The Michigan Center for Innovation and Economic Prosperity
(also known as The Michigan Prosperity Center)
James Madison College, Michigan State University

Mission Statement: Enhancing policy debate through the comparative investigation of the institutional foundations of innovation and economic prosperity around the world; transforming the economy by entrepreneurial private-public collaborations built on those foundations.

The Michigan Prosperity Center has grown out of a senior undergraduate research seminar at James Madison College, Michigan State University. The seminar focuses on faculty-student collaboration in developing a policy framework for enhancing the foundation of innovation and economic prosperity. Students in the seminar examined the best policy practices from around the world for entrepreneurial private-public collaboration, as well as the realities of Michigan’s economic potential, in order to build proposals for new institutional foundations for Michigan’s future. The Center builds upon the strengths evident in the seminar: collaborative faculty-undergraduate student research; a comparative political economy perspective; a public affairs and applied public policy orientation; a focus on the impact of technological and economic change; and the creation of university-led entrepreneurial collaborations among private and public entities that will help to bring about the transformation of the Michigan economy.

The Center’s Core Strengths:
The Center is built on four core strengths: the union of undergraduate teaching and research; a comparative political economy perspective, a focus on technology and innovation; and an applied public policy orientation.

Undergraduate Teaching & Research: James Madison College is an undergraduate college located within one of the nation’s leading research universities. Our students are increasingly requesting opportunities to engage in research that prepares them for careers in public policy, law, business, and for graduate programs in history and the social sciences. Although the Center will provide research opportunities for every level of academic attainment: faculty, post-doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate, the emphasis will be on fostering excellence in undergraduate research through strong mentoring relationships among the Center’s research staff. No research project will be funded by the Center that does not include a significant component of undergraduate research.

Comparative Political Economy Perspective: James Madison College has a history of comparative research in political economy that spans a diverse set of disciplines including political science, economics, history, and sociology. The center will focus these strengths on understanding the policy issues related to innovation and the creation of local and global prosperity. In particular, the center will focus on uncovering the tasks necessary for development, the institutions necessary to accomplish those tasks, and the forces behind the creation of those institutions. In each of these three areas we will identify the applied policy implications of our research.
Technology & Innovation: Creating the conditions for technological change and fostering innovation in the context of a global economy are essential components of the economic transformation of Michigan. The Center will maintain a focus on issues of technology and innovation throughout its activities, including examinations of both the supply and demand of entrepreneurship, technical skills, job growth, research and development, educational attainment, and the role of venture capital and other investment. James Madison College is developing an emphasis on technology, innovation, the environment, the role of science in society, and public policy through its STEPPS and Political Economy specializations. The Center will complement our teaching in these areas, and extend the College’s initiatives in these areas beyond the classroom.

Applied Public Policy: James Madison College is a college of public and international affairs. The Center’s goal is to provide a focus for teaching, research and outreach that extends the College’s faculty-student dialogue into engagement with policy-makers, the private sector, and other academic researchers on applied policy issues of innovation and economic transformation. The Center will extend the College’s comparative advantage and expertise beyond the confines of the university classroom.

Center Activities:
The senior undergraduate research seminar on Michigan Futures is an initiative that combines all four of the Center’s strengths, and forms the core of the Center’s activities. Out of the seminar emerge a variety of other educational, research and outreach opportunities.

Education
The Center’s core activity is the Michigan Futures undergraduate research seminar. The seminar has a two-fold mission: to encourage and support undergraduate research; and to generate technocratic, non-partisan research capable of influencing economic public policy. Approximately fifteen undergraduates will be selected from competitive application every spring semester. Participating faculty are paid on an over-load basis, and a post-doc or graduate student assists with the class as a research mentor for the undergraduate students.

A plan for offering the research seminar during the summer is currently under development. The summer semester section would be open to students from any Michigan university, and would provide two or three teaching assistantships to recent Madison graduates who participated in spring seminar. If available, the summer semester could be offered at an off-campus location like the Kellogg Field Station in an intensive one- or two-week session.

Future plans for the research seminar include the creation of a one-week version for high school juniors, held on campus, utilizing the facilities of James Madison College, if possible.

Research
The Center seeks to fund, facilitate, and promote technocratic, world-class research on public policy related to scientific and technological progress, innovation and economic prosperity in Michigan. The Center fosters research at all academic levels – undergraduate, graduate, post-doctoral, and faculty; as well as linking academic research in a non-partisan fashion to contemporary policy issues. As a part of its faculty-student research collaboration, the Center provides a structure for faculty- and peer-mentoring that brings younger scholars into its research
team and provides increasing levels of responsibility, up to and including co-authorship of peer-reviewed publications. The goal is an environment in which undergraduate students can remain with the Center as research assistants for several years, accepting greater levels of responsibility, and mentoring newly-arrived students. Graduate assistants and post-docs will be required to devote a portion of their time to training the undergraduate students in research techniques. But the Center’s directors will be actively involved in mentoring the undergraduate students, as well as the post-doc and graduate students.

