



Center for the Study  
of Free Enterprise

# 2020-21 Annual Report

Edward J. Lopez, Director

*Celebrating Five Years  
2016-17 to 2020-21*

# 2020-21 Annual Report

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### Center Mission

*“Center for the Study of Free Enterprise is a university-wide center whose mission is to provide economics research and thought leadership on issues pertaining to economic development in North Carolina, the region, and beyond, by conducting scholarly inquiry, policy analysis, educational activities, and community outreach on the role of free enterprise in a flourishing society.”*

### Center Vision, 2020-21 Academic Year

*“We produce high-impact research in three main areas: COVID-19 impact, evidence-based policy analysis, and free enterprise solutions for bottom-up recovery. We have a positive impact on the students, faculty, and community of Western Carolina University. We improve the climate of ideas and public policy in North Carolina.”*

## 1. Director's Welcome



Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday! With this annual report, we celebrate not just the Center's past year but also our first five years in operation.

Since launching in Spring of 2017, CSFE has supported **68 faculty projects** and **114 student projects**. We have published **14 original studies** in our flagship series, *CSFE Issue Briefs—Hard Research, Easy Reading*, plus a related **7 op-eds** in North Carolina papers. In addition, our first five years have provided **37 real and virtual events** with a total of **3,657 attendees**. We have hosted memorable conversations with Apollo 16 astronaut Charlie Duke, Home Depot co-founder Ken Langone, and author of *We Need to Talk* Celeste Headlee, among many more. We host annual research workshops and year-end community programs for our region, including our 2019 Opioid & Addiction

Awareness Campaign and Town Hall, when we welcomed Senator Shelly Moore Capito (R-WV), North Carolina Senator Jim Davis (R), and a large group of academics and community members, and our four-part 2021 COVID-19 virtual series that drew national audiences.

Through these programs and more, CSFE has developed a network that gathers over one hundred faculty and students from WCU and beyond, integrating them with community members and policymakers from the southeast region. By combining perspectives from economics, accounting, engineering, psychology, nursing, social work, and more, CSFE is a hub and platform for cross-disciplinary research that matters.

As Director, I am very thankful to work alongside the people whose talents and hard work make CSFE possible. Starting with the steady hand of WCU's administrative leadership, CSFE has depended crucially on the support of Chancellor Kelli R. Brown, Provost Richard Starnes, and Dean AJ Grube and her staff, especially Teresa Starrs and Nancy Liddle. Likewise, the Center's Advisory Board has been a trusted body, and its members have opened so many doors over the years. The entire team at University Communications and Marketing, especially Bill Studenc, Geoff Cantrell and Sam Wallace, have been immensely supportive and enjoyable collaborators.

As the Center's backbone, our Faculty and Student Affiliates, including Associate Director Sean Mulholland, have powered the Center. The pages of this report are filled with their accomplishments. I am so fortunate to partner with these excellent people, and to help them generate cross-disciplinary research that matters.

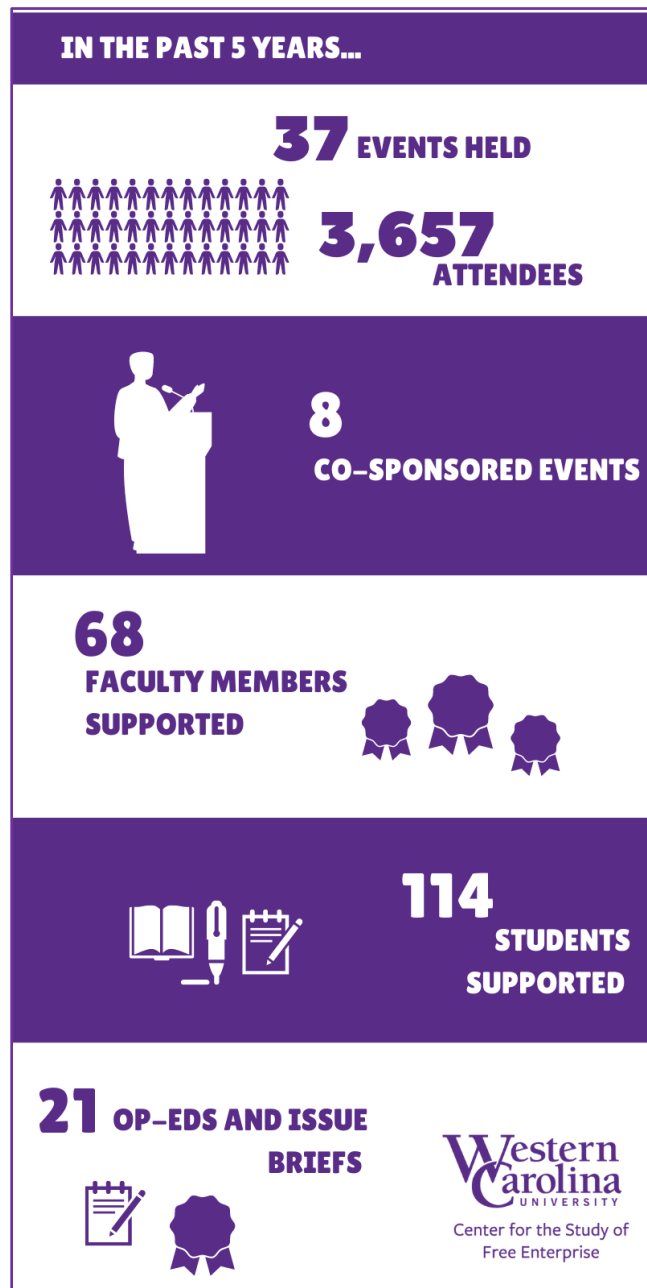
Last but certainly not least, I am honored and grateful to work alongside the Center's staff, Allie Todd who artfully coordinates our digital presence, and Jane Wiggins, whose skillful imprint on the Center as Events & Operations Manager is truly hard to overstate. I am honored and grateful to call them colleagues.

Looking ahead, CSFE and its people are on a sustainable path. So, I thank you for taking a look at this annual report, and I invite you to follow us at [enterprise.wcu.edu](https://enterprise.wcu.edu) and our social media. The best is yet to come!

