

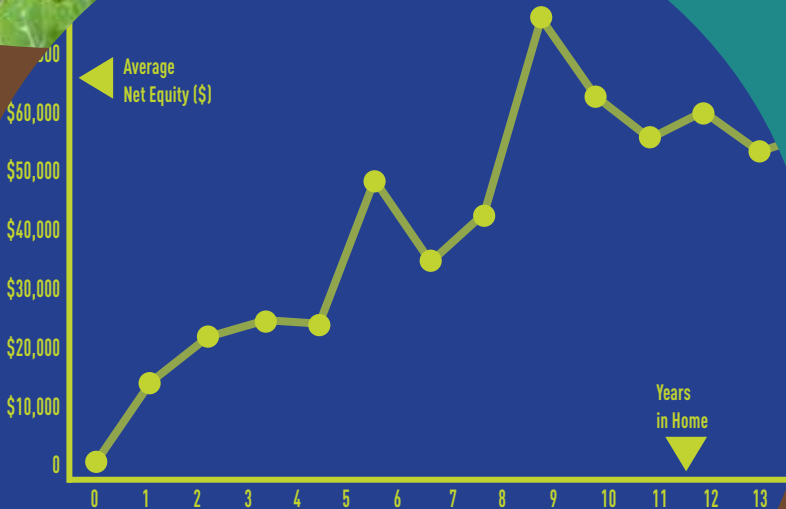
THAT FLOURISHING

“ Building wealth is one thing, but the journey up the economic ladder—upward mobility—is an essential part of a flourishing life. ”

– Craig Richardson,
CSEM Founding Director



2021–2022 ANNUAL REPORT



EQUIP • CONNECT • TRANSFORM

2020–21 Senior Research Fellows

Dr. Zagros Madjd-Sadjadi, *Senior Research Fellow for Regional Economics and Professor of Economics and Finance*

Dr. M. Dee Guillory, *Senior Research Fellow for Entrepreneurship and Associate Professor for Management, Marketing and Management Information Services*

2019–20 CSEM Faculty Fellows

Dr. Douglas Bates, *Assistant Professor, Social Work*

Dr. Tammara Thomas, *Associate Professor, Rehabilitation Counseling*

Dr. Keisha Rogers, *Associate Professor, Rehabilitation Counseling*

2018-19 CSEM Faculty Fellows

Dr. Charity Brown Griffin, *Associate Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences*

Dr. Russell Smith, *Professor of Geography in the Department of History, Politics and Social Justice*

2017–18 CSEM Faculty Fellows

Dr. Michele Lewis, *Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences*

Dr. Zagros Madjd-Sadjadi
Professor of Economics and Finance

Dr. Alice Etim, *Chair, Associate Professor of MIS/Accounting and Management Information Services*

Dr. James Etim, *Professor, School of Education and Human Performance*

Dr. Greg Taylor, *Associate Professor of Quantitative Business Analysis, Management and Marketing*

2021 Research Fellows' Student Interns

Denzel Hanes Yasmine Mitchell

2020 Research Fellows' Student Interns

Ladarian Eaton Tyler Chisolm
Matthew Parker Kiera White
Ivory Simmons Jaisha Grayson

2019 CSEM Engagement Student Interns

Alexis Lassiter Sierra Chesnutt
Anthony Baxter

2019 CSEM Sponsorship for four students to attend Columbia Business School Elevate Conference

Joyus Hawkins Niyah McDuffie
Alexis Lassiter Sharikah Patton

2018 CSEM Research Fellows' Student Interns

Ariel Hugee Ashley Lawrence
Tajsa Armstrong Michael Zeoli
Desiree Wilson Destyne Jones

2018 CSEM Engagement Student Interns

Anthony Barnes Nia Jackson-Evans
Jamir Smallwood

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City honors CSEM with major award

What began as a “startling” revelation to WSSU economics professor Craig Richardson five years ago has developed into a community-changing program that was selected for one of Winston-Salem’s most prestigious community awards.

The city of Winston-Salem picked CSEM to receive its annual Fair Housing Breaking Barriers Award for 2022. The award was presented on April 21.

The Breaking Barriers Award is presented annually by the New Horizons Fair Housing Committee of the city of Winston-Salem’s Human Relations Commission to a community agency, organization, business, or nonprofit for its furtherance of fair housing opportunities within the city.

“It was very gratifying to win this award and to be included with all the community organizations that are working so hard. I’m proud of our entire team,” CSEM Director Craig Richardson said. “We work to make the invisible visible, by measuring outcomes of various initiatives. We find out what is working and what is not, in terms of economic mobility, using solid data and proven statistical techniques. This is a real honor to our whole team.”



An area of focus for CSEM has been a first-time homeownership program that Forsyth County began several years ago that works primarily with below-median income and minority families.

“This program is a hidden gem,” said Richardson. “We are trying to scale it up with our research.”

Richardson and his team spent eight months doing a deep dive into the data from all the homeowners helped by the program over a nine-year period to give the county a comprehensive view of the program’s impact.

The county didn’t have a comprehensive view of what had happened with the homeowners. For eight months, with the county’s cooperation, they input the data from hundreds of notebooks that had been sitting on shelves for years. Each notebook contained a human story of upward mobility. “We tracked where they moved, the change in market value, home equity, wealth, changes in crime in their new neighborhoods,” said Richardson.

“This is a program that works. It’s a win for the county. We have neighborhoods that have homeowners instead of renters and they pay property taxes. Foreclosure rates are negligible, and their neighborhoods are 95 percent safer. It’s a game-changer for economic mobility.”

CSEM’s original grant runs out this year. Richardson has been writing grant applications to hopefully raise funding to keep the project alive.

“What we hope that his award does is to give us more credibility and increases the awareness of the work,” said Richardson. “Not only from the government sector but from the private sector. We don’t necessarily think government needs to solve every problem.”

“The great thing about Winston-Salem is we have a lot of devoted private institutions that want to be in this space. We hope this just raises our profile and allows us to partner with more organizations.”

