

How can universities help, right now?

My two-fold answer/suggestion is:

Help communities in your state get on the “**high road**,” using (as appropriate) the UN’s 17 SDGs to help frame discussion with them.

Join the **EPIC-Network** of university-based programs already doing just this. They’ve already completed nearly two thousand projects in nearly 300 diverse communities.

High Road

There are two very different ways to make a lot of money in this world.

You can treat people like road-kill, the earth like a sewer, and democratic government as something to weaken and mock, while you extract as many rents from its remaining power as you can

I'll call that the "low road"

Or you can show more respect for people and the biosphere they're part of and, working with respectfully with others (*aka* being democratic), figure out ways to reduce waste (*aka* increase efficiency), add value, and capture and share the benefits of doing both, locally, to live fuller lives in better places together.

I'll call that the "high road"

High road is a way of honoring our values (equity, sustainability, democracy) and interest in living better. It does this by using a better organized democracy to increase a place's multi-factor productivity (including natural capital among the factors and measuring productivity as value *per* unit of input) and more equitably share the increased social wealth that follows from that.

The high-road choice for firms

Low Road

Compete on lowering commodity price

... which we know produces

Lousy jobs (low pay, uncertain, little opportunity to advance) & inequality

Punitive and oppressive HR & LR

Environmental damage

Little commitment to place

Undemocratic, extractive elites

High Road

Compete on raising distinctiveness & performance

... which requires

Better trained and equipped workers

Continuous improvement/innovation

Minimizing waste (circular, cradle to cradle)

Supportive policy and public goods

... but we know produces

Better jobs, more equality

More cooperative & productive HR & LR

Less environmental damage

More commitment to place

Less hostile, more contributing, elites

The choice for communities

To develop (or not) higher standards of performance and supports in meeting them. To choose, or not (and this is a way of stating the high road policy agenda) to close off the low road, help pave the high road, enable those stuck on the first to roll merrily along the second

Making the high-road choice is certainly possible. But it requires political courage, skepticism of economic nonsense, and confidence in ordinary people.

Easy enough to measure

Firms

Value-added/FTE, average non-supervisory wage/industry, payroll benefits/net income, computer use/employees, low turnover, etc. etc.

Communities

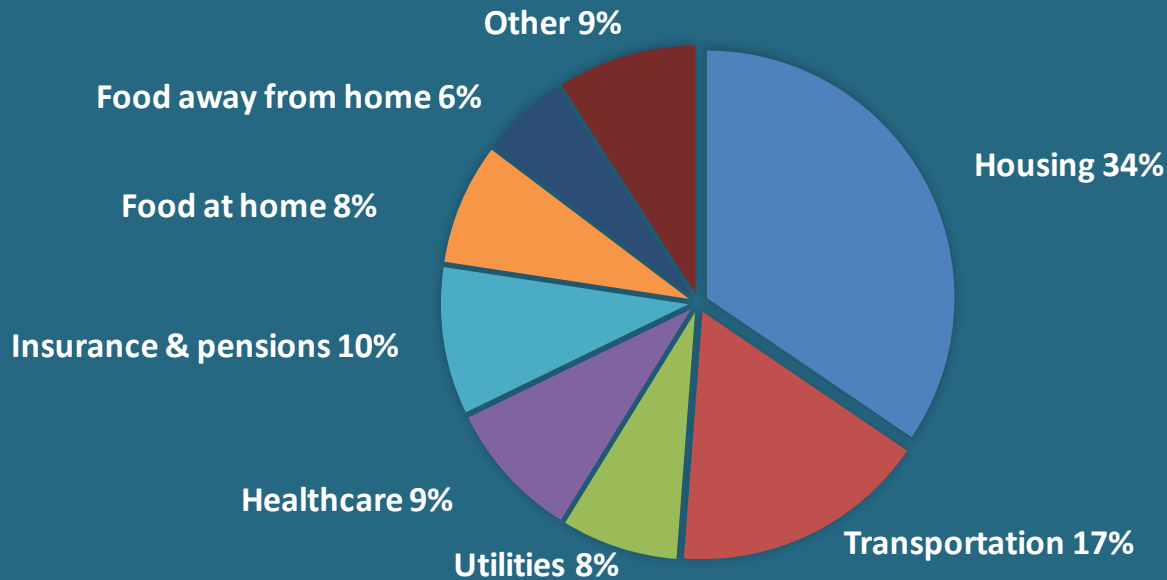
Health, wealth, wages, savings, educational attainment, equality of opportunity and outcome, presence and quality of public goods, access to those goods, efficiency of consumption, accountability of government, level and quality of citizen engagement, etc. etc.



