given discretion as to how to pursue these goals. Below, however, we provide some examples of ways that these goals could be met.

1. Increasing Exposure to Key Issues

Potential activities that could be pursued to further expand the number of students who are exposed to critical thinking in regard to poverty prevention and alleviation include the development of a regularly-offered University-wide theme semester on poverty prevention and alleviation, and a high-profile guest speaker series. The Committee encourages Center staff to pursue a variety of strategies and to evaluate their effectiveness.

We encourage Center staff to build on existing resources at UM. As Table 2 shows, a considerable number of poverty-related courses are offered in UM Schools, Colleges and Departments. However, there is no coordination of offerings. One strategy for coordinating these offerings would be for the Center to formalize an undergraduate certificate or minor program in “Poverty Prevention and Alleviation,” either on its own if the structure UM sets up allows a formal program of study, or in collaboration with a school or department.

The CASC (Community Action and Social Change) minor, housed at the School of Social Work (SSW), might serve as a useful model. The CASC minor is housed at SSW, but approved by 8 independent schools. SSW sponsors a limited number of required courses for minor completion, but beyond that students can choose from a list of approved offerings at different units. The CASC minor has proven exceedingly popular—over 600 students have declared this minor since

Table 2
Number of Unique Poverty-Related Courses in
UM Schools and Colleges (Past 5 Years)¹

| School/College | Cross-Listed Courses | Service-Learning Courses | Clinical Courses | Total # of Courses ² |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Architecture | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Business | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Dentistry | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Education | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Kinesiology | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Law | 0 | 7 | 8 | 13 |
| LSA | | | | |
| AfroAm & African Stud | 5 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| American Culture | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Anthropology | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Economics | 3 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Environmental Science | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| History | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Int'l & Comparative Stud | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| International Studies | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Judaic Studies | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| LSA Honors | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Philosophy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Science | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Psychology | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Residential College | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Sociology | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Women's Studies | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Nursing | 2 | 6 | 6 | 17 |
| Pharmacy | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Public Health | 2 | 2 | 0 | 16 |
| Public Policy | 1 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| School of Information | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Social Work | 3 | 3 | 0 | 32 |
| Number of Unique Courses³ | 22 | 21 | 15 | 175 |

¹ The following procedure was used to compile this list. (a) E-mails sent to researcher's contacts known to be interested in poverty alleviation and who held master degrees in various disciplines to solicit search terms related to poverty; (b) UM Registrar asked to search for the following words in the title, description, and book listing of UM courses offered during past 5 years—Poverty, Low-income, Socioeconomic, Economic, Disadvantaged, Inequality, Welfare, Income, Marginalized, Poor, Impoverished, Base of the Pyramid, Hardship, Disparity, Social Justice, Scarcity, Assets; (c) Deleted duplicate courses, reducing the list from ~3,500 to ~800 courses; (d) Read course descriptions to determine if they were relevant to our search; (e) Determined if course was cross-listed, had service learning, or conducted a clinical. This methodology does not account for courses for which the course catalog had no description, title, or required reading list.

² Column totals are not a sum of the first three columns because many courses were not cross-listed and did not qualify as service-learning focused.

³ This row is not a sum of the previous rows because cross-listed courses are double (or triple) counted in each respective school/college/department for which it was listed. For example, “Health in America: Patterns, Experiences and Inequalities” is a course that was cross-listed in American Culture, History, and Women’s Studies, and thus was counted in each respective subject. However, the entry under “Total Number of Courses” only counts the course once.

its launch in 2010. A minor or certificate program in Poverty might work in much the same way, and we believe might prove similarly popular.

Another potential strategy to substantially increase the number of UM students introduced to key issues related to the causes and consequences of poverty is to develop a flexible program of tested poverty simulation exercises that can be adapted for use in a wide range of educational contexts. Poverty simulations are well-defined educational tools that create opportunities for participants to reflect on conditions faced by individuals living in poverty (See <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/pretending-be-poor-can-change-your-perspective>; <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5232545>). These simulations are already used by numerous instructors in a number of schools and departments at UM (Social Work, Business, SNRE, Ford, SPH), providing a base of knowledge and experience to expand upon.