The research team of the Center will include freshman and sophomore Professorial Assistants funded by the Honors College program; sophomore, junior and senior Madison Professorial Assistants funded by the Provost’s office, the Honors College, James Madison College and private donors; and graduate students in political science and/or economics who are funded by graduate student fellowships. Eventually, the Center will have at least one post-doctoral fellowship available every year, possibly including a teaching assignment in James Madison College. Visitors-in-residence from other universities and the private and public sectors will be invited for both short- and long-term assignments in the Center. Over time, the Center will develop a regular pattern of post-doctoral fellows, visiting fellows and graduate assistants who would join senior fellows and students in the Center’s research, educational, and outreach activities.

The Center will host at least one academic research conference each year, on an issue emerging from its focus on innovation and economic prosperity. The conference will be held in the spring, in order to complement the spring semester research seminar. Publication of the conference proceedings will be pursued with an academic publisher.

The goal is for The Prosperity Center to be known as the place for undergraduate students to participate in applied public policy research; for policy professionals to participate in educational outreach services that will make them better policy makers; for academic researchers in comparative political economy to undertake quality, policy-oriented research; and for the public to obtain nonpartisan policy advice.

**Outreach**

The Center’s educational and research activities blend naturally with outreach opportunities, as the applied policy focus extends the Center’s activities beyond the walls of Case Hall.

In Fall 2006, the Center will join the Department of Radiology at Michigan State University in sponsoring the Synergy award, given each year to an individual who promotes university-private sector collaboration. We hope to be a regular sponsor of the award in the future, and may link the award presentation to a small conference on the opportunities for public-private partnerships that promote innovation and economic prosperity.

The Center is also planning to create a seminar-style course or workshop for public policy professionals on innovation and economic prosperity that could be offered at different times of the year, either at Michigan State’s James B. Henry Center for Executive Development or other locations in Michigan. The professional seminar would serve Michigan and other state policy analysts by providing a roundtable environment in which they could discuss institutional innovations from around the world in an effort to improve economic policy-making in their own state settings. An intended by product of these seminars and workshops will be the creation of public-private collaborations that will stimulate economic growth and technological change.

Applied policy research generated at the Center will be published not only in academic outlets, but also in a Public Policy for Prosperity pamphlet series. These pamphlets will bring
Center research to a general audience. They will be available online, and also distributed to a mailing list of public policy analysts, legislators, journalists, corporations, other public policy institutes and organizations, academics, and interested individuals.

Among other partners, the Center works closely with Prima Civitas, a University-led public-private partnership for economic development in mid-Michigan. One of the Center’s initiatives for Prima Civitas is the creation of an office to facilitate the start-up of new high-tech firms in the mid-Michigan area.

**Center Audiences**
The Center’s activities are aimed at three different audiences: students interested in public policy research; academic researchers interested in coupling their comparative political economy research with policy evaluation; and policy professional who are interested in nonpartisan policy research to inform their own policy analyses. We welcome expressions of interest from all three audiences.

**Center Co-Directors**

Dr. Bryan K. Ritchie is an assistant professor of international relations at James Madison College, Michigan State University. His research focuses on the political economy of technological and economic development in the fast-growing economies of Asia. Recent publications include *Taking Care of Friends and Business: The Social Capital Paradigm and its Applications; Progress Through Setback or Mired in Mediocrity? Crisis and Institutional Change in Southeast Asia; Coalitional Politics, Economic Reform, and Technological Upgrading in Malaysia; and Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective*. Ritchie also has significant business and entrepreneurial experience in high technology firms. After receiving an MBA from Brigham Young’s Marriott School, he has owned his own hi-tech company twice and held leadership positions at Novell, 3Com, USRobotics, Dayna corp., and Century Software.

Dr. Ross B. Emmett is an associate professor of political economy and political theory & constitutional democracy at James Madison College, Michigan State University. An historian of both classical and Chicago economics, Professor Emmett also has research interests in technical progress and economic change, and constitutional political economy. He holds an International MBA from the University of South Carolina and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Manitoba. He held university positions in western Canada for 15 years prior to coming to Michigan State University in 2003. He is the editor of *The Biographical Dictionary of American Economists, Selected Essays of Frank H. Knight, The Chicago Tradition in Economics*, and *Great Bubbles*, and is an editor of *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*. At James Madison he teaches Politics & Markets, the core course in the Political Economy specialization, and a senior seminar on Constitutional Political Economy.
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