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Reflections on our past, and the way forward

By Craig Richardson, CSEM Director

CSEM has reached a milestone: the end of our fifth year and the culmination of the major \$3 million grant that started our center. It was awarded to us by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, in conjunction with the Charles Koch Educational Foundation and Koch Industries.



Craig Richardson

From our inception in 2017, we have enjoyed full academic freedom to explore questions around economic mobility from a variety of perspectives.

We have investigated transportation, social safety-net programs, housing initiatives, as well as the challenges posed by geography, psychology and disabilities. We support a wide variety of community programs and were honored with the prestigious “Fair and Affordable Housing Award” from the City of Winston-Salem in April 2022 for our impactful work in that area.

We’ve produced two solid documentaries—**Bus Stop Jobs** and **Home Stretch**—both of which have driven dialogue and action around transportation and affordable, or workforce, housing. We are grateful for our financial support from our donors, as well as their hands-off approach to enable us to experiment and innovate in how we approach issues and solutions concerning economic mobility.

Our CSEM team has contributed a wealth of journal articles, working papers, policy reports and media stories and op-eds that have led our community to consider us a “go-to” place when research using empirical data is needed. We report the truth and let the data follow our lead. Our work has led to more than a dozen partnerships, each having fruitful outcomes that go beyond conversations.

Now, as we move forward, our financial future is less certain as we search out future funding paths that will support our work and our remarkable CSEM team. While we look to our next challenges, we know one thing for certain: The work by our CSEM staff, faculty research fellows and our extended CSEM family has made this an amazing journey with integrity and quality as its hallmarks.

Building wealth is one thing, but the journey up the economic ladder—upward mobility—is an essential part of a flourishing life.

CSEM charges on with homeownership, helping all to flourish

In 2020, CSEM began to chip away at a new bedrock, homeownership, through its groundbreaking study of Forsyth County's Homeownership program, which showed that initiative is a win for first-time homeowners and the county's tax revenue. CSEM, recognizing that the county and Winston-Salem are in need of thousands of units of housing in the next decade for core workers, ranging from teachers to firefighters, did not stop there.

The homeownership program and other efforts, while beneficial, face a huge barrier that has clients on waiting lists: A lack of good affordable housing. CSEM continued its research on the county program and related issues, produced a film on the program, published stories on housing subdivisions setting a model for ramping up workforce housing, and supported organizations that are working on the housing challenge.

It is a holistic effort in which CSEM fulfills its key role as a catalyst, putting research and information before the public that has helped to drive a public search for solutions to this crucial issue. Richardson served as executive producer of the film, *Home Stretch*, which premiered at the RiverRun International Film Festival in April 2022. The city of Winston-Salem followed up with a June showing of the documentary. Diana Greene of Winston-Salem directed and produced the film and Tom Green served as a producer and editor. In powerful and evocative detail, the film tells the story of the county's homeownership program and its

Gordon Simpson, new homeowner and participant in the Forsyth County Homeownership Program.

Anthony Wright, Success Coach for the homeownership program; his son, Alijah Wright; Home Stretch Editor and Producer Tom Green; CSEM Director Craig Richardson, who also served as executive producer of Home Stretch; Home Stretch Director and Producer Diana Greene; retired homeownership program head Dan Kornelis; and Hilda Moore, the IDA program manager for Experiment in Self-Reliance. Photos by Bruce Chapman

clients against the backdrop of the historical inequities of the city, including redlining and U.S. 52, which divided the city's largest Black section from the rest of Winston-Salem. With that hard history still looming, CSEM and its partners continue their work:

- In November 2021, CSEM and the think-tank New America produced a special report, "The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market: Why Millions of Families Can't Get Small-Dollar Loans." CSEM provided local research and proposed solutions to the problem. The report generated coverage by Bloomberg News. The report can be seen at The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market (newamerica.org).
- The same month, Jerry Anderson started the local Do School. Supported by CSEM, the school trains people of low resources in the construction trade. The houses they build go to fill the gap in workforce housing.
- Rasheeda Shankle of the CSEM-supported group Honorable Youth continued her efforts to establish a local template for communal living, a dwelling where single mothers can raise their children and start climbing the economic ladder.
- In the spring of 2022, CSEM published stories in the local media about neighborhoods in Kernersville and Winston-Salem that set models for workforce housing that need to be ramped up.

CSEM is committed to continuing this crucial work.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FORSYTH COUNTY HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM*

What happened after a participant's move to a new neighborhood?

After 9.1 years in the program, the average net equity for the homeowner is **\$48,986**.

And they have paid around **\$12,255** in property taxes over that time.

Individual Development Account (IDA) participants accumulated **20% more** net wealth than non-IDA participants.

For every **\$1** of county government dollars spent on the program, **\$5.49** of homeowner equity is generated.



The changes after a move to a new neighborhood:

- Homeownership rates rose by **50%**.
- Poverty rates are **25%** lower.
- A **9%** drop in single-parent households.
- Similar outcomes across racial groups.
- Crime rate fell by **95%** per 1,000 residents.
- Unemployment rates are **6%** lower.
- Median household incomes rose by **22%**.
- Housing vacancy rate fell by **27%**.



* In-depth reports can be found at www.wssu.edu/csem.

Rising with CSEM-honed talent



Tyler Chisolm

Tyler Chisolm, who came from modest means in the small town of Henderson, never imagined he would get to Duke University graduate school. What he learned at WSSU and CSEM helped him rise against odds that may have been against him.

While Chisolm was earning his undergraduate degree in psychology at Winston-Salem State, the school, and, specifically, CSEM, were included in the documentary *RIGGED: Let's Get Real about the American Dream*, which came out in 2021. The film explores inequities in higher education. CSEM and a few other college initiatives were spotlighted for innovative efforts that “meet students where they are.” In addition, *RIGGED* gave evidence of how well-to-do families get special consideration for getting into the most elite universities.

Although not presented in *RIGGED*, a recent lawsuit underscores the film’s theme. Filed in federal court in early January 2022, the suit alleges violations because of how Duke and 15 other “elite” private universities “collaborate to determine financial aid,” *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reported. The lawsuit claims that alleged collaboration “ultimately favors wealthy students,” the paper reported.