Groups of students might, for example, be challenged to live on the food budget made possible by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) or search out an affordable housing unit in Washtenaw County on a fixed budget and then discuss the experience. During a class session they might be given the challenge to work in small groups to address transportation, childcare, and work challenges faced by a fictional low-income single parent, or handle the water crisis in Flint. These exercises can be effective as part of a program to teach participants about the lived-experiences associated with poverty. A few existing examples of these types of exercises are:

- **An online simulation** that is living the life of a low-income family for a month.
- **Poverty Challenge.** A two-session seminar in which participants record their normal consumption; then restrict their budget to a poor family’s normal consumption.
- **'Games':** A series of games are available (e.g., [Life Happens](#) and [Monopoly](#)) that help identify the struggles and issues that low-income families face.

We propose that the Center task staff members to develop a resource repository to collect and assess the effectiveness of a series of simulation experiences that could be used in a variety of setting across campus. Center staff would become experts on facilitating of a range of these simulations, including necessary facilitation skills related to cultural competence that are needed to effectively conduct and understand such an exercise. Staff could consult with faculty on which of the simulation exercises would be most effective in a given context and provide advice on how to incorporate the simulations into their class effectively. Or center staff could in some cases facilitate the exercises themselves. While simulations are well regarded by many and already used here at UM, we have little research on their effectiveness (see Pankow, 2006). Thus, we believe that a major contribution of this effort would be to assess their effectiveness and report on the findings for the broader field.

2. Providing In-depth, Community-based Experiential Educational Opportunities

We propose that the Center collaborate with sponsoring units to design and implement a limited number of experiential courses for students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Variations on these courses could be used to address domestic poverty. These courses would be community-based and organized around a direct, problem-solving educational experience. A number of units already have clinical models that engage students in these ways. For example, students in the Law School's Community and Economic Development Clinic work with non-profit organizations and small businesses in Detroit to foster economic growth and job opportunities as well as other community resources in low-income communities. As an extension of this concept, faculty from the Law School, Ross Business School, Computer Science and Engineering and the Stamps School of Art and Design are creating a transdisciplinary course for students to work with the Detroit Development Fund to assist Detroit small business owners on a range of business, legal, design, technology and other needs.

For these courses, the instructor will partner with a set of community-based organizations (nonprofits, county, city, or state governmental entities) to identify a manageable problem related to poverty that small groups of students can evaluate, make recommendations to address, and potentially assist a community in implementing one or more of their recommendations. For example, a city might identify challenges with its public transportation system that serves a significant portion of low-income residents. A small group of students would be assigned to this task and begin by researching transportation access and learning about the problem directly. They might then make recommendations to the partner entity on how to address this, and if possible, assist in the implementation.

Classroom sessions would be used both to provide educational content on poverty, and also for small groups to present their progress to other groups, providing enrichment to the entire course. By the end of the course, students will present their final recommendations and actions to fellow students, as well as to their organizational partners. Funds could be available to support student projects based on need.

3. Expanding Transdisciplinary Training Opportunities

We propose two strategies to expand transdisciplinary training opportunities for students in the area of poverty prevention and alleviation to prepare emerging scholars for successful careers in terms of research and impact. The first strategy is a transdisciplinary fellowship program focused on poverty and economic opportunity ("Poverty and Economic Opportunity Fellowship Program"). The program should include some level of funding for admitted students, with both undergraduate and graduate student cohorts possible. Students would be from different disciplines/colleges/schools and might be co-housed. Educational content would focus on experiential, problem solving educational experiences, much like the courses described above. In fact the Fellows might serve as team leaders in the courses. Students might also conduct a research project under the direction of an assigned advisor.