## 2. CSFE by the Numbers

Celebrating our First Five Years

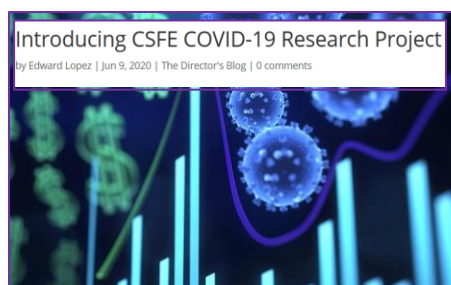
Since launching operations in Spring 2017



### 3. Year in Review—Month-by-Month

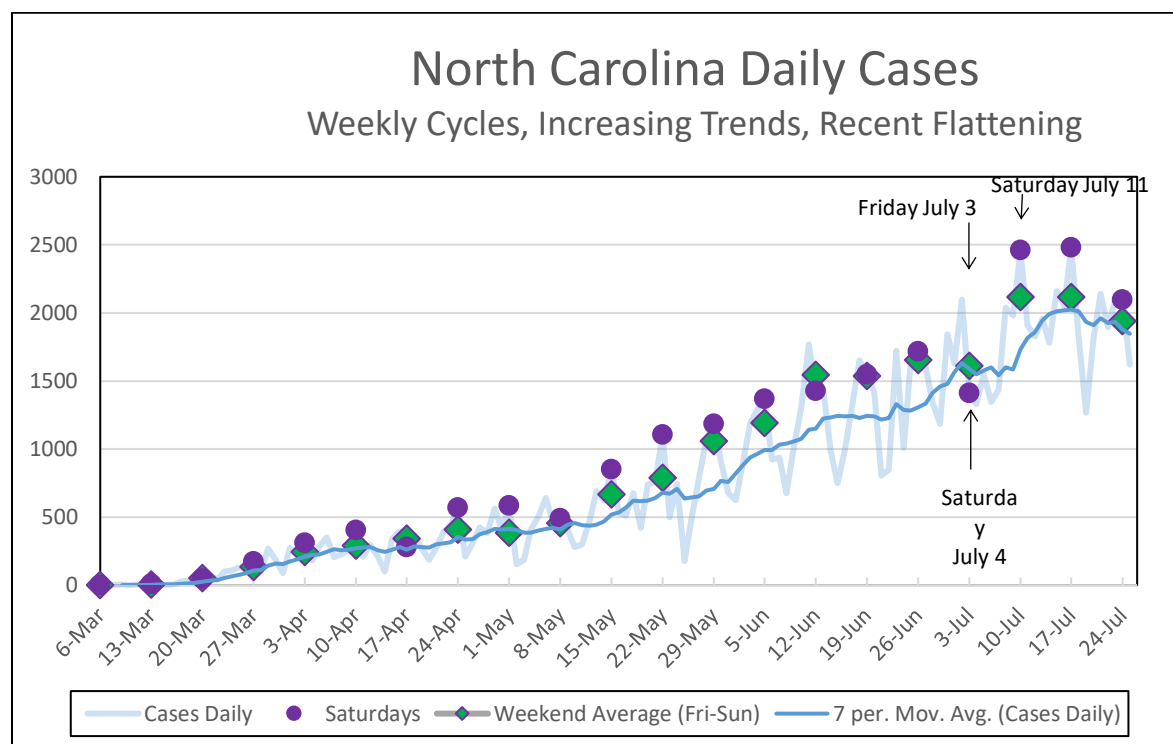
#### June, 2020

Although our reporting year doesn't begin until July, by June of 2020 we had already begun making progress on our 2020-21 plans. On June 9, we [announced our COVID-19 Research Initiative](#), a cross-disciplinary team working on three main areas: 1. COVID-19 Impact Analyses; 2. Evidence-Based Policy Analyses; and 3. Free Enterprise Solutions for Bottom-Up Recovery. We didn't know at the time how much impactful research this Initiative would generate in the coming year.



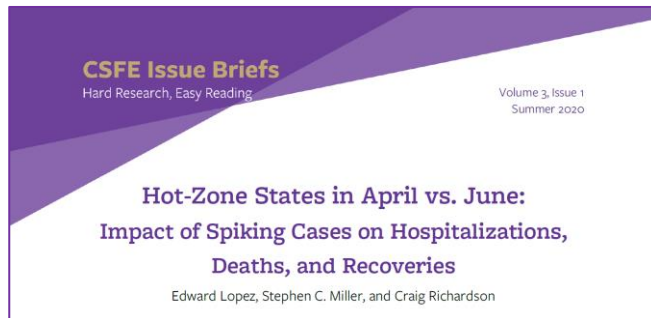
For starters, Associate Director Sean Mulholland drew attention with his study “COVID-19 Prevalence and Empty College Seats,” finding that a higher number of coronavirus deaths in a county tends to decrease county college enrollment. Shannon Watkins of the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal interviewed Sean and the 20-minute video can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYPufug-tL8>.

Director Edward Lopez began attending weekly webinars at NC DHHS, where the latest pandemic data and discussion were made available. He also began using the Center blog to invite and post mini reports of research, including “[What does a dip in positive cases mean for North Carolina?](#)” and “[What does a spike in cases mean for NC?](#)” He was also [interviewed](#) on WLOS News 13 about the impact on small businesses.



## July, 2020

July brought the first major nationwide surge of coronavirus cases, and the Center's first completed study analyzing the pandemic data.



### The Impact of Spiking Cases on Hospitalizations, Deaths, and Recoveries

*By Edward J. Lopez, Stephen C. Miller and Craig Richardson | July 13, 2020*

This study compares five hot zone states from Round 1 (Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) to five counterpart

states in Round 2 (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas). In Round 1, cases surged for over a month beginning in April, and in the second round, cases began surging in early June. However, in Round 2 states the spikes in cases are not leading to similar spikes in hospitalizations or deaths as what occurred in Round 1. We find no correlation between deaths on any given day and lagged measures of cases. Instead, we find that daily deaths on a seven-day moving average are not increasing in Round 2 states, and if anything they are decreasing. Meanwhile hospitalizations are increasing in Round 2, but more gradually than they did in Round 1, and still remain at relatively low levels compared to Round 1 states. Our findings suggest the importance of understanding why hospitalizations and especially deaths are not following cases in the same manner as earlier in the pandemic. Data on recoveries could be part of the solution, as Round 2 states generally have higher and, in some places, increasing rates of recovery.

**Blog and Media:** In addition, the Center blog continued to feature analyses including [“Do spikes in COVID-19 cases lead to spikes in deaths?”](#) and [“There’s something interesting happening with North Carolina’s case numbers”](#). Additional media interviews included WLOS TV on July 8 on about economic rebalancing and July 21 about aluminum can shortages, and on Wallet Hub on July 25 comparing North Carolina’s pandemic policies.

## August, 2020

Things really heated up in August when we were awarded a grant from the NC Policy Collaboratory at UNC Chapel Hill. The \$110,000 grant was designed to provide North Carolina lawmakers with evidence-based insight into the pandemic’s impact and recovery. On this grant, Edward Lopez, Sean Mulholland, and CSFE Faculty Affiliate Steve Ha produced a 160-page report that the Policy Collaboratory published on their site. Check out more about this grant [on WCU News](#).

## August (continued)

**Ask the Congressional Candidates:** Director Lopez posed questions about trade policy and fiscal policy as a co-panelist on this public forum, featuring both congressional candidates for North Carolina district 11, Moe Davis (D) and Madison Cawthorn (R), hosted by Blue Ridge Public Radio, Mountain Xpress, and Smoky Mountain News.



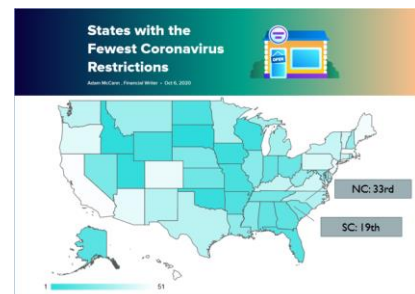
## September/October, 2020

### Meet CSFE's Faculty and Student Affiliates Below

As fall knocked on the doorstep, CSFE was very excited to announce our [2020-21 Faculty Affiliates](#), a dozen faculty from across campus representing six disciplines and four of WCU's six colleges. These top faculty and their students bring together a cross-disciplinary effort to study post-pandemic recovery from different perspectives. Meet our Faculty and Student Affiliates beginning on page 13 below. And keep an eye out for our 2021-22 cohort of Faculty Affiliates to stay connected with the Center's work.