How a community does it

1. Map and decide
2. Reduce waste
3. Build a value-adding machine
4. Fix your governing
5. Be a good fiscal steward

Third Quintile Households (\$41,490-\$70,366)



> 2/3rds (68%) in areas of obvious waste (housing, transportation, utilities, healthcare)

See www.prov21.org for efficiency suggestions

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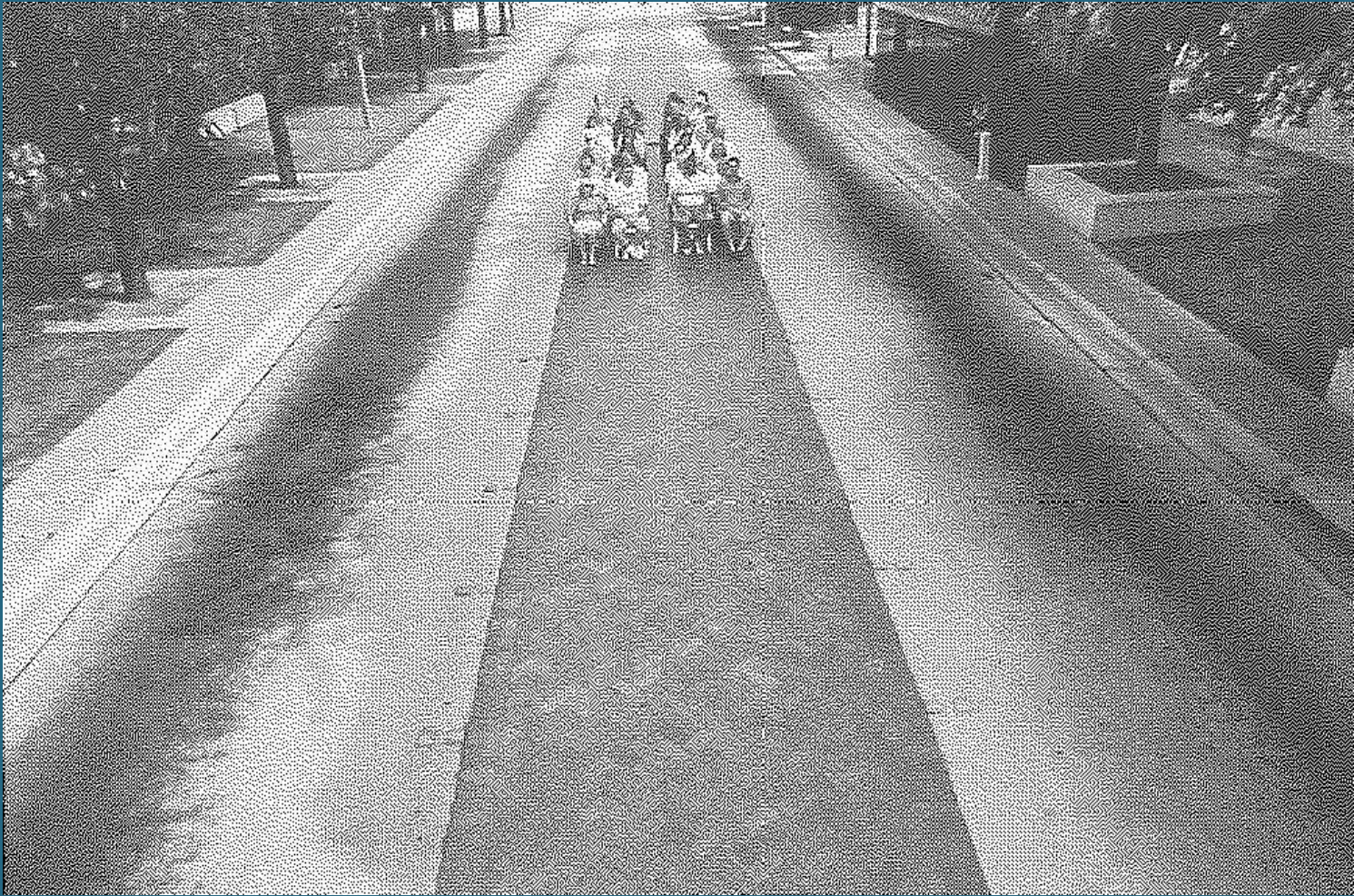
1. MAP AND DECIDE