The second strategy consists of pre- and post-doctoral training opportunities for emerging scholars. The Center would sponsor Graduate Student Research Assistant (GSRA) positions, research fellows, and post-doctoral positions to support mentored training in poverty research. These individuals would be expected to split their time among three duties: 1) supporting the educational program of the Center through co-facilitation of poverty simulation exercises and experiential courses; 2) engaging in the direct research activities of the Center; and 3) pursuing their own research agenda, utilizing the expertise of Center faculty, staff and affiliations. These positions will help foster research on preventing and alleviating poverty and also establish the Center as a hub of emerging researchers. Table 3 presents an summary overview of the goals and activities of the teaching/education component.

Table 3
Goals and Activities of the Teaching/Education Component of Proposed Center

| Goal | Activity Example |
|---|---|
| Increase the number of University of Michigan students who have been introduced to key issues regarding the causes and consequences of poverty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased course offerings; undergraduate minor or certificate in “Poverty Prevention and Alleviation” • Poverty simulation exercises • Poverty theme semester • High-profile speaker series |
| Provide in-depth, community-based experiential educational opportunities regarding poverty prevention and alleviation strategies and programs to engaged students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with sponsoring units to implement a limited number of community-based, action-oriented experiential learning courses for students at the undergraduate and graduate level, focusing on domestic poverty. |
| Expand transdisciplinary training opportunities for emerging scholars in the area of poverty prevention and alleviation to prepare students for successful careers in terms of research and impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and Economic Opportunity Fellowship Program • Pre-doctoral graduate student research assistant positions • Research Fellows • Post-doctoral fellowship positions |

C. Engagement and Dissemination Core

An overarching principle of the proposed Center is that the research and educational activities of the Center will be greatly enhanced through active engagement with practitioners, policymakers and community-based groups and individuals outside of the University. In addition, another principle of the Center is that its action-oriented work will be disseminated actively and broadly to multiple audiences and stakeholder groups in order to increase its positive effects on practice and policy related to poverty prevention and alleviation.

1. Engagement

Active engagement with communities, including communities of practice, is essential for academic institutions that value producing research, teaching and service that is informed by the issues, needs and assets of groups external to the university. Engagement informs and enhances the planning and design of academic activities, increasing the likelihood of value and impact beyond scholarly communities. Active engagement also informs and supports the dissemination of research and other scholarly pursuits, and strengthens the probability of positive effects on poverty prevention and alleviation. Active and productive engagement is built upon bi-directional learning relationships, and is community-based, participatory, and mutually respectful.

The Center proposes to prioritize the building and maintaining of strong and active bi-directional relationships and engagement with the following key constituencies: a) organizations and communities that are willing to offer engaged learning and experiential educational opportunities to our students; b) community-based organizations and individuals willing to share perspectives, to identify research/information needs and to assist with and participate in research activities; c) policymakers and practitioners who can provide valuable perspectives from the field and can articulate their needs in regard to information/data from research, interventions or services; and d) communities of practice, which are intentional collaborative learning networks of practitioners (and sometimes researchers) working together.

An important way in which the Center can build strong, engaged relationships with key constituent groups is through experiential service learning. Having UM students interested in poverty prevention and alleviation become engaged with outside communities and groups to provide service/work that is useful and that provides educational value will without question strengthen these key external relationships. Experiential learning opportunities can occur through multiple pathways, including: a) didactic courses or independent study; b) practica and internships; c) through the Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning (whose mission is to engage students, faculty, and community members in learning together through community service and civic engagement in a diverse, democratic society); and d) an organized student volunteer program in which students, who are provided sufficient orientation and support, are matched with communities in need of their specific skills (e.g., community-based survey interviews; providing music, art or language lessons; environmental assessments).

Research on poverty alleviation and prevention also benefits from working alongside community members and the organizations that support them, as we have previously outlined. This ensures that questions being asked are relevant to practice, that community members' voices inform potential interventions, and that interventions stand a greater chance of acceptance by poor communities.

In addition, in order to build stronger relationships with communities within the state of Michigan, especially those that are challenged by concentrated poverty, the Center will offer technical assistance and support for activities related to poverty prevention and alleviation within communities. Such activities could include:

- strategic planning
- guidance on evidence-based practices and programs
- needs assessment
- program/intervention planning and design
- program evaluation
- networking resources
- technical assistance for funding proposal development
- assistance in developing metrics, measures and dashboards
- skills-based teaching to enhance community capacity
- policy and advocacy training

If resources allow, the Center could also competitively provide grants to communities to design, implement and evaluate local community-based strategies addressing issues related to poverty prevention or alleviation.