Also in September, Faculty Affiliate Marco Lam, Associate Professor of Accounting, presented his research on how North Carolina's counties adjust their spending priorities when revenues tighten due to revenue shortfalls. Here's a [summary](#) of Marco's work on the Center blog, and you can [dive into his full, peer-reviewed study](#) at *Political Economy in the Carolinas* (volume 3). Marco presented this and related work by invitation at Universidad LaSalle and at the Classical Liberals in the Carolinas conference this month.

**Pandemic Restrictions:** Director Lopez presented at the September Classical Liberals in the Carolinas conference, where he covered three main topics: North Carolina's COVID-19 restrictions compared to other states, the racial and ethnic incidence of COVID-19 infections, and liberty as a political value since 2001.



## November, 2020

**Substance Use During the Pandemic:** Faculty Affiliates Audrey Redford, Assistant Professor of Economics, and Angela Dills, Professor of Economics and Gimelstob-Landry Distinguished Professor of Regional Economic Development, presented their work about the political economy of substance misuse during Covid-19 at the [virtual conference of the Southern Economic Association](#), November 22.

**Community and Media:** Meanwhile, Associate Director Sean Mulholland presented early parts of his Covid-19 and policy response impact analysis to [Leadership Cashiers](#) on Tuesday November 10. He was also featured in a [Rex Hodge story on WLOS TV](#), emphasizing the differential impacts on industries and policy implications.



## November (continued)

### Democracy in Decline?

By Loren Lomasky | November 2, 2020

How resilient are the democratic institutions that protect American representative government? This issue brief marked the occasion of the 2020 general elections by examining voting as an expressive act, valued in its own right. As political emotions run seemingly ever-higher two decades into the twenty-first century, political expression across much of the world has turned increasingly away from positive support for greater good toward negative opposition of other groups. This oppositional turn has combined with technology, specifically social media which has universalized access to information while reducing its credibility, to fuel the range of threats to democracy today.



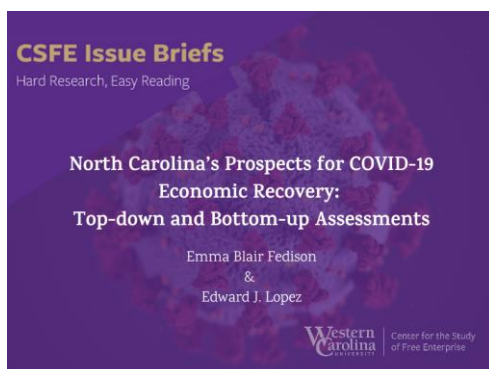
## December & January

*We took a mini break between the semesters.*

**February, 2021** In February we published two new *CSFE Issue Briefs* and safely held one of the first in-person conferences of the year.

**Scaled-Up Seminar 4.0:** While keeping a watchful eye on state and county gathering limits, we planned our fourth annual Scaled-Up Seminar as an in-person event. Scaled-Up Seminar gathers CSFE's network of researchers from within driving distance of WCU to present current research and provide mutual feedback. The interaction is designed to provide exposure to each other's work, spark innovative discussions about policy and community impacts, and lead to future collaborations on research and teaching.

[Learn More About  
Scaled-Up Seminar  
Below](#)



### NC's Prospects for COVID-19 Economic Recovery: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Assessments

By Emma Blair Fedison and Edward J. Lopez | February 3, 2021

What are North Carolina's prospects for sustained COVID-19 economic recovery? This Brief focuses on the state's fiscal health (top-down) and the state's economic health (bottom-up). We find that North Carolina has created balanced improvements in the state's economic climate. However, there is room for improvement, especially in worker regulations and market restrictions. North Carolina's prospects for sustained recovery are good, underscoring the need to maintain good fiscal health and continue improving economic health in the state.

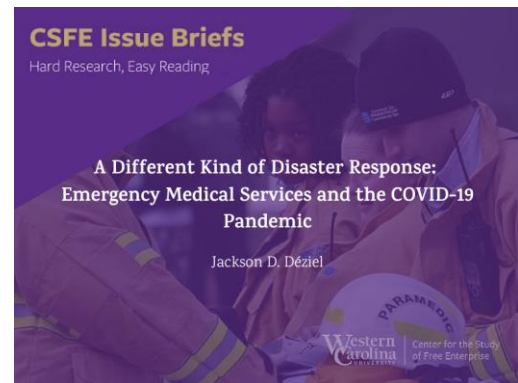


## February (continued)

### A Different Kind of Disaster Response: Emergency Medical Services and the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Jackson D. Déziel | Feb 17, 2021

The pandemic thrust EMS roles into the spotlight. Training for EMTs and paramedics includes Mass-Casualty Incident (MCI) management preparation, but these typically focus on singular and relatively localized events (e.g., tornado or plane crash), not a societal wide incident. This issue brief explores the role of the EMS professional and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted prehospital practice. There exist very real opportunities to bolster the EMS workforce, expand professional roles, and encourage innovation throughout the industry. As we move forward from the pandemic, state-level regulatory and policy change will better prepare us for the next infectious disease event.



**Collaboratory Grant Complete:** Back in August, soon after launching our Covid-19 Research Initiative, we [received a grant](#) from the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory at UNC-Chapel Hill. CSFE Faculty Affiliates Steve Ha, Sean Mulholland, and Edward Lopez worked on the grant to study the economic impact of COVID-19 and restrictive policies to slow the spread. We submitted our final report (a mere 160 pages) to Collaboratory in February, and we published Part 1 of the grant as the NC recovery prospects study mentioned above.

## March, 2021

**Economic Freedom for Long-Term Recovery:** In March, Director Lopez presented “NC’s Prospects for COVID-19 Economic Recovery,” making the case for economic freedom at two virtual events in Raleigh.

- On March 1, the John Locke Foundation hosted a panel discussion, with Dr. Lopez as the main speaker with responses from co-panelists NC Rep. Dean Arp (R), Brian Balfour (Locke Foundation), and Andy Ellen (NC Retail Merchants Association) <https://www.johnlocke.org/event/north-carolinas-prospects-for-covid-19-economic-recovery/>
- On March 11, Dr. Lopez presented the study to the North Carolina House Regulatory Reform Committee, Rep. Dennis Riddell (R) chair <https://www.ncleg.gov/Committees/CommitteeInfo/House/133>

**Adaptive-Imitation as Entrepreneurship:** On March 19, Dr. Lopez presented virtually to students and faculty of the College of Charleston during their annual Adam Smith Week. The topic, “Adaptive-Imitation as Entrepreneurship,” highlights the beneficial economic functions of design copying and the negative impacts of over-privatizing intellectual property, while curtailing common notions of design originality. The full video can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/537101506/e1717d8324>.

## March (continued)

**Appalachian Research in Business Symposium:** Faculty Affiliate Steve Ha, Professor of Economics, co-directs the annual regional conference, [2021 Appalachian Research in Business Symposium](#). Held annually in March, ARBS is a wonderful opportunity for regional scholars in business disciplines.