Chisolm takes it all in stride, having earned a partial scholarship that helps pay his way, in addition to his work in a Duke library as a research assistant. He likes Duke. “It’s definitely a prestigious place to be,” he said.

Chisolm participated in CSEM activities that he says have helped him at Duke, where he is starting his second year of grad school, working toward a master’s degree in population health science. His overall experience at WSSU helps as well, he said. CSEM Research Manager Zach Blizard found that, nationwide, HBCUs have higher percentages of their low-income students achieving upward mobility than non-HBCUs, based on data collected by Harvard. Of the 2,203 universities and colleges nationwide with mobility estimates, WSSU is in the 88th percentile for the upward mobility of low-income students, and 5th among all North Carolina colleges and universities for upward economic mobility among its graduates.

“Going to an HBCU, you get exposed to a lot,” Chisolm said. “Your mobility goes up automatically, because you might land in a job you never thought you would be in without your HBCU education.”

With the mobility comes commitment, Chisolm said, noting that Chancellor Elwood Robinson stresses the WSSU motto of “Enter to learn, depart to serve.”

“That’s the overall culture, from the chancellor on down,” he said. “Everybody at the school influenced me in some way.”

At WSSU, Chisolm participated in CSEM Fellow Charity Griffin’s YouthRISE program, taking a lead role as a facilitator, helping East Winston youth to become change agents in their community on issues such as food deserts. That experience was invaluable in one of his Duke classes on research methods, he said. “I was one of the very few in the class who had hands-on experience,” he said.

In classes, he said, they talk about how income affects access to transportation, health care and other basics. “I saw that through my CSEM work,” he said. “Economic mobility in Winston-Salem is in kind of a rough spot, where people can get stuck in the same place. It’s kind of hard to grow.”

Also instrumental in his WSSU education, he said, was his participation in the Playbook for Entrepreneurial Excellence programs offered by Dr. Antwain Goode and his wife, Andrea, of Tate Consulting. The programs, sponsored by CSEM, nurture students in business bedrocks such as networking, aligning with an emphasis of Chancellor Robinson. Among the things he learned in the programs, Chisolm said, were confidence and boldness.

Applying the Playbook lessons, Chisolm started a pop-up shop to provide resources and techniques for people dealing with mental- and physical-health problems, such as those he has seen among friends and family. Such shops are short-term sales spaces, often timed to coincide with a trend or an event.

Chisolm said he might use his master’s degree to focus on health disparities and food deprivation.

Meanwhile, he wants to get back to Winston-Salem and talk to classes taught by Griffin and the Goodes.

“That’s my goal,” he said. “To give back to the people who helped me along the way.”

Chisolm’s story resonates: Despite the educational system being tilted away from those of modest means, it is still possible to thrive, with greater odds after having attended an HBCU.



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Tackling the economics of local gun violence

The mass shootings nationwide grab the widespread media attention. But the daily toll of gun violence involving one or two victims is far larger annually in the numbers of dead and wounded. (“More than 99 percent of gun deaths in the U.S. are from shootings other than mass shootings,” Everytown Policy and Research Policy reports.) That is the brand of violence, along with the sound of gunfire in general, that many residents of East Winston live with constantly.

In 2021, there were a record 50 homicides in Forsyth County and Winston-Salem, with 44 of those crimes occurring in the city and most involving guns. There were more than a hundred assaults involving guns. Many of the victims were Black and young. By June 1, 2022, there had already been 18 homicides in Winston-Salem. Firearms are the No. 1 cause of death for children in the United States.

CSEM, in close contact with its community partners, listens to stories from those residents and reports on them in local media, detailing the human and financial costs of gun violence. The issue hits close to home for CSEM. Survivors of victims of gun violence include Velma Terry, who lost her son to a fatal shooting on Feb. 14, 2021. She works for GIDE, a nonprofit supported by CSEM.

As the media pundits and cyberspace visitors argue vehemently about the violence, CSEM looks for practical solutions through its community engagement. CSEM Associate Director Alvin Atkinson sees gun violence as a barrier to economic mobility—including the stress on students and their parents in schools and the workplace—and has positioned CSEM as a partner with GIDE and other organizations and individual leaders in the effort to reduce gun violence. A large part of this effort is supporting organizations and initiatives that give at-risk youth beneficial options, including GIDE, YouthRise, Project M.O.O.R.E, the Royal Curtain Drama Guild, the Triad International Ballet and Island CultureZ,

which help youth with efforts ranging from speaking out to financial literacy to the arts to urban agriculture.

In May 2022, with several more mass shootings nationwide and as Winston-Salem was wracked with more gun violence, CSEM continued its efforts. At a May 25 meeting in Winston-Salem, a “Strategy-Focused Town Hall Discussion on Gun Violence,” residents confirmed the economic roots of gun violence. One recurring theme was the longstanding divide between residents of low economic resources and those of better resources. The speakers of lived experience of all ages, including those who live in neighborhoods wracked by gun violence, some angry, had clearly been waiting to be heard.

They talked about hopelessness tied to poverty and about teenage boys who can make more money working for drug dealers than in legal jobs because businesses and the city of Winston-Salem will not invest in their communities. “Money is not the problem,” one speaker said. “It’s allocation.”

One panelist, Forsyth County Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, noted that the gun violence problem is complex, tied to other issues such as education. School Superintendent Tricia McManus, who has taken a front-and-center role, appearing often at events aimed at reducing gun violence and tackling innovative solutions, was also on the panel. CSEM researches educational inequities, such as the lack of internet access for some students of low resources.

A teenage speaker told the panel: “Involve the youth. We want to be part of the dreams that will be part of our future.”

That is a key part of CSEM’s work.

Flourishing through the Arts

Winston-Salem leaders emphasize the arts as an economic driver downtown, but there is just as much talent in East Winston.

CSEM realizes that as it works with two important arts organizations, Triad International Ballet and the Royal Curtain Drama Guild (the RCDG), that nurture talent, rendering the invisible visible. “It’s for the community, to have a place for the community to thrive and grow and nurture their gifts,” said Stephanie Hurt, the founder and director of the RCDG.