Map your local political economy (public and private): assets, liabilities, revenue/income, sources/value-add, etc., current procurement and regulatory powers. Offer employers and other stakeholders this new deal: ***“We’ll do almost anything to get you on the high road but next to nothing if you want to stay on the low-road; in fact, we’re going to make that harder for you by requiring better performance of you”***

2. REDUCE WASTE

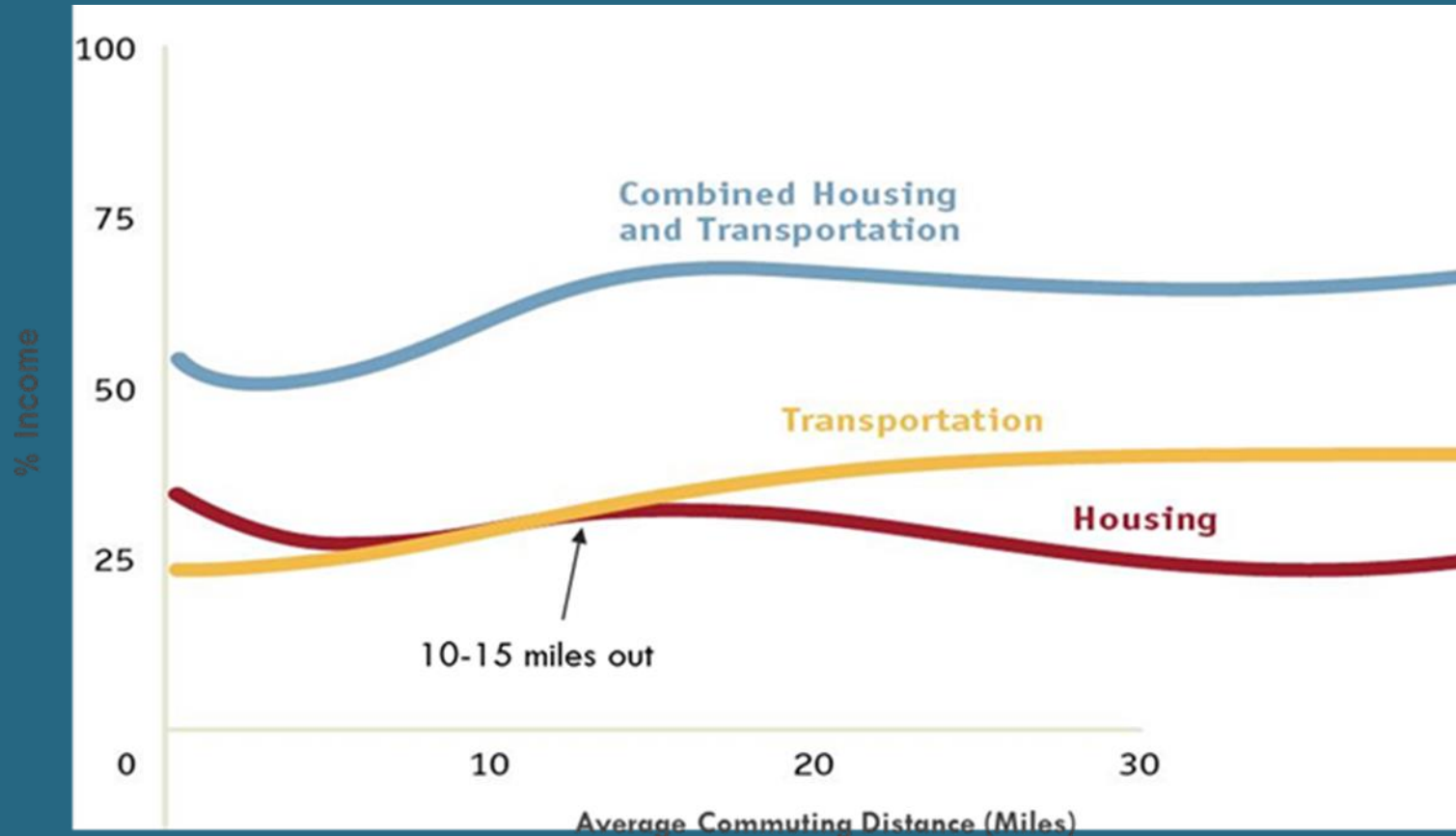
Look around at proven and promising high-road policies and practices (see www.progov21.org for municipal ones) and build the technical and political chops for implementing them, starting with those designed to reduce waste – and thus ***lower the cost of living for area resident and increase their truly disposable income – in key areas of household consumption:*** housing, transportation, communication, energy, water, healthcare, food.