### Getting Back to ‘Normal’ vs. Posttraumatic Growth: Ways for Individuals, Communities, and Societies to Grow in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

*by Chelsea Sokolow and Emma Miller | March 5, 2021*

Researchers in psychology and related fields have developed the theory of posttraumatic growth (PTG) to explain how people can experience major positive transformation in response to traumatic events or experiences. A PTG perspective offers seemingly counterintuitive yet potentially effective ways of moving forward through trauma that go beyond adaptation, resiliency, recovery, or a return to the status quo. Instead, PTG allows for generative and positive changes to pre-trauma patterns of functioning. This perspective invites individuals, families, organizations, and communities in Western North Carolina and beyond to engage in intentional meaning-making and positive transformational changes. Research has shown that we, individually and collectively, can grow to constructively surpass pre-pandemic measures of functioning and well-being.



The Center is home to Public Choice Society (PCS), an international and interdisciplinary association of collective action scholars. Like everyone else, we unfortunately had to cancel the 2020 PCS conference, but we were happy for the opportunity to get together in March 2021 in



Savannah, Georgia. It was, of course, not as large a group as usual. But it was as vibrant and productive a conference as ever because our attendees were so eager to get back to in-person and real-life interaction.

## April, 2021

**Economics Education:** On April 16, Director Lopez served as a judge in the *North Carolina Economics Challenge*, a statewide competition of high school students. Over a dozen teams of three to six students and their teacher competed. Each team competed on oral exams, presentation skills and policy analysis. The Challenge is hosted by the North Carolina Council on Economics Education.



**Economic Freedom for Jackson County:** In April, Director Lopez presented “NC’s Prospects for COVID-19 Recovery,” making the case in Jackson County for economic freedom.

- Sylva Rotary Club, in partnership with Jackson County Community Foundation, April 1
- Western Wednesdays, a webinar series for alumni and friends hosted by the WCU Foundation, as a co-presenter with Dean AJ Grube, April 28

## May, 2021

**Societal Impacts of Pandemic Responses:** We couldn’t host a big in-person town hall to showcase the work of our Faculty and Student Affiliates, so instead we held [a series of three hybrid live-streamed events](#), each aimed at one of our overlapping audiences: academic, policy, and community.



The series combined the Center’s two key programs, Scaled-Up Seminar and Faculty Affiliates. Together, these programs connect over 100 faculty and student researchers from different disciplines and campuses.

### ***Equip, Connect, Transform!***



To kick things off, on May 19 [Chancellor Kelli Brown](#) welcomed a national audience to WCU’s Bardo Performance Hall for “Helping the Community Helps your Campus.” Co-sponsored by the [American Council on Education](#), this unique program featured center director Edward Lopez alongside Craig Richardson, center director at Winston-Salem State’s [Center for the Study of Economic Mobility](#).

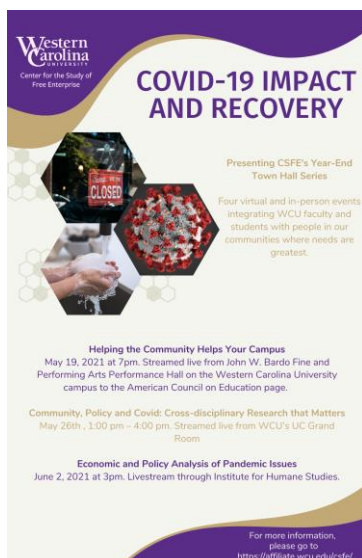
## May (continued)

The hour-long discussion started with some of the surprising ways geography creates economic hurdles and division. Richardson and Lopez then shared how their centers identify problems and compared stories with the common theme of using faculty and student research to **Equip, Connect, and Transform** their surrounding communities. Check out the [event page and video](#), and let us know what you think!



## June/July, 2021

**Next in our series**, we held back-to-back panel discussions that connect our faculty and students with our policy and community audiences. On May 26, seven CSFE Faculty Affiliates and one Student Affiliate presented their work on Covid-19 recovery, state policies to promote well-being, and workable ideas for long-term economic and personal growth. Associate Director Sean Mulholland's presentation compared the unemployment and death rates under Governor Cooper's Covid-19 restrictions to what they would have been under neighboring states' restrictions. Blue Ridge Public Radio covers Sean's findings in this fantastic [web story and podcast interview](#). By combining perspectives from economics, gerontology, social work, and health professions, this event fulfills CSFE as a hub for cross-disciplinary research that matters.



**Finally, on June 2**, CSFE partnered with the [Institute for Humane Studies](#) at George Mason University to feature the research of CSFE faculty Angela Dills, Audrey Redford and Edward Lopez. Joined by fellow academics from across the country, this workshop is similar to our annual Scaled-Up Seminar that showcases and supports center faculty's scholarly contributions. You can check out speaker topics and bios at our this event's page, [Economic and Policy Analysis of Pandemic Issues](#).

The second session in the series, "Public Choice and Experts" was held on June 23, 2021, 3-6pm. The panel was comprised of Roger Koppl (Syracuse University), Maura Priest (Arizona State University), and Jessica Flanigan (University of Richmond). The third session, "Civil Liberties During Pandemics," July 21, featured Associate Director Mulholland, Samuel Director (Brown University), and Chris Freiman (William and Mary University).



## 4. Meet our 2020-21 Faculty and Student Affiliates



**Jackson D. Déziel** *Assistant Professor and Director EMC Program*

Jackson D. Déziel, PhD, MPA, NRP, is Assistant Professor and Director of the Emergency Medical Care program at Western Carolina University. Dr. Déziel began his career in 2000 in New Hampshire and has since worked as a paramedic in both urban and critical care settings. He holds a PhD in public policy from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and a Master of Public Administration from NC State. His research interests embrace public policy on the economic incentives of unnecessary ambulance transport, social determinants of ambulance demand, and prehospital resource provision.



**Angela Dills** *Professor of Economics and Gimelstob-Landry Distinguished Professor of Regional Economic Development*

Angela Dills joined the faculty of at Western Carolina University in 2016. She teaches health economics, econometrics, and principles of economic She received a B.A. from the University of Virginia and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Economics from Boston University. She previously held faculty positions at Clemson University, Mercer University, Wellesley College, and Providence College. Currently she is a trustee of the Southern Economic Association, a fellow at EdChoice, and an advisory board member at the Economic Freedom Institute.



**Turner Goins** *Ambassador Jeanette Hyde Distinguished Professor*

R. Turner Dr. Goins is the Ambassador Jeanette Hyde Distinguished Professor in the Department of Social Work. Dr. Goins received her BA in Psychology from East Carolina University and her MS and PhD in Gerontology from the University of Massachusetts-Boston. In 1998, she completed a two year National Institutes of Aging's research post-doctoral fellowships at Duke University's Medical Center with an emphasis in Epidemiology. She was faculty at West Virginia University's School of Medicine and Oregon State University's School of Public Health and Human Development before coming to Western Carolina University in 2013.