Alexia Maas, the executive director of Triad Ballet, agrees. “We want to become an integral part of the community,” Maas said. “To live, love, laugh and cry with you and, maybe one day, feel a mutual sense of pride when we watch one of our hopefuls take to the stage as a professional ballet dancer. How magical that would be!”

In the winter of 2022, Triad Ballet, triadinternationalballet.org, based in Greensboro, launched a community outreach program in East Winston-Salem. CSEM, along with My Brother’s/My Sister’s Keeper in Winston-Salem, and the

Guiding Institute for Developmental Education (GIDE), supports the effort. Geneviève Basu, a soloist with Triad Ballet, and Natalya Davison, Triad Ballet’s artistic director, teach the initial classes for youth at the Winston Lake Family YMCA.

Recently, Basu worked with a group of joyful young girls, guiding their nascent steps into art. “Visualize that you’re sitting on a cloud. Dance is movement through space and time,” she said. We are visible representations of the music. It requires a lot of movement and mobility, right?” The hope and excitement could be felt in the room.

Stephanie Hurt started the RCDG, rcdg-productions.com, in 2010. The organization has put on numerous plays, drawing in visitors that can, eventually, support restaurants and other businesses. The guild has drawn in more than 100 participants, as well as ticket revenues in fiscal year 2019-2020 of just over \$33,000,



Geneviève Basu, a soloist with Triad International Ballet, teaches a recent class at the Winston Lake Family YMCA. Photo by Kathleen Railey



“ We want to become an integral part of the community. To live, love, laugh and cry with you and, maybe one day, feel a mutual sense of pride when we watch one of our hopefuls take to the stage as a professional ballet dancer. How magical that would be! ”

– Alexia Mass
Executive Director of Triad Ballet

before being slowed by the pandemic. As it came back from the pandemic, the RCDG experienced a challenge: finding enough folks to fill the roles and do the backstage work. In response, Hurt has set up a talent agency, the Parable House Theater Staffing Agency, a business that will recruit and register people for work in the RCDG and other organizations.

“The RCDG actually birthed a bigger baby than itself,” Hurt said. “The necessity of this was having enough players for theater performances on more than just a once- or twice-year basis. We need to ID enough people and keep their names in a database. These are the Parable House Players, passionate performers we train and tap into for our productions. This also opens them up to job offers from other groups.”



The agency is open to ages ranging from teenagers to older adults. In its work with teenagers, the agency aligns with the local My Brother's/My Sister's Keeper initiative, with which CSEM is also affiliated, working to make sure youth of low resources have all they need to make it in the world. “For example,” Hurt said, “I love the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, but everybody doesn't qualify to go there.”

Hurt said: “We want to make sure that anyone who comes in to do work for us as a Parable House Player will be open to other offers as well. Ours is a theater company that gives them space and pays them for their work. As we grow, the hope is that the investors will sign up. I see the talent every day in East Winston.

Broadway can happen right here in North Carolina if we work with the talent, if we support it.”

Royal Curtain Drama Guild dancers during a rehearsal for *The Wiz*, in the photo on the left, and, in the photo on the right, in a performance of the play.



CSEM Policy Briefs

How do the Colleges/Universities in North Carolina Promote the Upward Mobility of their Students?

Zachary D. Blizard, Winston-Salem State University

Youth Participatory Action Research as an Intervention to Promote a Pathway for Economic Mobility: Pilot Data from the YouthRISE Summer Program

Charity Griffin, Winston-Salem State University

Working papers

How Did Participants' Home Values Change?: A Deep Dive into Market Values

Zachary D. Blizard, Craig J. Richardson, and Joseph B. Sloop

CSEM publications with partners

Policy Reports

Sabiha Zainulbhai, Zachary Blizard, Craig Richardson, Yuliya Panfil (2021). The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market. *New America/Center for the Study of Economic Mobility policy report, November 9th.*

Sabiha Zainulbhai and Zachary Blizard (2022). Large Investor Activity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. *New America Blog Post.*

Academic Journal Publications

Smith, R. M., and Blizard, Z. D. (2021). A census tract level analysis of urban sprawl's effects on economic mobility in the United States. *Cities*, 115, 103232.

Smith, R. M., & Blizard, Z. D. (Forthcoming in 2022). Does Municipal Incorporation Influence Levels of Black-White Segregation? Evidence from Counties in the Southern United States, 1990–2010. *Southeastern Geographer*.



SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2022 | A7

Local Lions roar back against new challenges



ALVIN ATKINSON
Guest columnist

Helen Keller once told an international convention of Lions Clubs to become “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.” This weekend, as Lions from across the state have gathered in Greensboro for their annual convention, it can be acknowledged that the Winston-Salem Twin City Lions Club, the state’s first Lions Club, has answered K

It did so more than a century ago, four decades ago, four tries for the Bli globe are cont for the blind a to be of service other darkne youths being lo gun violence.

Last year it and Forsyth (a record 50 h involving guns hundred ass The victims cases were y city is not a increased c lence amor tionally, a c very 45 sec olence h use of d ion bet chool suspension we s public



JOHN RILEY
Guest columnist



CRAIG RICHARDSON
Guest columnist

Have you noticed how shortages of workers are everywhere, from restaurant's reduced hours to longer checkout lines at shopping outlets? Automatic checkout machines may be efficient, but they can't help us find a product on the aisle shelf.

While COVID seems like the obvious culprit, there is a deeper, more chronic problem: the lack of affordable, or workforce, housing for our local workers, including our police officers, restaurant workers, hospital staff and teachers, among many other service occupations.

At Winston-Salem State University's Center for the Study of Economic Mobility (CSEM), and other housing issues. Of course, most homeowners are developing...



JOHN RILEY
Guest columnist

Homeownership is one of the most important building blocks toward upward economic mobility. But many Forsyth County residents never achieve it, and end up as lifelong renters. They sometimes live in deplorable conditions in a county with a serious lack of decent affordable housing.