Waste in transportation

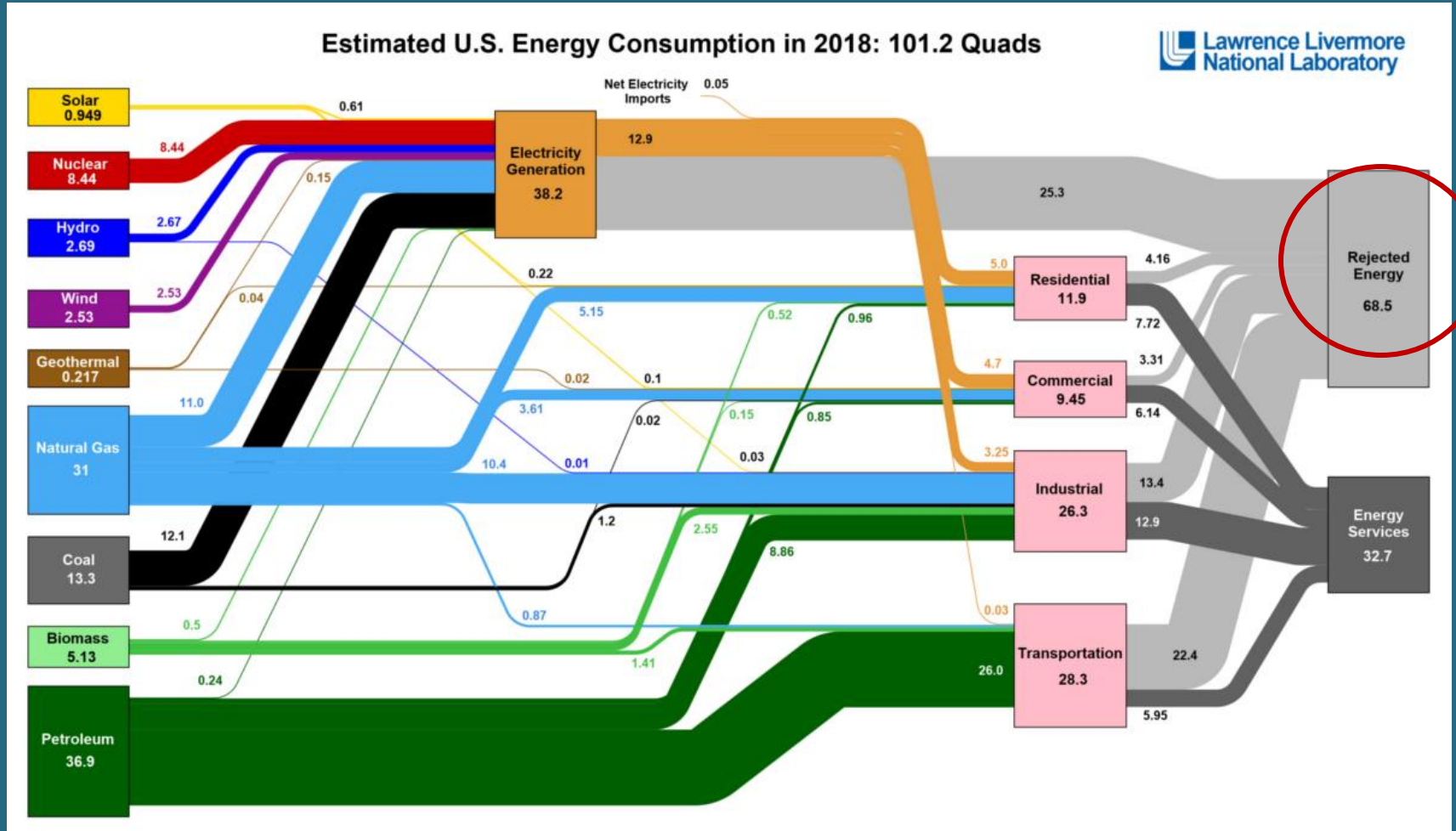


Waste in housing & transportation > inequality

On average, transportation costs exceed housing costs for metro households with \$20K-\$50K in income

