



Center for the Study  
of Free Enterprise

# 2021-22

# Annual Report

Edward J. Lopez, Director

*Celebrating Six Years*  
*2016-17 to 2021-22*

## 2020-21 Annual Report

### 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, 2021-22 Academic Year

*“We produce high-impact research in three main areas: human progress, 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.”*

## Director's Welcome



With this our sixth annual report, we celebrate not just the Center's past year but also our many years in operation.

Since launching in Spring of 2017, CSFE has supported **71 faculty projects** and **118 student projects**. We have published **14 original studies** in our flagship series, *CSFE Issue Briefs—Hard Research, Easy Reading*, plus related op-eds in North Carolina and national papers. In addition, our first six years have provided **40 real and virtual events** with a total of **3,747 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 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 Austen Evans and Jane Wiggins, whose skillful imprints on the Center as Events & Operations Manager has been truly hard to overstate. I am honored and grateful to call them colleagues. 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!

# Year in Review

## Fall 2021:

**NEW FACES:** This semester we have added two more members into the CSFE team, Austen Evans and Tyler Tarbet. Austen is a 2018 Western graduate in Business Administration and Law, and he will be assisting with events and operations. Tyler is also a 2018 WCU grad who majored in CIS, and he recently completed his Master's in Economics at West Virginia University. Tyler is joining us as a research assistant and website/database manager. We are so excited to have these dynamic and enjoyable professionals on the CSFE team.

**RETURNING FACES:** More great personnel news! Allie Todd returns for a second year as our writer and digital content manager. Also, Jane Wiggins has been promoted from her previous position to a full-time permanent role as CSFE's new Managing Director. Jane is the Center's main point of contact and manager of events, operations, and pretty much all things CSFE. We are very fortunate and excited to welcome back Allie and Jane!

**HUMAN PROGRESS RESEARCH INITIATIVE:** This year, CSFE is launching a year-long research project to dive deep into what counts as economic progress in our region. This initiative combines different perspectives from various colleges and disciplines on WCU's campus, aiming to answer the question: "What counts as human progress, and what steps can be taken to achieve greater progress in WNC and beyond?" Learn more about CSFE's Human Progress Research Initiative [here](#).

**CALL FOR FACULTY AND STUDENT AFFILIATES:** It is the time of year again where we are inviting faculty and students to join CSFE in a faculty/student affiliate position. This program is a cohort of faculty from different disciplines and backgrounds with a purpose of connecting their work with academic, policy and community audiences in Western NC and beyond. To apply, email us at [csfe@wcu.edu](mailto:csfe@wcu.edu) to receive the application form.

**CATCHING UP WITH TYLER:** Earlier in September, CSFE Content Marketing Specialist caught up with Tyler Tarbet to talk about what he has been up to since graduation. Tyler graduated WCU in 2018 and has gone on to obtain his master's in quantitative economics at West Virginia University and is working full time as a business analyst in addition to being a CSFE research assistant. Check out [this blog](#) to learn more about Tyler!

### In The News:

- September 1: Blue Ridge Public Radio interviews CSFE Director, Edward Lopez about his [latest study with the North Carolina Cable Telecommunications Association](#), which showed that who owns utility poles in NC is holding up access to high-speed internet throughout the state.
- September 15: Beth Lawrence of the Sylva Herald interviews Center Director, Edward Lopez in the article, [Broadband Expansion 'critical' to economy](#).
- September 22: Nature interview with Amy Fagan, [Will NASA's Moon rover find enough of the ice it seeks?](#) Check out Amy Fagan's interview with Charlie Duke at [CSFE's An Out-of-this-World event](#).