**Steve Ha** *Professor of Economics*

Dr. Inhyuck “Steve” Ha’s areas of interest are economics of discrimination, spatial econometrics, community economic development. economic impact analysis, and agent-based models. He has extensive experience conducting statistical analysis and understanding the complexities of real-world data. His current research projects include studying the effects of affirmative action policy in public procurement and contracting, and labor market discrimination.



### Marco Lam *Associate Professor of Accounting*

Dr. Marco Lam holds a MA in Management Science and a Ph.D. in Operations Management from The University of Alabama and a Master of Accountancy from Western Carolina University. He is a Certified Public Account (CPA) licensed in Colorado. Dr. Lam has been widely published in such journals as the Journal of Asset Management, Advances in Accounting Behavioral Research, Strategic Finance, and International Journal of Operations and Production Management. His research interests include the use of accounting information in decision making, data analytics, and public policy.



### David McCord *Professor of Clinical Psychology*

Dr. David McCord is Professor of Clinical Psychology. He received the B.A. in Psychology from Duke University in 1984, M.A. in Clinical Psychology from Western Carolina University in 1979, and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from The University of Alabama in 1984. He completed his pre-doctoral internship year in the School of Medicine, UNC - Chapel Hill in 1984. His publications and professional presentations focus generally on personality assessment and personality theory, with career-long emphasis on the MMPI family of instruments; he has recently published a book in the APA Psychological Assessment Series, *Assessment Using the MMPI-2-RF*. Dr. McCord's current research program involves the development of a new-paradigm, multi-dimensional mental health screening test for use in primary medical care settings.



### Emma Miller *Assistant Professor, HRSA BHWET Project Coordinator*

Emma Miller, MSW, LCSW is an Assistant Professor of Social Work and the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program (BHWET) Project Coordinator. Related to integrated care, she served as a Behavioral Health Quality Improvement Consultant to approximately 50 primary care medical practices in western NC, Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and a hospital management firm, as well as for local, regional and state projects. Though her experience has been across disability areas, interdisciplinary, and has afforded her a lifespan perspective in many service settings, of note is her work in six pediatric practices as a Developmental and Behavioral Health Consultant where she implemented inventive integrated models. Pertaining to pediatrics, she provided health promotion, prevention, and early intervention with children and youth with special health, behavioral and transition needs, and their families. In addition, she has held two positions in medical social work and has had other responsibilities in primary and specialty care. Additionally, she has been involved with the development of a Health Home and population-based care at Vaya Health, a managed care organization. Besides writing a training for physicians and a protocol for a primary care practice, she served on a NC Institute of Medicine Task Force and is listed as an expert in Integrated/Collaborative Care on the NASW-NC website. Lastly, she provided preconception through age five services for children/parents/families, training for professionals, and parenting products on an international scope, and has served on nonprofit boards including an international one.



**Stephen C. Miller** *Adams Bibby Chair of Free Enterprise in the Manuel H. Johnson Center for Political Economy at Troy University*

Stephen C. Miller is the Adams Bibby Chair of Free Enterprise and an Associate Professor of Economics at the Manuel H. Johnson Center for Political Economy at Troy University. Before coming to Troy, he was an Associate Professor of Economics and the SACSCOC Director at Western Carolina University. Dr. Miller's research has been published in several academic journals, including *Public Choice*, *Intelligence*, *Critical Review*, and *Public Opinion Quarterly*. He has also written for *Reason*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Yellowhammer News*, *AL.com*, and *The American Institute for Economic Research*.



**Audrey Redford** *Assistant Professor of Economics*

Audrey Redford earned her Ph.D. in Agricultural & Applied Economics from Texas Tech University in 2016. Prior to attending Texas Tech, Dr. Redford earned her B.B.A. in Economics from James Madison University. Dr. Redford's research interests include Austrian economics, public choice, and comparative institutional analysis as tools to understand the ways in which markets adapt to changes in policy and institutional foundations. Her published research largely focuses on the unintended consequences of drug prohibition as well as interventionism and entrepreneurship in illicit drug markets.

She has published in academic journals such as *The Independent Review*, *Review of Austrian Economics*, *University of Florida Journal of Law & Public Policy*, and *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Public Policy*.



**Martin Tanaka** *Associate Professor Mechanical Engineering.*

Martin Tanaka has extensive knowledge of product design stemming from over a decade of experience developing high-quality commercial products in industry. Martin has worked at all levels of engineering from entry-level to engineering management, so he understands each step of the product development process and how it is conducted at multiple different companies. Martin earned a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering from Virginia Tech and Wake Forest University, a dual program that leverages the strengths of the engineering and medical schools. Through his work at the university, he has helped local companies develop innovative products including medical devices, projects for the

US Army and Navy, and green energy products.



## CSFE Student Affiliates



**Haley Goller** *Graduate Affiliate.* Haley Goller earned her MA in Clinical Psychology from WCU in May of 2019. She is currently enrolled in the Health Service Psychology Doctoral Program. Currently, Haley is working to develop a better depression/suicide screening tool for use with mothers during the postpartum period. Haley appreciates the supporting and challenging atmosphere at WCU and couldn't think of a better place to earn her doctorate. When Haley isn't at school or collecting data, she enjoys hiking, spending time with her daughter, and cooking with family.



**Emma Blair** *Graduate Affiliate.* Emma Blair is a graduate economic research assistant at George Mason University while getting her MA in Applied Economics. Before her time at George Mason, she graduated from Roanoke College with a BS in Economics, Actuarial Science and Spanish. Emma co-authored with Center Director Edward Lopez our February *CSFE Issue Brief*, "North Carolina's Prospects for Long-Term Economic Recovery: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Assessments." In her free time, Emma loves to be outside either hiking, playing lacrosse or laying in a hammock with a good book.



**Chelsea Sokolow** *Graduate Affiliate.* Chelsea Sokolow is a first year Master of Social Work (MSW) student at WCU. She works with Professor Emma Miller, MSW, LCSW, as a graduate assistant supporting the HRSA Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) project. Chelsea is currently researching Post-Traumatic Growth as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before starting at WCU, she completed a B.A. in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Brown University, with a supplementary course of study in Geography and the Environment at Pontifícia Universidade Católica in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Chelsea's current interests within the field of Social Work include clinical practice, decolonizing Social Work, and abolitionist perspectives.



**Abigail Fairbrother** (left) is a senior majoring in Political Economy with minor in Business and Visual Data Analytics.

**Jordan Fox** (right) is a life-long Cullowhee resident majoring in Applied Mathematics and Mathematical Economics.

Abi and Jordan spent the fall semester collecting detailed data about all Covid-19 related executive orders issued by the Governors of North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Their work contributed to Associate Director Sean Mulholland's portion of the Collaboratory grant.

## 5. About Scaled-Up Seminar

While keeping a watchful eye on state and county gathering limits, we planned our fourth annual Scaled-Up Seminar as an in-person event, February 5-6 in Asheville. Scaled-Up Seminar is an annual mini-conference that gathers CSFE's network of researchers from within driving distance of WCU. Attendees present current research and provide mutual feedback. The interaction is designed to provide exposure to each other's work while in progress, and to spark innovative discussions about policy and community impacts, and to lead to future collaborations on research and teaching.