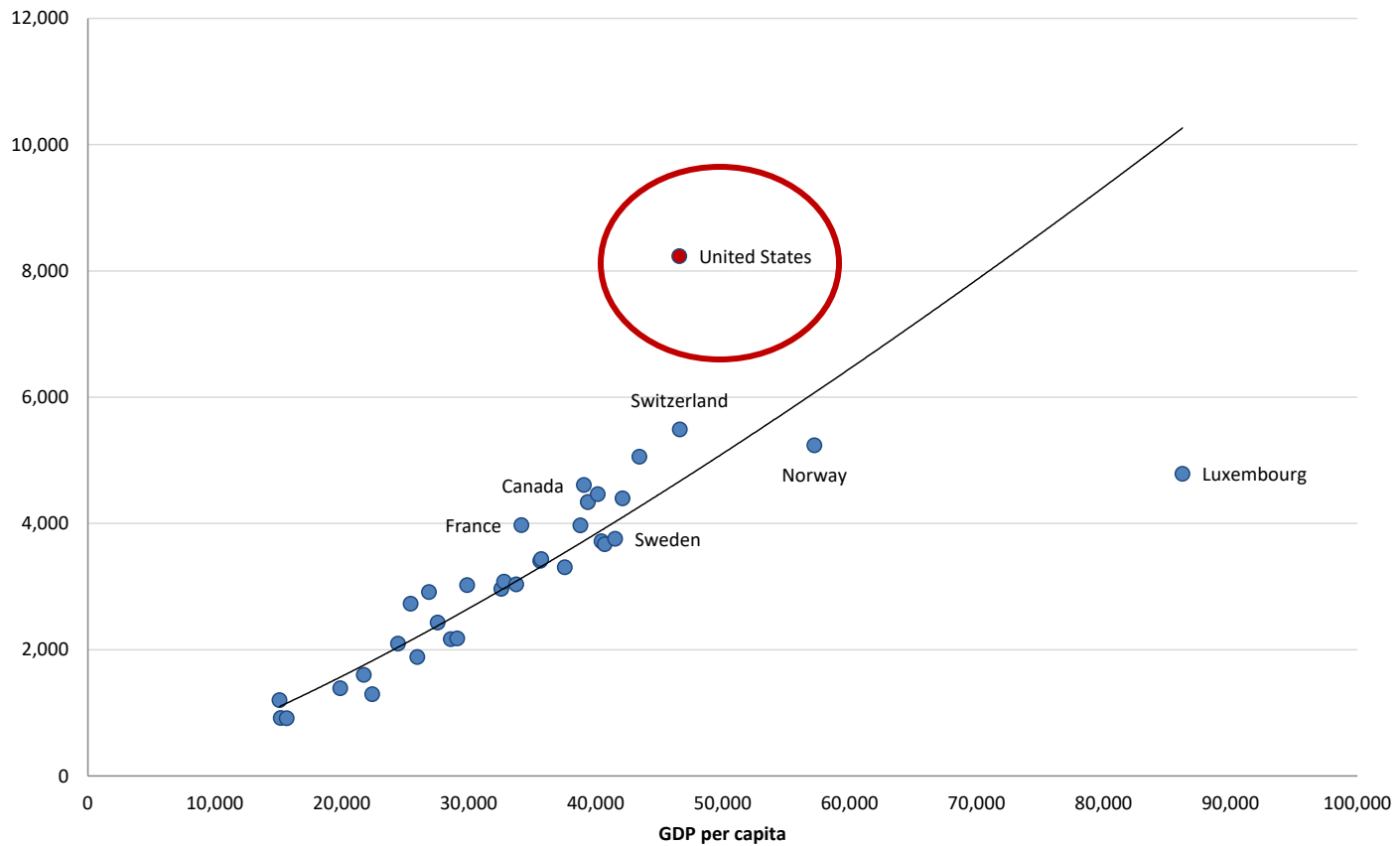


Waste in energy



Waste in health care

Health Expenditure per capita
2011 or most recent year (2010 ppp dollars)



Source: OECD Health Data 2012, and OECD iLibrary

3. BUILD A VALUE-ADDING MACHINE

Develop the human and social capital needed for higher-value-adding work (focusing, in skills development, on depth of understanding, practical skills, explanatory analytics, and cooperation – gifting ***the ability to learn more***). ***Reform your educational system to be seamless, integrated, modularized, demand-driven, open, lifelong, and competency-tested***. Encourage ***management transparency*** with employees and greater (responsible) employee voice. Stay in close touch with employers, especially high-road-aspiring ones. ***Do a lot of economic gardening with second stage entrepreneurs.***