## Winter 2021-2022:

NEW FACES: We are beginning to introduce our newest Faculty Affiliates who joined CSFE to be a part of our 2021-22 cohort. This week we highlighted Craig Richardson. Craig is the founding director of the [Center for the Study of Economic Mobility](#) (CSEM) and a BB&T Distinguished Professor of Economics at [Winston-Salem State University](#). Lately, CSEM partnered with recently partnered with the [New America's Future of Land and Housing program](#) on their "[The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market](#)" report. This report analyzes what is stopping millions of would-be homeowners to acquire a mortgage. To learn more about Craig and his involvement with CSFE, check out our profile here. [will link when it goes live before Thursday]

HEIDI: Her interview had to re-scheduled for Tuesday of her request, but I believe I can get her information and link to the blog in here before Thursday. [thanks for the update]

DISPATCHES FROM ECON 101: On October 14, CSFE Director Dr. Edward Lopez presented, "Dispatches from Econ 101 to the Pandemic" to Coastal Carolina University students. Dr. Lopez's talk explored topics of the pandemic and its effect on labor markets. The presentation was then followed by a panel discussion on the same topic. Check out the recording of the presentation [here](#).

ECONOMIC UPDATE: On November 10, CSFE Director Dr. Edward Lopez spoke to the Haywood County Chamber of Commerce at their annual Economic Update. Held at the Wells Event Center in downtown Waynesville, this event was sold out and audience members had many questions for Dr. Lopez.

LONG-TERM ECONOMIC PROSPECTS: On November 18<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm, Dr. Lopez will present to the Great Smokies Chapter of the Risk Management Association. The topic, "North Carolina's Long-Term Economic Prospects After the Pandemic," expands on [our CSFE Issue Brief of the same title](#) to assess the state's prospects for sustained recovery. Register for the event [here](#).

LOOKING AHEAD: Save the date for CSFE's spring town hall and guest speaker event, Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Keep up with our social media pages for upcoming information.

#### In The News:

- [What items are hard to get as supply chain disruptions impact WNC consumers, businesses?](#) – As supply chain disruptions to continue to affect our national economy, CSFE Director Edward Lopez explains how these disruptions affect Western North Carolina consumers and the region's economy.
- [How Dodd-Frank Locks Out the Least Affluent Homebuyers](#) – An analysis of CSFE Faculty Affiliate Craig Richardson's report, "The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market."

## Spring 2022:

SCALED-UP SEMINAR: Last weekend, the Center hosted our fifth annual Scaled-Up Seminar in downtown Asheville. Scaled-Up Seminar gathers economic 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 future collaborations on research and teaching.

IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO BE OPTIMISTIC: CSFE Director Dr. Edward Lopez tackled the question, "Is now a good time to be optimistic?" in his latest blog. This piece dives into the nature of optimism, how it coincides with measures of human betterment, and how economics and data provide support for being more optimistic now about our future.

Yet while research extols the social benefits of optimism, “meanwhile, today’s polling and climate of ideas are becoming more pessimistic.” Read the full post [here](#).

TEN GLOBAL TRENDS EVERY SMART PERSON SHOULD KNOW: CSFE was pleased to welcome Marian L. Tupy, author and editor of HumanProgress.org, to WCU’s campus on February 3 to give his talk, “Ten Global Trends Every Smart Person Should Know: And Many Others You Will Find Interesting.” His talk stems from his recently published book by the same title that shows trends of betterment across a range of issues from health to violence, work, ecology, agriculture, and more. CSFE [livestreamed](#) the event on our Facebook page.

#### Faculty Affiliate Spotlight:

- On January 21st, Craig Richardson spoke via Zoom to Leadership North Carolina (LNC), a group that works with “state luminaries to improve North Carolina’s quality of life through visionary hands-on programming.” Craig spoke on the LNC theme of “Bridge to Equity” by sharing the accomplishments of the Center for the Study of Economic Mobility (CSEM), where he serves as Founding Director.
- Martin Tanaka and Heidi Dent presented “Industry Academic Partnerships with Technology Companies in Western North Carolina: A Case Study” at the 2021 Institute for Global Business Research (IGBR) International Conference in Las Vegas. An [abstract](#) and [video](#) of the presentation are available.
- Jackson Deziel’s paper, “Emergency Practitioner’s Acceptance and Motivations of COVID-19 Vaccination” was recently published in the Journal of International Paramedic Practice. Written alongside colleague Nate Andrews, the published paper can be found [here](#).