Our goal as the host was to facilitate this seminar with everyone's safety at the forefront. This year's seminar hosted 14 attendees, smaller than a typical year of about 30, but that did not stop the flow of research and collaboration. For nearly all attendees, this was their first in-person interaction with other researchers in their field since March 2020.

The research topics ranged from politics to education to illicit drug use and more, but a common theme was using research to make positive impacts on policy and communities. Attendees told us they valued the event for being in-person, because the deep focus and spontaneous back-and-forth helps so much when fine-tuning research.

*"The best benefit of Scaled-Up Seminar is just what happened today, the fact that you don't feel like you're talking to a wall or a blank computer screen. Then you have that back and forth," he said, "which is not being replicated in other settings."* – Bryan McCannon, Professor of Economics, West Virginia University

*"I want the community to know that CSFE is doing a really good job with bringing together people at Western and people in nearby institutions while thinking about questions that are relevant to the region, our state, our community, and how we can improve lives."* – Angela K Dills, Professor of Economics and Gimelstob-Landry Distinguished Professor of Regional Economic Development



Our intention for this seminar, even during pandemic uncertainties, was to provide a space for collaborative and intentional feedback among a group of serious and dedicated scholars from our region. We thank these scholars for coming! We also look forward to seeing them publish and generate impact from the work they presented

## 2021 Scaled-Up Seminar Participants

Emma Blair Fedison, Georg Mason University (graduate student)  
Angela Dills, Western Carolina University  
Lauren Heller, Berry College  
Edward Lopez, Western Carolina University  
Phil Magness, American Institute for Economic Research  
Bryan McCannon, West Virginia University  
Brian Meehan, Berry College  
Stephen Miller, Troy University  
Sean Mulholland, Western Carolina University  
Audrey Redford, Western Carolina University  
Craig Richardson, Winston-Salem State University  
Jenna Robinson, James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal  
Frank Stephenson, Berry College  
Cameron Tilley, Duke University (graduate student)

## 2021 Scaled-Up Seminar Papers Presented

1. Bryan C. McCannon, West Virginia University, "Do Elections Encourage Public Actors to Be More Responsive?" (with Corey Williams, West Virginia University)
2. Craig J. Richardson, Winston-Salem State University, "Benefits Cliffs, Disincentive Deserts, and Economic Mobility," (with Zach Blizard Winston-Salem State University)
3. Cameron Tilley, Duke University, "Peer Pressure Matters: The Role of Social Networks on Civil Society Participation"
4. Sean Mulholland, Western Carolina University, "Don't TREAD on anyone: The political economy and effectiveness of tire pressure monitoring systems"
5. Angela K. Dills, Western Carolina University, "Homeschooling and child abuse: Are kids safer at home?"
6. Stephen Miller, Troy University, "The Impact of Rent-Seeking on Income Distribution," (with Vitor Melo, Affiliation)
7. Phil Magness, American Institute for Economic Research, "The Mainstreaming of Marx: Measuring the Effect of the Russian Revolution on Karl Marx's Influence," (with Michael Makovi, Northwood University)
8. Audrey Redford, Western Carolina University, "The Impact of Drug-Induced Homicide Laws on Unintentional Drug Overdose Rates," (with Angela K. Dills, Western Carolina and Kathleen M. Sheehan, Creighton University)

## 2021 Scaled-Up Seminar Participant Testimonials

“There are multiple values to presenting your research. At the top of the list is getting feedback and suggestions prior to publication. What I appreciate the most about this workshop is its small size and the willingness of audience members to look at work beforehand and come with comments and suggestions. The more you can promote this culture in your workshop, the more it will stick out as a unique and valuable experience. Of course, this year, being in-person is of extra value.”



“I call it a BFC- a ‘blowhard free conference’. \*Everyone\* at Scaled-Up seems to follow a nice little rule – listen for at least as much as you talk – keep things in balance. In my 30 years in academia, I’ve never been with a group of academics who have a greater nexus of important qualities – true love of economics, good listeners, insightful/super sharp, kind and fun folks. Moreover, and this is especially unique in an academic group..., I think the ultimate freedom is the freedom to be independent thinkers – even if that means coming up with conclusions that are

sometimes uncomfortable or go against our original intuitions or beliefs or the group itself. This “BFC” nourishes that concept and I hope extends to influence others in the same way.”

“It was great to see what everyone was doing, this particular Scaled-Up Seminar had excellent papers. I’ll plan to submit a paper again next year because the feedback was also great. I think the smaller settings actually encouraged more constructive feedback than normal. ”

“The feedback I received at SuS has invigorated my progress on the paper I presented. I received specific, constructive suggestions on how to improve the paper as well as informal advice on strategy for publication. In addition, the time to socialize, particularly in these pandemic times, was welcome and renewed the joy I receive from my profession.”

“Speaking at Scaled Up is a wonderful opportunity to get constructive feedback, supportive feedback, critical feedback for what I do from scholars I greatly respect. For me personally, I hope I gain improvement of my own work from SuS and learn from other people about what they are doing, the exciting research that they are doing. It is a way to grow as a scholar and as a professor.”



## 6. About CSFE Issue Briefs



*CSFE Issue Briefs* provide an educational resource on important issues and fundamental concepts. *CSFE Issue Briefs* are well-grounded in sound scholarship, written in plain language for everyday readers, hence the tagline: “Hard Research, Easy Reading.” CSFE distributes the series of issue briefs by email, social media, and its website.

### **Volume 3 (2020–2021)**

March 2021 — [Getting Back to ‘Normal’ vs. Posttraumatic Growth: Ways for Individuals, Communities, and Societies to Grow in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) by Chelsea Sokolow and Emma Miller (WCU Social Work)

February 2021 – [A Different Kind of Disaster Response: Emergency Medical Services and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), by Jackson D. Déziel (WCU EMS Program)

February 2021 – [North Carolina’s Prospects for COVID-19 Economic Recovery: Top-Down and Bottom-up Assessments](#), by Emma Blair Fedison (George Mason University) and Edward Lopez

November 2020 – [Democracy in Decline?](#), by Loren E. Lomasky

July 2020 – [Hot-Zone States in April vs. June: Impact of Spiking Cases on Hospitalizations, Deaths, and Recoveries](#), by Edward Lopez, Stephen C. Miller (Troy University), and Craig Richardson (Winston-Salem State University)

### **Volume 2 (2019–2020)**

October 2019 – [Illicit Drug Trade and Drug Misuse: The Unintended Consequences of Well-Intentioned Policies](#), by Audrey Redford (WCU Economics)

September 2019 – [The Humanistic Perspective of Nursing and Its Potential to Address the Opioid and Addiction Crisis](#), by April Messer and Kae Livsey (WCU Nursing)

September 2019 – [A Call for Empathy: Understanding the Neurobiology and Stigma of Addiction](#), by Beth Young (WCU Social Work)

September 2019 – [The Opioid Crisis in Western North Carolina: Opportunities for Adults in the Criminal Justice System](#), by Albert M. Kopak (WCU Criminal Justice)

July 2019 — [What Do Film Incentives Mean for the North Carolina Economy?](#) By John Charles Bradbury (Kennesaw State University)

### **Volume 1 (2018–2019)**

April 2019 — [Economic Freedom: What is it Good For?](#) By Robert A. Lawson (SMU)