2. Dissemination

The University of Michigan is home to a large number of well-respected poverty prevention and alleviation scholars and practitioners with tremendous real-world community-based intervention and policy experience at local, state and federal levels. The Center will work enthusiastically to communicate, translate and disseminate the results of its transdisciplinary research to a broad set of audiences and constituencies, including communities involved with and potentially affected by its work.

Research results will, of course, be disseminated through traditional academic channels such as conferences and the publication of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and books. It is important that the research of Center investigators meet the highest academic standards and also get disseminated in ways that promote recognition within and impact on the numerous scholarly fields that will comprise the work of the Center. This includes issuing press releases when important research results are published and ready for public communication and translation. It is also extremely important that the action-oriented research findings of the Center be communicated and translated beyond scientific communities in order to meet our goals of positive community change and meaningful impact on policy and practice. This includes disseminating research results using the following methods, as appropriate for specific projects:

- policy briefs and white papers
- brief reports, one-pagers and infographics
- research briefings for legislative committee staff, government agency staff, advocacy groups, think tanks, professional associations, etc.
- testimony before state and federal legislative committees
- policy consulting and technical advising
- participation on consensus panels and committees
- effective communication using social media, including Twitter, blogs, Facebook, etc.

It is also important that research results be communicated to and discussed with the general public, especially communities affected by poverty. Methods for communicating with communities include town hall meetings, focus groups, charrettes, through community leaders, through local churches and businesses, local press, social media, and other methods as identified by people within each community. The work of the community engagement and dissemination core will be influenced and enhanced by the External Advisory Board (discussed in the next section of the report), whose membership will include community members, practitioners and policy experts.

3. Resources for Implementation

Resources will be needed to support and coordinate experiential learning activities of students, and also to support meeting community requests for technical assistance, as described above. At the University of Michigan, the important functions of communications/outreach, media relations and government relations are organized at both the university and the school/college levels; some research centers and institutes have their own staff in these areas as well. The Office of the Vice President for Government Relations is organized around state relations, federal relations and community relations, with staff offices in Ann Arbor, Lansing, and Washington, DC. The office of the Vice President for Global Communications and Strategic Initiatives has a number of departments, including ones that cover media production, public media/media relations, public affairs, and social media.

In order to achieve the important dissemination and communication goals of the Center, we propose that the Center employ two full-time staff members to support this work: one in the area of government and community relations and the other in the area of communication. These staff members will work with other UM staff both centrally and at individual schools, as appropriate, to coordinate communication and outreach/impact activities. These activities are too important and critical to the success of the Center to assume that they will be appropriately covered by the stellar staff already on board at the University. It is critical to the success of the Center to have dedicated staff focused on the key functions of engagement and dissemination.

V. Structure and Evaluation of the Proposed Center

The Committee believes strongly that the Center should be situated outside of UM schools and departments in keeping with its interdisciplinary nature. In addition, the Committee agreed that the proposed Center as conceived is much broader and more action-oriented in its mission and scope than the National Poverty Center at UM and, hence, is well-situated to supplant, while also building on, this existing unit.

See Figure 3 for a summary of the proposed organizational structure of the Center. We recommend that the leadership of the proposed Center include a director and co-director (tenured faculty) responsible for the overall operation of the Center, an executive director who manages day-to-day operations, and an internal (UM) executive/steering committee. The executive/steering committee will work with the director and co-director to determine Center policies and strategies for the implementation of policies, to engage the range of UM units in the

Center's work, and in general, to help the directors make decisions about the Center's operation and other issues as they arise. The directors will appoint an individual to head each Center core (i.e., research, teaching, engagement and dissemination). To facilitate coordination and cohesion, these three individuals will serve on the executive/steering committee. It is important that members of the internal executive/steering committee represent a substantial mix of academic disciplines.