For more than 20 years, the Forsyth County Homeowner...

which has been aggravated by COVID. Resistance to workforce housing is manifested by local laws: zoning regulations restrict in-wealthier areas. The “NIMBY” or “Not in My Backyard” problem is the end result, creating gridlock toward community solutions.

In Winston-Salem, Mayor At-tell us we will need 15,000 new (affordable housing) units over the next eight years.” But, as seen in the accompanying graphic, declining over the past eight years, following nationwide trends.

City Council member Jeff MacIntosh, a Realtor who champions affordable housing, noted a problem is that the “private market cannot build projects that pay for themselves, much less return a profit, on be low-market-rate units, on be more (to build affordable hous- ing) than you can charge.”

The Biden administration announced on May 16 a Home Supply Act...

local zoning boards, encouraging them to adopt plans welcoming to workforce housing, instead of zoning out such projects. That would incentivize cities and counties to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Without it, housing affordability is increasingly out of reach, driven by increased demand and stagnant supply. “With both conditions operating, listing prices tend to rise,” said CSEM Res...

the program costs are recouped five times over, through the taxes on their homes. An expansion of this program would help with the housing shortage.

Russ Smith, a CSEM Research Fellow and the Faculty Lead for the Spatial Justice Studio at the Center for Design Innovation (@CDI), said, “A...



CSEM, PROVIDED

AR NOVEMBER 25, 2021

Winston-Salem could benefit from ridesharing services other cities are offering

“Our buses just ran out of fuel,” said Gronna, a city transportation official. “If you could have a carpooling service, it would be a great benefit.”

Carolina Department of Transportation. Brittany Marshall of Winston-Salem, who rode WSTA buses to work for years before finally buying a car. Winston could...



Gordon Simpson, a chef and father of two young children, stands in front of his new house. The new homeowner is profiled in a documentary film, “Home Stretch,” from Winston-Salem State University’s CSEM.

retired as the county’s economic development director and led in starting the program, film: “White families never had to worry about this, but Black families always did.” As they started the program, he said, they decided “people should be able to buy (houses) where they want to buy.”

The film details that many program clients take financial literacy classes, learning how to raise their credit scores and budget their expenses. Feggins coach at the local nonprofit...

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OPINION

How can we increase workforce housing?

SATURDAY, JULY 2, 2022 | A9

neighborhoods are dense places, with a mix of housing options at multiple price points that are highly desirable places to reside. Additionally, builders/developers also need to do a better job designing more aesthetically appealing developments.”

MacIntosh noted in an email that “the pattern of suburban development we see today has become the norm in the county—always the case. “Prior to World War II, neighborhoods had duplexes, triplexes, quads, and often up to eight-unit door to single-family. And it worked.”

If we want our local economy to function and grow, we will need to embrace solutions that make it possible for our workforce to live near where they work. As our local...



CSEM partner pushes for agricultural equity

The nonprofit Island CultureZ is gradually chipping away at the East Winston food desert in which it is based, creating beneficial change through its many partners.

“Power to the people is what we need,” said the group’s executive director, Michael Banner.

Island CultureZ is supported by CSEM as part of its emphasis on health and wellness being key to rising from poverty. Banner and Marcus Hill, the Island CultureZ chairman, formed the group a few years ago to increase land and market access for economically marginalized communities, focusing on urban gardens, more accessible farmers’ markets and other strategies.

Island CultureZ’s latest initiative is the Grassroot Growers Cooperative, launched in the spring of 2022. “We are working collectively to increase market viability, buying power, political and economic solidarity, shared wisdom, etc.,” Banner said.

This new push is sorely needed, especially as opportunists move in on the urban farming movement.

“Our cooperative is building on solidarity, a common space where we can generate resources from the soil,” Banner said. “We’re pulling in talent from East Winston and from all across the city, from different ‘islands’ or different communities that have been cut from different resources and opportunities. We’re building

Michael Banner works in the greenhouse and shows a reward for his work.



solidarity with them to close that loop to where we are the producers and the consumers. We

already have locally owned stores within our network that stock our produce. “We’ll be helping our partners with resources such as seeds and young volunteers who can help with planting. We’ll be doing marketing promotion and sponsoring trainings by experts in organic practices. We’ll be having healthy cooking demonstrations and community field days where people can come out and eat healthy food.”

The new initiative continues the innovative work of Island CultureZ. In 2021, the group secured a \$25,000 transportation grant from The Winston-Salem Foundation, a grant that affirms a new form of community mobilization. With the grant, the nonprofit has bought buses to provide transportation for youth to work at urban and rural farms. It’s timely for Island CultureZ and CSEM, whose research has helped drive public dialogue and action on public transportation.

Banner noted at the time: “No man or woman is an island to themselves, although it can get awfully lonely trying to carve out an existence with grassroots agriculture in the ruddy red clay landscape of Winston-Salem. With these buses, we are going to at last galvanize the movement so that we can employ camaraderie and popular education as we go about the business of re-branding ‘urban farming’ in Winston-Salem so that it better reflects our call for land reclamation and cooperative economics in building community resilience ... Ours is really an organization that organically grew out of the food disparity in East Winston.”

The buses will help in the new initiative, built on community involvement.

Banner said: “The order of the day is power to the people.”

For more information, go to islandculturez.org.



CSEM takes part in festival highlighting city's best innovators

Winston-Salem is increasingly known as a city revitalizing with innovative initiatives, from biotech to music to education. The CSEM team is proud to be a bedrock of that through its groundbreaking research. That was underscored on Oct. 2, 2021, when CSEM was tapped by Wake Forest University to take part in its IdeasCity festival at Bailey Park in the Innovation Quarter, a festival that highlighted 22 of the city's innovators. The Innovation Quarter, located in the heart of the city's biotech bedrock, served as an ideal site. Less than a mile away, across U.S. 52, and out of sight of the attendees, is East Winston, an area that has been hit by decades of poverty and low economic mobility. CSEM is confronting these low mobility issues through research and community engagement that puts common-sense solutions before policymakers, business leaders and the public. "We use good questions to guide us to explore and analyze new data, thinking of innovative solutions that cut across the political spectrum so that we have economic wins for as many parties as possible," said CSEM Director Craig Richardson. "This ends the logjam problem of deciding how to divide a fixed pie of resources."