March 2019 — [Independent and Accountable State Judges: Drawing Lessons from Past Attempts](#) by F. Andrew Hanssen (Clemson University)

March 2019 — [A Case for Free Trade in Labor](#) by Benjamin W. Powell (Texas Tech University)

February 2019 — [Why is Economic Mobility so \(Surprisingly\) Low in North Carolina?](#) by Craig J. Richardson (Winston-Salem State University)

## 7. CSFE in the News, 2020-21

**July 6, 2020** - Television/Newsprint Interview – Stephanie Santostasi, “Several Asheville chain restaurants close for good,” WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/4-asheville-chain-restaurants-close-for-good>

*Many local restaurants and business felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but many corporate chain restaurants have also been closing with no plans to reopen. Dr. Lopez comments the pandemic has prompted major economic rebalancing.*

**July 20, 2020** – Television/Newsprint Interview – Rex Hodge, “Some brews may be harder to find because of aluminum can shortage” WLOS TV <https://my40.tv/news/local/aluminum-can-shortage-due-to-covid-impacting-local-breweries>

*The COVID-19 pandemic brought many shortages and manufacturing delays, now aluminum cans are in shortage which is impacting local breweries. Dr. Lopez commented on the economics of shortages.*

**July 25, 2020** - Television/Newsprint Interview - Taylor Young, “North Carolina ranks high when it comes to COVID-19 restrictions, one national study shows” WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/north-carolina-ranks-high-when-it-comes-to-covid-19-restrictions-one-national-study-shows>

*Dr. Lopez comments on North Carolina ranking 45 out of 51 on overall public safety guidelines and pandemic restrictions.*

**August 17, 2020** - Newsprint Story - Cory Vaillancourt, “Best in the West: Blue Ridge Public Radio, Mountain Xpress and Smoky Mountain News to host two-day NC11 candidate forum” Smoky Mountain News

<https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/29665-best-in-the-west-blue-ridge-public-radio-mountain-xpress-and-smoky-mountain-news-to-host-two-day-nc11-candidate-forum>

*WCU hosted the second event in the two-day joint forum between Madison Cawthorn and Moe Davis, candidates for the North Carolina congressional seat. As an invited panelist, Dr. Lopez posed questions about public debt and international trade restrictions.*

**September 9, 2020** - News Editorial- Holly Kays, “N.C. 11 candidates face off” Smoky Mountain News

<https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/29797-n-c-11-candidates-face-off>

*The two-day forum between Congressional candidates Moe Davis and Madison Cawthorn, with Dr. Lopez as panelist, took place at WCU in Asheville and Cullowhee, sponsored by Smoky Mountain News, Blue Ridge Public Radio, and Mountain Xpress.*

**September 24, 2020** - Television/Newsprint Interview- Rex Hodge, “WCU studies regional economic impact of pandemic” WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/wcu-studies-regional-economic-impact-of-pandemic>

*The Center for the Study of Free Enterprise is conducting a research study to look into the pandemic's economic impact on our region, with hopes that the findings will better prepare Western North Carolina for any future, similar event.*

**February 3, 2021** - News Editorial, “Western Carolina University – CSFE examines state’s prospects for economic recovery after pandemic” VTS Finance <http://vts-fi.com/2021/02/03/western-carolina-university-csfe-examines-states-prospects-for-economic-recovery-after-pandemic/>

*Coverage of Dr. Lopez’s CSFE Issue Brief on North Carolina’s recovery prospects following the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**3 February 2021** - News Editorial, “Western Carolina University – CSFE examines state’s prospects for economic recovery after pandemic” Brief Hot News <https://briefhotnews.com/2021/02/03/western-carolina-university-csfe-examines-states-prospects-for-economic-recovery-after-pandemic/>

*Coverage of Dr. Lopez’s CSFE Issue Brief on North Carolina’s recovery prospects following the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**February 4, 2021** - Newsprint Interview, “WCU center examines economic recovery after pandemic” Smoky Mountain News <https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/30756-wcu-center-examines-economic-recovery-after-pandemic>

*The Center for the Study of Free Enterprise issued an assessment of economic recovery, sustainability and growth in North Carolina following the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**February 4, 2021** - Television Interview, “North Carolina’s economy shows signs of recovery” WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/north-carolinas-economy-shows-signs-of-recovery>

CSFE Director Dr. Lopez was interviewed about the signs of economic recovery, and said that the state's labor market has partially bounced back but there are still signs of downfall from the pandemic.

**February 16, 2021-** News Editorial- Cory Vaillancourt, "Top to bottom, prognosis for NC economic recovery is good" Smoky Mountain News [smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/30816-top-to-bottom-prognosis-for-nc-economic-recovery-is-good](https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/30816-top-to-bottom-prognosis-for-nc-economic-recovery-is-good)  
The Center for the Study of Free Enterprise issues a new report stating that North Carolina's fiscal and economic health are in a good place for sustained recovery post COVID-19.

**March 15, 2021-** Television/Newsprint Interview, "Stimulus checks will help economy more if they are spent, WCU professor says" WLOS TV [https://wlos.com/news/local/stimulus-checks-will-help-economy-more-if-they-are-spent-wcu-professor-says?fbclid=IwAR3TsKPO-CHyXsmtWWZUF8X5msE2ivEZpK2TKHXdvXpPWZSTzFWl8il\\_vFM](https://wlos.com/news/local/stimulus-checks-will-help-economy-more-if-they-are-spent-wcu-professor-says?fbclid=IwAR3TsKPO-CHyXsmtWWZUF8X5msE2ivEZpK2TKHXdvXpPWZSTzFWl8il_vFM)  
When the most recent stimulus checks went out, CSFE Director Edward Lopez argued that if the checks went to saving then they will not have the intended impact on the North Carolina economy and are not needed.

**March 10, 2021-** Television/Newsprint Interview- Taylor Young, "Buncombe County Businesses struggle to find employees" WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/buncombe-county-businesses-struggle-to-find-employees?fbclid=IwARoNto3PaZ7l76MIAzJ-P-Puzvm4L3cAGOQUoJeBrTa7KvD7cChqeAGa3iU>  
A year of layoffs and job-cuts has finally landed North Carolina's job market to rebound, but businesses are struggling to find employees which is causing a strain in the labor market.

**April 21, 2021-** News Editorial, "Research driving progress" Charles Koch Foundation <https://charleskochfoundation.org/stories/research-driving-progress/?linkId=117949918&fbclid=IwAR1gblMl7Twz-IrhURLqotWdSIawovHv32FFk91Zj-f-xBlfaM5jboaOws4>  
CSFE uses their research to create a direct impact on their community, as seen with their 2019 opioid and addiction awareness campaign.

**May 14, 2021-** News Editorial- Liora Engel Smith, "Recovery initiative combines job and mental health help" Wishful Morning <https://www.wishfulmorning.com/recovery-initiative-combines-job-and-mental-health-help/>  
During the pandemic, North Carolina saw spikes in overdoses and mental health crisis, but through recovery resources in Buncombe county, there is support and assistance.