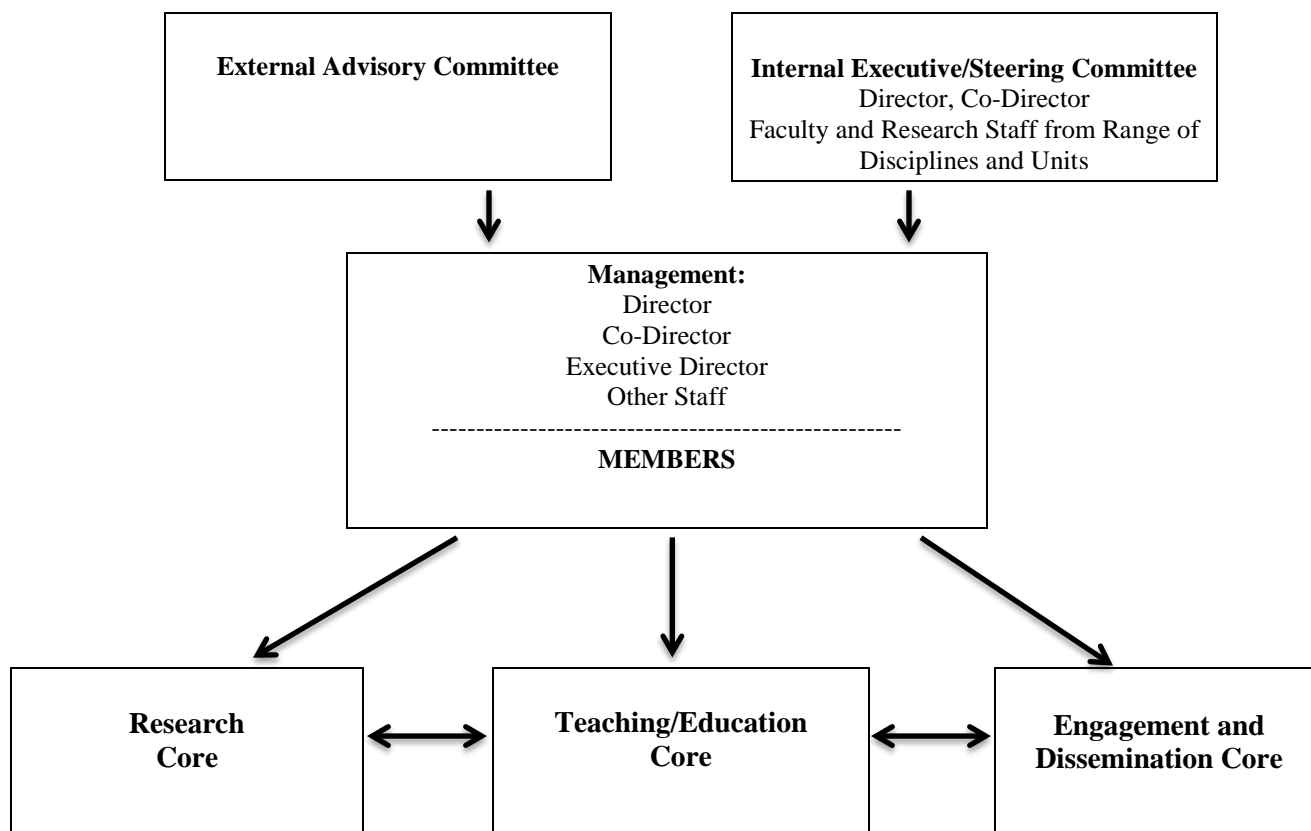


Figure 3. Organizational Structure of the Proposed Center

To provide guidance and critical feedback about the Center's activities and direction, the Center should have an external advisory board composed of leading poverty researchers (from varied disciplines), practitioners working at non-UM organizations/institutions around the country, and Michigan-based practitioners and community members. Because community engagement and dissemination are high priorities, a Michigan-based community advisory council that meets periodically throughout the year, in addition to an external advisory board, might be advisable. As noted previously, the Center should also have two full-time staff members devoted to the functions of engagement and dissemination.