4. FIX YOUR GOVERNING

Reform your government to be cleaner, smarter (evidence-based), more transparent, more accountable, more experimental, more responsive, less oppressive – with ***more engaged citizens throughout***

5. BE A GOOD FISCAL STEWARD

Pay for (don't mindlessly borrow) this social investment by progressive taxes on the resulting increased income and wealth, ***value capture on productive development***, and ***Pigovian taxes*** on public bads (pollution, sprawl), while spending nothing (zilch, nada, zero! 😊) on things that don't add to social wealth, median health and happiness, and/or greater opportunity for the poor

EPIC



epic-network

Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network

EPIC-N

Programs

Allegheny College
Arizona State University
Augustana College
Boston University
Bowling Green State University
Chinhoyi University of Technology
Colégio Politécnico de Nacala
CSU Channel Islands
CSU Chico
CSU Fresno
CSU Fullerton
CSU Monterey Bay
CSU Sacramento
CSU San Marcos
Eastern Oregon University
Florida Atlantic University
Gonzaga University
Indiana University
Indiana State University
Kansas State University

Makerere University
Montana State University
Ohio University
Penn State University
Penn State University Behrend
Penn State University Brandywine
San Diego State University
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville
Technical University of Mombassa
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Texas A&M University
Texas Tech University
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
Universida de Leon
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
Universite Officielle de Bukavu
University of Botswana
University of Calgary
University of Colorado, Denver
University of Ghana

University of Iowa
University of Kwazulu-Natal (Durban)
University of Liberia Monrovia
University of Malawi Polytechnic
University of Maryland
University of Mississippi
University of Minnesota
University of Nairobi, Kenya
University of Nebraska at Omaha
University of Oregon
University of South Carolina Beaufort
University of South Florida
University of St. Thomas
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin - Madison
University of Zambia
Washington State University
Western Washington University



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



Endorsed by all (193) nations in the UN General Assembly; US performance by 105 MSAs available at [2019 US Cities Sustainable Development Report](#)

EPIC Model Elements

1. Respects and fits within Existing administrative structures & incentives on both sides
2. A genuine Partnership (with co-signed contracts)
3. Intentionally aims at improving communities (SDGs)
4. Projects are Community-identified and -driven and evaluated on contribution to community
5. Multi-discipline and usually large Numbers (courses, students, hours)



500+
STUDENTS



15-20 PROJECTS



10+
DISCIPLINES



**20-25 FACULTY
MEMBERS**



**25-35
COURSES**



**40-60,000 HOURS
OF EFFORT TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY**

“[EPIC is]... the easiest adopted and most efficient model I've seen for ensuring real and visible faculty and student contribution of value to area communities, while also improving the student learning experience”

David Ward, past President of ACE and (twice) Chancellor of UW-Madison

1700+ Projects
275+ Cities

Black Lives Matter: racism is deeply woven into the fabric of the United States, its structures, institutions and governance. The design of these systems have created, and continue to create, social, economic and judicial racial disparities; these systems must be dismantled. EPIC-N recognizes the importance of focus on corrective action and the need to change policies utilized by dominant actors and institutions which devalue Black lives, defame what it means to be Black and discriminate against Black and Brown people. EPIC-N therefore embraces the responsibility to ground our work in dismantling broken structures and rebuild new systems that support our EPIC-N partners and programs to act in ways that deconstruct institutional and structural racism. As a mostly white organization, we commit to being deliberately anti-racist in our own efforts and race-conscious as we pursue our mission. We will be making adjustments to our organization, structure and how we support our members as we move forward and we ask that you hold us to this commitment. [Learn more](#)



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[WHO'S IN THE NETWORK](#) [THE EPIC MODEL](#) [CASE STORIES](#) [RESOURCES](#) [EVENTS](#) [NEWS](#)



EPIC Program helps national, state, and local response, to COVID-19.

[Learn More](#)

The main content area features a large, vibrant graphic with a red and blue color scheme. It depicts a world map with numerous red circular markers of varying sizes scattered across the continents, representing data points or locations. The background is a dark, abstract composition of red and blue geometric shapes and lines, creating a sense of digital connectivity and global impact. A prominent orange button with the text "Learn More" is centered over the graphic. Navigation arrows are visible on the left and right sides of the graphic area.

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