**May 24, 2021-** Newsprint Interview- Vicki Hyatt, "WCU to hold town hall series on post-pandemic recovery" The Mountaineer [https://www.themountaineer.com/news/wcu-to-hold-town-hall-series-on-post-pandemic-recovery/article\\_f6095c1c-ac2a-11eb-84a7-cba2c6f19e86.html](https://www.themountaineer.com/news/wcu-to-hold-town-hall-series-on-post-pandemic-recovery/article_f6095c1c-ac2a-11eb-84a7-cba2c6f19e86.html)  
The Center for the Study of Free Enterprise will hold their series of four town hall meetings on the impact of COVID-19 and the prospects of recovery.

**May 26, 2021-** Television/Newsprint Interview- Anjali Patel, "U.S. Sens. Burr and Tillis call on Gov. Cooper to end extra unemployment benefits" WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/us-sens-burr-and-tillis-call-on-gov-cooper-to-end-extra-unemployment-benefits>  
U.S. Senators Richard Burr and Thom Tillis released a statement calling on Gov. Roy Cooper to end extra unemployment benefits and instead help local businesses find employees.

**June 3, 2021-** Newsprint Interview- Lilly Knoepp, "How NC COVID-19 Restrictions Stacked Up Against Its Neighbors" Blue Ridge Public Radio <https://www.bpr.org/post/how-nc-covid-19-restrictions-stacked-against-its-neighbors#stream/o>  
Sean Mulholland conducted a study that compared the impact of COVID-19 restrictions in North Carolina to surrounding states and found that overall North Carolina had a lower death rate but higher unemployment rate due to restrictions.

**June 11, 2021-** Television/Newsprint Interview- Anjali Patel, "Consumer prices rose in May at fastest pace since 2008; how long will it last?" WLOS TV <https://wlos.com/news/local/consumer-prices-rose-in-may-at-fastest-pace-since-2008-how-long-will-it-last>  
Prices rose 5% during the month of May compared to last year, WCU professor Edward Lopez said part of the reason behind it is shipping and manufacturing disruptions from COVID-19.



## 8. About the Center

**Mission:** Center for the Study of Free Enterprise is a university-wide center whose mission is to provide economics research and thought leadership on issues pertaining to economic development in North Carolina, the region, and beyond, by conducting scholarly inquiry, policy analysis, educational activities, and community outreach on the role of free enterprise in a flourishing society.

**Vision:** In June, 2020, we adopted this vision statement for the 2020-21 Academic Year: “We produce high-impact research in three main areas: COVID-19 impact, evidence-based policy analysis, and free enterprise solutions for bottom-up recovery. We have a positive impact on the students, faculty, and community of Western Carolina University. We improve the climate of ideas and public policy in North Carolina.”

**History:** A brief overview of the Center’s history

Fall 2015	Center proposal is brought forward by Professor Edward Lopez and Dean Darrell Parker. Proposal vetted and discussed by faculty and administration.
Spring 2016	Board of Trustees approves Center and appoints director, December 4, 2015. Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar and Faculty Chair David McCord convene Implementation Advisory Board to recommend organizational structure and charge for CSFE’s ongoing Advisory Board.
Fall 2016	Provost appoints internal members of ongoing Advisory Board. Gift agreement is signed between WCU and Charles Koch Foundation. First installment of funding received, October 2016.
Spring 2017	Center launches. External members of ongoing Advisory Board are recruited. Center begins supporting student-faculty projects and other activities.
Summer 2017	Student-faculty projects under way, some projects and activities completed, Center’s first annual report is written.
Fall 2017	First organizational meeting of the complete Advisory Board is held. Center bylaws become official. Mr. Ken Torok of Sylva named Advisory Board Chair.
Fall 2017 - Spring 2018	First complete academic year of Center operations. Launch programs in all eight categories listed in scope of activities approved by Board of Trustees.
Fall 2018 - Spring 2019	Second complete year. Expand programs and build in efficiencies.
Fall 2019 - Spring 2020	Third complete year. Major campus and community impacts through opioid town hall, Apollo 16 astronaut Charlie Duke, and WCU’s One Book author talk with Celeste Headlee. Cut short by COVID-19.
Summer 2020	Center provides evidence-based perspective to pandemic impact and policy analysis, becomes key platform for impactful research on COVID-19, evidence-based policy, and free enterprise solutions for bottom-up recovery.
Fall 2020 - Spring 2021	Center impacts community and statewide policy discussions with studies on NC’s long-term prospects for recovery, effects of NC’s pandemic restrictions compared to neighboring states, post-traumatic growth, many presentations and media appearances. Center convenes national, regional, and community audiences in its four-part Town Hall Series.

## 9. Center Personnel

**Director:** The Center’s founding director is Edward Lopez, Professor of Economics and BB&T Distinguished Professor of Capitalism. Edward joined WCU’s faculty in 2012 and teaches classes in microeconomics, ethics of capitalism, and principles of economics. As the co-author of two books and over 60 scholarly publications, Professor Lopez gives frequent presentations and news media interviews on economic topics of the day. A native of San Antonio, Texas, he lives in Buncombe County with his wife and two young children. More information at [faculty.wcu.edu/ejlopez](http://faculty.wcu.edu/ejlopez).

**Associate Director:** As Center Associate Director, Professor Sean Mulholland spent the 2020-21 year conducting research on COVID impact on college enrollment and the effects of North Carolina’s COVID restrictions compared to neighboring states. Sean also mentored Faculty Affiliates and Student Affiliates of the Center. Having completed his Ph.D. in economics at Clemson University, Sean has previously taught at Stonehill College and Mercer University. Learn more at [seanemulholland.com](http://seanemulholland.com).

**Events and Operations Manager:** CSFE would not do much without Jane Wiggins and her excellent managing of events and operations. Jane has been with us since September 2018, and her efforts are responsible for the Center’s smooth operation. She holds a B.S. in Statistics from the Honors College at the University of Florida, and she has taught math at multiple levels from tutoring to community college. Jane enjoys traveling, fishing, and exploring with her family and her dog, Duke. Thank you, Jane!

**Content Marketing Specialist:** In summer of 2020, we welcomed a new content marketing specialist, Allie Todd. Throughout the year, Allie has brought energy and creativity to CSFE’s digital presence. She is responsible for curating social media and website content and designing marketing materials. Allie holds a B.A. in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing and playing with her puppy, Goose. Thank you, Allie!

**Advisory Board:** The Center’s Advisory Board consists of six tenured WCU faculty members and five distinguished members of the community. The Advisory Board advocates for the Center and the University, advises the Director, and actively participates in Center events and growth of its network.

### 2020-21 Internal Advisory Board Members:

- Peter Nieckarz, Professor of Sociology
- Allison Cruse, Assistant Professor of Library
- Hollye Moss, Professor of Management and College of Business Associate Dean
- Niall Michelson, Professor of Political Science.
- Bill Yang, Professor of Engineering

### 2020-21 External Advisory Board Members:

- Ken Torok of Sylva (Board Chair)
- Tony Zande of Cashiers, WCU class of 1976
- Phil Walker of Hickory, WCU class of 1976, former WCU Trustee and UNC Governor
- Arthur Salido of Candler. Director of Business Strategy and Economic Development, Withers Ravenel
- Pam Frey of Sylva
- Craig Richardson, Professor of Economics and Director Center for the Study of economic Mobility at Winston-Salem State University