As detailed in this report, undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral and research fellows, and faculty are all crucial for carrying out the work of the proposed Center. Processes for establishing membership in the Center will need to be established, as well as strategies for

recruiting and fostering the involvement of UM faculty and researchers representing various types of diversity. The proposed center needs to have designated space on central campus (or within walking distance) that includes common areas, meeting spaces, and offices for management, students, postdocs, research fellows and faculty. This will enable the Center to more effectively nurture productive interactions and informal connections, and the kind of synergy that is a prerequisite for transdisciplinary scholarship. Designated space will also contribute to the proposed center's identity among those within and outside the University.

Although the term "Center" is used throughout this report, the Committee discussed repeatedly whether to propose a center or an institute. We did not resolve this issue, but rather recommend that the entity be adapted to meet the core goals of the initiative as outlined in the report. Key areas of concern include (a) whether an institute is better suited to the initiative's teaching and education goals, e.g., developing and offering new courses, developing and implementing a certificate program, (b) whether the entity should be a cost unit (major concerns include the inefficiencies involved in applying for and administering grants through a unit created for this initiative; competition with schools and departments for indirect costs of awards secured by participating faculty), and (c) disincentives for teaching cross-disciplinary courses.

Several criteria seem reasonable to gauge the success of the proposed Center 5 years after its launch, among them:

- Fielding and evaluation of interventions and programs
- Establishment of new and well-received courses
- Evidence of new, interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty scholars and researchers who otherwise would not have worked together
- Grant and contract applications that stem from Center activities, regardless of whether the application is run through or, if awarded, administered through the Center
- Dissemination of Center's action-oriented work to practitioners, policymakers and community-based groups and individuals outside of the University (e.g., brief reports, policy briefs)
- Placement of students and fellows in positions (research and practice) related to poverty prevention and alleviation

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Example of Potential Center Project

Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts of Expanding Job Opportunities to Low-Income, Structurally Unemployed Adults

Investigators: H. Luke Shaefer, Elisabeth Gerber & Brian Jacob
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

The need to expand the availability of work opportunities to low-income working-age adults has received considerable and bi-partisan policy attention in recent years.ⁱ Even as the economy has improved, the unemployment rate and labor force participation among low-educated workers—especially for those living in high poverty areas—remains high. Even among those with jobs, many low-wage workers face difficult working conditions, such as unstable work schedules, particularly among those working in retail and other service sector positions. Such instability can be especially hard to manage for low-income families who face multiple barriers to work, such as lack of access to transportation and quality and affordable child care, and complex housing and family dynamics.ⁱⁱ

There have been a number of initiatives at the federal level and among states to create programs that seek to expand work opportunities for low-income or structurally unemployed workers. One particularly innovative program called Community Ventures (CV) was implemented by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) under the leadership of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. The goal of the program is to connect “low income ‘structurally unemployed’ individuals to sustainable living wage jobs. The main objectives of the CV program are to make communities safer and to alleviate poverty.”ⁱⁱⁱ

CV provides a stipend of up to \$5,000 to participating employers for the first year of work by a CV participant. In addition, the program provides up to \$3,000 in support services aimed at improving job retention that can be accessed by participants for the first two years of employment. CV also organizes employers into resource networks (ERNs) that can help address challenges faced by workers. A key focus of CV is connecting participants with sustainable jobs that pay a living wage and offer stable, full-time work. As of April 2015, 2,788 individuals had participated in CV, well exceeding its original enrollment goal.