On the beautiful fall day of the festival, the CSEM team—Alvin Atkinson, Zach Blizard, John Railey, Cam Choiniere, Coretta Montague and Craig Richardson—met old friends and welcomed new ones, telling CSEM's story through brochures and a video that featured CSEM's work. CSEM's inclusion in the IdeasCity festival was another step in its mission of overcoming generational poverty.



Shaída Horner checks out CSEM's booth at the IdeasCity event. Photo by Coretta Montague



CSEM and the public ride to the future on transportation research

Transportation research has been a CSEM bedrock since its inception. CSEM realized that the flawed system of local public transportation thwarts most issues of economic mobility, from the workforce to education to healthcare.

CSEM has played its role as a catalyst, presenting the problem to the public and potential solutions through research papers, a documentary film and research-based stories in the local media. Most recently, CSEM has partnered with Forsyth Technical Community College in fact-based solutions to the challenges posed to students using the Winston-Salem Transportation Authority (WSTA) in meeting its students needs.

The work began in 2018 with CSEM's groundbreaking research on people who use WSTA to commute to work, coupling it with a documentary, *Bus Stop Jobs*, profiling a local bus rider and her son, with viewings that led to widespread public dialogue and The Winston-Salem Salem Foundation setting up a round of grants for innovative solutions to the local transportation challenge. Forsyth Tech won one of those grants and contracted with CSEM for survey-based research of bus-riding students. And in 2021, Island CultureZ, a CSEM-supported nonprofit that works to eradicate food deserts, secured a \$25,000 transportation grant from the Foundation to buy buses to provide transportation for youth to work at urban and rural farms.

In August 2022, CSEM Director Craig Richardson and CSEM Research Manager Zach Blizard presented their Forsyth Tech findings to an audience there. Among those findings:

- Around 57 percent of responding students stated that they would do more school-related activities, such as homework, studying, or attending a study group, with time saved from quicker commutes.
- CSEM calculated, using stated assumptions, between \$405,156 to \$633,688 in foregone tuition revenue from current FTCC students.
- They also calculated, by the same method, between \$671,232 to \$1,039,680 in foregone tuition revenue from prospective FTCC students.

Students living on the Wake Forest, Salem and Winston-Salem State University campuses easily walk to their classes. Forsyth Technical Community College students don't have that luxury. Some drive in, or have loved ones drive them in. Others rely on Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) buses.

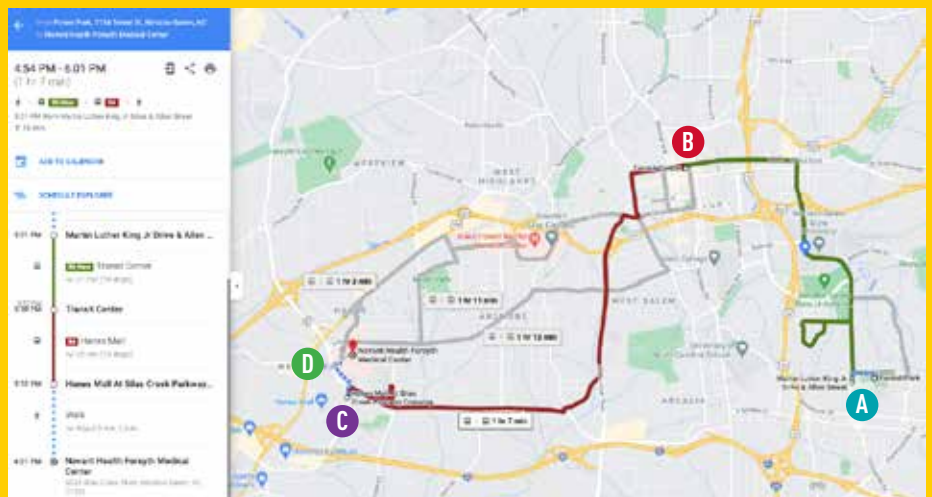
"You spend a lot of time waiting for the bus," said Samuel Cruz, 20, who is studying toward an associate degree in science and wants to go on to a four-year college. With transfers and waiting,

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BUS RIDER IN FORSYTH COUNTY:

1 hour and 7 minutes

(plus walking time) to get from East Winston to the hospital for work or medical attention.

In a car it takes about 12 minutes.



- A** Walk from home to closest bus stop. Catch bus at 4:54 pm.
- B** Change bus at transit center in downtown Winston-Salem at 5:30 pm.
- C** Arrive at bus stop at Hanes Mall, Silas Creek Parkway at 5:52 pm.
- D** Walk from bus stop to hospital; arrive 6:01 pm.



Vehicle in Wilson, NC's ride-sharing program

A small North Carolina city has succeeded with a ride-sharing program, and so can Winston-Salem

In November 2021, CSEM, building on its research on the failures of Winston-Salem's bus system, published a story in *The Winston-Salem Chronicle* about the North Carolina city of Wilson's success with an Uber-like ride-sharing program, Via, that led to the dissolution of that city's bus system. Winston-Salem's public radio station, WFDD, did a follow-up on the story, and Winston-Salem leaders began to ramp up their search for solutions similar to the one Wilson found. The city of Winston-Salem's plans, working with a local foundation and a nonprofit, are still in progress, but CSEM has laid fine groundwork and stands by to help with research.

CSEM Director Craig Richardson said Winston-Salem could test using Via in an area with the same perimeter as Wilson's system. "If Wilson can do it, why not us?" he asked.

Officials in Wilson, a city of about 50,000 in Eastern North Carolina, say Via gets its patrons to their destinations faster and more efficiently. "It saves me a lot of time," one rider, who uses the system to get to work, said. "It's a lot better than the city bus system I used to have to ride."

Nationwide, other cities are testing similar plans, such as in Birmingham, where the city and a community foundation are doing a pilot program.

In response to CSEM's November 2021 story on Wilson's program, Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines indicated openness to a system like the one in Wilson. "Transportation is a critical issue in addressing poverty," he said. "This is an interesting concept and I look forward to learning more about it."