#### In the News:

- CSFE Director Edward Lopez was featured in Livingston Parish News’ opinion piece, “[Report says onerous pole attachment regulations significantly harm broadband growth](#),” published in December.

#### March 2022:



The Center is home to Public Choice Society (PCS), an international and interdisciplinary association of collective action scholars. Like everyone else, we were still experiencing the pinch of pandemic conditions for our 2021 conference, but for 2022 PCS was very happy

to be back to pre-pandemic strength for our conference in Nashville, Tennessee. It was almost as large a group as usual, and it was as vibrant and productive a conference as ever because our attendees were also eager to be back to in-person with real-life interaction.



## Meet our 2021-22 Faculty 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.



### 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.

## Meet our 2021-22 Student Affiliates



**Libby Weitkamp** From Wake Forest, North Carolina, Libby graduated from Heritage High School, where her love for research began. Apart from the importance of research, her heart also lies in the community. Community is one of the many reasons that she chose to come to WCU. She wanted to be able to combine her research goals with her love for helping her community.

Now a sophomore at WCU, Libby is majoring in Innovation Leadership & Entrepreneurship with a minor in Economics. Her first economics class at WCU is where her interest in economics began, specifically, the concept of moral hazard. Libby stated that “the ability to explain behaviors in an analytical way was incredibly interesting to me.” Thus began her path to becoming a CSFE Student Affiliate and assisting Dr. Lopez on his research endeavors this semester.



**Betsy Butner** Graduating from the Master of Social Work Program in May, Betsy is rounding out her collegiate career that began when she graduated from Salem College with her bachelor’s in Biology and Spanish. After graduating, she worked in a BioTech company for four years, along with independently using her license in massage and bodywork therapy.

Last April, we introduced the CSFE community to Faculty Affiliate Emma Miller, MSW, LCSW. Emma 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 for Professionals (BWHET) Project Coordinator. She has been working with CSFE, focusing her research on posttraumatic growth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shared traumatic event that is the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that our lives are operating on a daily basis and it has caused various other aspects of society to shift along with that. Emma’s research considered experiences in Western North Carolina as a way to extrapolate a helpful perspective for societies on a global scale.

Now, Betsy has joined this research initiative, aligning her beliefs and education into one.

“We are working towards developing the curriculum and making sure it stands with the positive psychology but maintaining a level that is not engulfed in academia,” said Betsy, continuing, “We want to be able to share this with any community member, for everyone to have access to the same tools.”

## 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, 2021, we adopted this vision statement for the 2021-22 Academic Year: “We produce high-impact research in three main areas: human progress, 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. Board of Trustees approves Center and appoints director, December 4, 2015.
Spring 2016	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.

## 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).

**Events and Operations Manager:** CSFE would not do much without Jane Wiggins and her excellent managing of events and operations. Jane was with us from September 2018 through September 2021, when her efforts were smoothly handed off to Austen Evans. Austen is a 2018 alumnus of WCU with a degree in Business Administration and Law. He resides in Cullowhee with his wife, Emma. Jane 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 and Austen!

**Content Marketing Specialist:** In summer of 2020, we welcomed a new content marketing specialist, Allie Todd. Throughout these two-plus years, Allie has brought energy and creativity to CSFE’s digital presence. She is responsible for curating the Center’s 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.

### Internal Advisory Board Members:

- Amy Fagan, Associate Professor of Geosciences
- Peter Nieckarz, Professor of Sociology
- Hollye Moss, Professor of Management and College of Business Associate Dean
- Niall Michelson, Professor of Political Science.
- Bill Yang, Professor of Engineering

### External Advisory Board Members in Recent Years:

- 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