The primary outcome upon which most other jobs programs have been evaluated is medium and long-term earnings. Such analyses seek to assess the impact of program participation on an individual’s earnings after the subsidy period ends. In many cases, past programs have not shown evidence of improved long-term earnings among participants. However, there is evidence that—if structured correctly—they have potential to do so, particularly for public program participants. For example, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Job Training and Partnership Act found that over a 30-month follow-up period, welfare mothers who participated in a form of subsidized employment earned a statistically significant 49 percent more than similar women in a control group.^{iv}

Furthermore, evidence indicates that singular focus on improvements in long-term earnings—as most evaluations have done in the past—may miss much of the overall impact of programs such as these. Recent research points to the possibility that jobs programs for low-income structurally unemployed individuals may yield numerous other positive benefits to participants and to society. One recent review of research suggests that work may be “good for your health” and that work may be an important component of health-promotion initiatives designed for unemployed individuals.^v Another recent review found “strong evidence” that employment reduces the risk of depression and improves mental health.^{vi} There may be effects on social functioning as well. For example, a randomized trial of a work supports program conducted in Milwaukee in the late 1990s found improvements in some health outcomes, increased long-term marriage rates, and even improved outcomes for children of participating parents.^{vii} Also, evaluations of jobs programs have found that participation can reduce criminal activity, and reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated individuals.^{viii ix}

As a partnership between the State of Michigan and researchers at the University of Michigan, we seek to pursue a large RCT to assess the effects of access to stable employment at a living wage for low-income, structurally unemployed individuals on a series of social and economic outcomes. We propose that the State of Michigan Community Ventures Program will administer the program while researchers at the University of Michigan will work in partnership with CV staff to conduct the evaluation.

Relative to a randomly selected control group, does an experimental group with access to the CV program experience improved outcomes across a range of domains including health, mental health, and family functioning? Do CV participants describe “ripple effects” of gainful employment in qualitative interviews? This project will seek to offer some answers to these questions by improving the metrics upon which such programs are judged.

This project, in the early stages of development, represents an exciting collaboration between the State of Michigan and the University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. It will not only inform program implementation in the State of Michigan, but holds significant potential to inform policymaking in other states and at the federal level, making a Michigan-based program a model for the nation.

ⁱ AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity. (2015). Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security: A Consensus Plan for Reducing Poverty and Restoring the American Dream.

www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2015/12/aei-brookings-poverty-report/full-report.pdf

ⁱⁱ See Edin & Shaefer (2015). *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more background on CV, see <http://www.mitalent.org/community-ventures/>;
<http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/Files/Fact-Sheets/CommunityVentures.pdf>

^{iv} In comparison, classroom training increased earnings by only 13 percent compared to the control group, but this finding was not statistically significant. See Bartik, Timothy. 2001. *Jobs for the poor: Can labor demand policies help?* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation; Bloom, D. 2010. Transitional jobs: Background, program, and evaluation evidence. New York, NY: MDRC; Bloom, H.S., L.L. Orr, S.H. Bell, G. Cave, F. Doolittle, W. Lin, and J.M. Bos. 1997. The benefits and cost of JTPA Title II-A programs: Key findings from the National Job Training Partnership Act Study. *Journal of Human Resources* 32: 549–576; Miller, Cynthia et al. 2008. New Hope for the Working Poor: Effects After Eight Years for Families and Children. MDRC www.mdrc.org/publication/new-hope-working-poor.

^v Burdorf, A., & Schuring, M. (2015). Poor Health as Cause and Consequence of Prolonged Unemployment: Mechanisms, Interventions, and Policy Recommendations. In *Sustainable Working Lives* (pp. 215-227). Springer Netherlands.

^{vi} van der Noordt, M., IJzelenberg, H., Droomers, M., & Proper, K. I. (2014). Health effects of employment: a systematic review of prospective studies. *Occupational and environmental medicine*, 2013.

^{vii} Miller, Cynthia et al. 2008. New Hope for the Working Poor: Effects After Eight Years for Families and Children. MDRC, www.mdrc.org/publication/new-hope-working-poor.

^{viii} Redcross, Cindy et al. 2012. More Than a Job: Final Results from the Evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Transitional Jobs Program. OPRE Report 2011-18, <http://www.mdrc.org/publication/more-job>

^{ix} A randomized trial of a youth summer jobs program found that it led to significant reductions in violent crime arrests long after the program ended. Sara Heller. (2014). Summer Jobs Reduce Violence among Disadvantaged Youth. *Science*, 346(6214), 1219-1222.