Wilson, with a population less than a fourth as large as Winston's, is reducing the "time tax" with its ridesharing service. "It's been quite the success," said Rodger Lentz, the city's chief planning and development officer. Patrons wait, on average, 13 minutes for their ride, compared to an average of 45 minutes under the former bus system.

"Our buses just ran every hour," said Gronna Jones, the city's transportation manager. "If you went outside and saw the taillights on the bus, you automatically knew you had to wait an additional hour before the next bus came. It's been a great improvement in customer service."

One rider said his walks to visits with his doctor took almost an hour. Now, he said, Via gets him there in less than five minutes.

Wilson started the service in September 2020. It is "a blend between apps like Uber or Lyft and a public transit system," WRAL, the Raleigh-based TV station, reported. "By either using an app or calling in, passengers can arrange a ride, get picked up outside their current location, and share a trip to their location with passengers headed in the same direction. The cost of each ride is \$1.50 for a single passenger and an extra \$1 for an additional passenger. Children eight years old and younger can ride for free."

Wilson contracted with Via after Lentz and City Manager Grant Goings brainstormed ways of easing transportation to work. Wilson, like Winston-Salem, is not especially pedestrian friendly. There, just as in Winston now, the bus system was not addressing that challenge.

Brittany Marshall of Winston-Salem, who rode WSTA buses to work for years before finally buying a car, said Winston could benefit from a system like Wilson's. "It would be better for people who have children who have to stand out in the rain and the cold and the heat waiting for buses," said Marshall, whose young son often rode the bus with her. She was featured in CSEM's film *Bus Stop Jobs*.

Lentz, the Wilson planning and development officer, said it might not work for Winston to cut off its entire bus system, but Via could certainly be used in areas not reached in a timely fashion by the bus system.

Marshall agreed. All in all, she said, a Via system "could be really good for folks riding the buses now."

his trip home, which takes about 13 minutes in a car, can take over an hour in a bus.

Richardson calls such factors a "time tax" that inhibits upward economic mobility for individuals and adversely affects the local economy as a whole.



Forsyth Tech student Samuel Cruz

"Students tell us that in some cases, they miss classes offered for their major, take fewer credits, and have less access to professors than desired due to transportation challenges," Blizard and Richardson write in their commissioned report: "A Study of Forsyth Technical Community College Students: How Do Transportation Challenges Impact Their Educational Experience?"

Cruz and another bus-riding student, Letroya McCray, welcome the research. "If it could make the bus system better, that would be great," said McCray, who is 26 and is studying graphic arts and imaging. Riding the bus to Forsyth Tech takes her 30 to 45 minutes. When she catches a ride in a car, it takes 15 to 20 minutes, she said. "Taking the bus most definitely takes up a lot of time."

CSEM's research could lead to solutions.

For more about CSEM's transportation research, go to www.wssu.edu/csem, click the Research button and scroll to Working Papers.



Members of the Tiny Creators program take part in an exercise teaching them financial literacy. Photos by Antonia Imes

Giving the public the tools it needs for economic mobility

CSEM breaks down complex problems like we're sitting around a kitchen table hashing it out, understanding it and potential solutions together. That's the way CSEM shares its research and ideas and engages with the public on solutions.

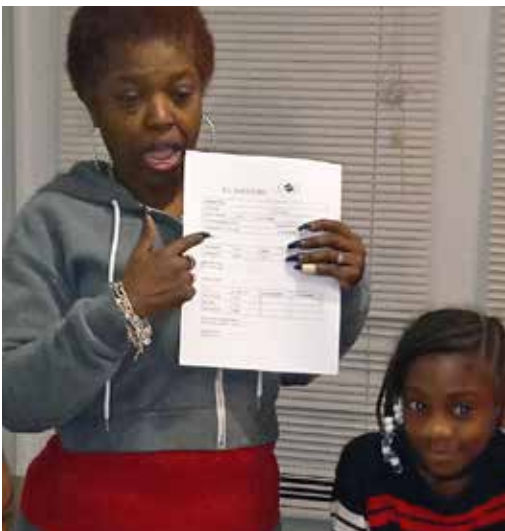
CSEM does that by encouraging financial literacy courses in public high schools and through a nonprofit initiative it supports under the leadership of CSEM Associate Director Alvin Atkinson, Project M.O.O.R.E. Located in East Winston, the project includes lessons introducing elementary and middle-school students to financial literacy. Through constant engagement with its community partners, CSEM realizes that financial literacy is crucial for upward economic mobility, in buying first homes and in rising in general.

Another way CSEM engages with the public on economic mobility is through its work on "The Benefits Cliff." When hourly workers receive a raise, they often lose public benefits, a heartbreaking "one-step forward, two-steps back."

In 2019, CSEM took part in a public dialogue about ways to remedy that problem. That led CSEM to do its own research on the question, with CSEM Director Craig Richardson saying a better term for the problem is "disincentives desert." He felt that an

“ Professor Richardson’s minimum wage analysis is one of the few new takes on the minimum wage in thirty years. He finds that a 107% increase in the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour may barely change the lives of low-wage workers who are currently drawing social benefits such as food stamps (SNAP benefits), child care, and/or housing assistance. ”

– Professor Richard McKenzie,
University of California at Irvine



innovative tool was needed to help employees and employers understand the problem, equipping them with information they might use to connect in the search for solutions.

Richardson worked with local research partner Forsyth Futures on the unique tool, a Social Benefits Calculator, which CSEM made available to the public on its website in 2021, www.wssu.edu/csem. The calculator enables anyone to experience what it is like to be receiving social benefits and experience a wage increase. “Designed for Forsyth County, the calculator shows that if you are receiving social benefits, you face huge penalties for earning more money, as benefits decline in many cases it’s effectively the same as 90 % income tax rate or higher,” Richardson says.

CSEM is working with local firms on creative wage and benefits structures that may provide alternative paths to move up the economic ladder— using its calculator as a starting point for conversations among employees, employers, policy experts and legislators. Local high schools and institutions of higher education may also find it useful.

The calculator, and CSEM’s efforts to encourage financial literacy, are important parts of its commitment to engage with the public for upward economic mobility.

MOVING FROM MIMINUM WAGE TO LIVING WAGE, ON SOCIAL BENEFITS

Scenario: Single parent, with two small children in subsidized child care in Forsyth County.

	HOURLY WAGE (FULL-TIME)		
	@\$7.25	@\$15.00	NET DIFFERENCE
Monthly Income	\$1,160.00	\$2,400.00	\$1,240.00
Social Benefits			
Food stamps (SNAP)	\$517.30	\$297.85	-\$219.45
Subsidized child care	\$1,460.00	\$1,336.00	-\$124.00
Housing voucher	\$488.80	\$154.00	-\$334.80
WIC benefits	\$180.00	\$180.00	\$0.00
Earned income tax credit	\$464.00	\$327.15	-\$135.85
Total social benefits	\$3,110.10	\$2,295.00	-\$815.10
Federal and state taxes	\$88.74	\$314.70	\$225.96
Total monthly benefits & after tax income	\$4,181.36	\$4,380.30	\$198.94

Source: Craig J. Richardson, using the WSSU Center for the Study of Economic Mobility’s Social Benefits Calculator

Confronting a crisis through research, collective hope

A few years ago, WSSU Chancellor Elwood Robinson was jarred by a figure he came across in his reading: Nationwide, Forsyth County was third from the bottom in upward economic mobility. “If you were born into poverty, it was difficult to escape,” Robinson said recently. He was troubled by the county’s contradiction: the wealth for many, the generational poverty for many more. He works daily to reverse that contradiction, encouraging students and staff to reach beyond the campus walls.

Craig Richardson, a WSSU economics professor, was also struck by the county’s low rating for economic mobility, and that led him to form CSEM and become its executive director.

Forsyth County Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, having grown up in modest means in Winston-Salem, was not surprised by the figure, but is just as determined to reverse it. That figure, aggravated by the pandemic and violence, puts the county in crisis mode, he suggested.

The converging paths of these men was readily apparent during a June 23, 2022 panel moderated by Chancellor Robinson at WSSU and sponsored by the Emerging Leaders program of the Winston-Salem Chamber. Robinson, Kimbrough, Richardson and the chamber participants tackled generational poverty tied to inequities, ranging from transportation to education, and sought solutions.

“It’s not rocket science, people. Social issues not addressed become criminal issues.”

– Bobby Kimbrough
Forsyth County Sheriff

In the summer of 2020, Robinson said, the COVID pandemic underscored the local inequities. Forty percent of black businesses nationwide were lost, he said, as well as an equal number of businesses owned by women. “How do we build that back?” Robinson asked. “That’s the challenge.”

CSEM is confronting that and other challenges through community engagement and state-of-the-art, data-driven research.



Craig Richardson and Chancellor Elwood Robinson. Photo by Bruce Chapman

“Nobody was really measuring this,” Richardson said. “How do we have impact? What is working and what is not?”

More is needed. Sheriff Kimbrough said issues of hunger and educational inequalities are not being addressed. “I go in houses where kids are trying to figure out how to eat,” he said. “Then I go in other houses where you need a tour guide to show you around.”

A main problem, he suggested, is the lack of money directed to East Winston. For example, he said, more money is needed for after-school and summer programs, he said, and banks with branches in the area should contribute. “Money is a game-changer,” he said. “We can change this narrative.”

People he said, have to see a pathway to better futures. “It’s not rocket science, people,” he said. “Social issues not addressed become criminal issues.”

He talked about the high human and financial costs of gun violence, brought home recently to many more local residents by shootings at Hanes Mall and Mount Tabor High School. There were 44 homicides in the city in 2021 and hundreds of shootings. Many of the victims are young black males. There have already been 18 homicides in 2022. “The thought that violence will stay there, it won’t come here, you can erase that thought,” Kimbrough said.

Kimbrough and Robinson encouraged their audience to speak out to “change the narrative.”

“You can’t sit silent,” Kimbrough said. He said a “Hope Force” should be formed to confront the issues of inequity tied to low economic mobility.

Robinson said: “We’re preparing for tomorrow, to be able to change the narrative.”

CSEM timeline

September 2021:	CSEM Associate Director Alvin Atkinson continues his efforts with community groups to combat gun violence, including through Project M.O.O.R.E., supported by CSEM. CSEM Research Manager Zach Blizard publishes a column in the <i>Winston-Salem Journal</i> on his analysis of nationwide data showing high rates of economic mobility among graduates of WSSU and other HBCUs. CSEM Director Craig Richardson and Blizard began second round of research of public transportation issues on the Forsyth Technical Community College campus, working with the school. CSEM celebrates its fourth birthday. Forsyth County and businesses begin using CSEM's Social Benefits Calculator.
October 2021:	CSEM participates in the IdeasCity festival as part of a select group of innovative organizations.
November 2021:	CSEM holds a nationwide webinar with the Washington, D.C.-based think tank New America on their shared and groundbreaking research about the huge challenges in finding mortgages for houses priced under \$100,000. The Do School, supported by CSEM, opens in East Winston, coupling training in carpentry with building workforce housing.
January 2022:	Project M.O.O.R.E begins introductory financial education classes for middle-school students in its after-school program.
February 2022:	Triad International Ballet, supported by CSEM, begins classes in East Winston for at-risk youth.
April 2022:	The city of Winston-Salem presents CSEM with its annual Fair Housing Breaking Barriers Award for 2022 for its "furtherance of fair housing opportunities within the city." CSEM's documentary on the Forsyth County Homeownership Program, <i>Home Stretch</i> , premieres before a large audience at the RiverRun International Film Festival in Winston-Salem.
June 2022:	The City of Winston-Salem shows <i>Home Stretch</i> to a select audience. CSEM Director Richardson takes part in a panel discussion on economic mobility at WSSU moderated by WSSU Chancellor Elwood Robinson.
July 2022:	Rasheeda Shankle of the CSEM-supported group Honorable Youth unveils plans for a communal housing community for single mothers and their children to pursue upward economic mobility.



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