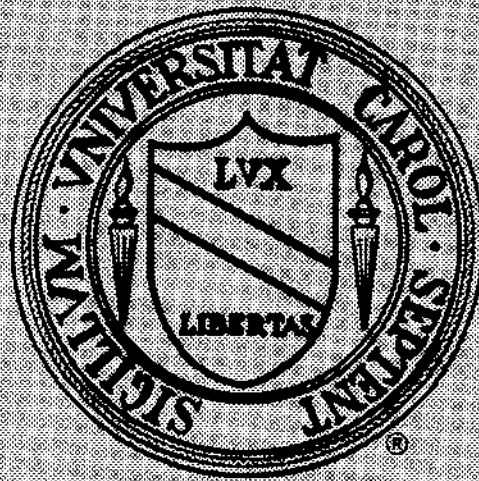


Southern Regional Policy Center

Prospectus



by

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ABSTRACT

The Southern Regional Policy Center is conceived as the means by which the South will link its many scattered policy resources, principally through its systems of higher education, and build a new region-wide set of "Foundation Factors" essential to the region's development, while striving to build new alliances and strengthen existing ones between policy researchers, policy makers, and local officials.

The coming decade will be a critical period of development in the southern states and regions of the United States. Much of the economic base and overall preparedness that brought initial prosperity to rural regions and the poorest workers will erode beyond recognition and repair. This plan identifies a number of new "Foundation Factors" important for economic development that appear to be emerging in small cities and metropolitan areas of the south; while significant, they alone are incapable of pulling the entire region and its neediest citizens into an ever more competitive mainstream that flows in directions set by international and technological advances.

The principal staff proposing this Center bring significant expertise in economic development and policy research, and have established networks of colleagues in the region and through out the nation. The Center will operate under the University of North Carolina umbrella and will build region-wide networks of research scholars, professional and community clients, and policy partners. Numerous core operations, significant policy research, and related regional development activities are envisioned.

The full set of documents that support the Center concept includes: 1) Prospectus, 2) Action Plan, and 3) Questions & Answers.

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SOUTHERN REGIONAL POLICY CENTER: A PROSPECTUS

Untold millions of dollars from foundations, corporations, and governments have been poured into policy research regarding the birth, the development, and the continuing weakness of the Southern economy. In the minds of some, much of this investment has yet to be fully exploited.

This Center's price tag (nearly \$3 million over 4 years) taken alone is a sizeable yet essential investment to leverage available talents and resources gained earlier at considerably higher costs, thereby ensuring that actions taken on broad fronts finally yield long-overdue social dividends from effective policy choices. It is important to stress that this organization is ready to open its doors, and that the funding requested will be put to work immediately (*See also "Questions and Answers," about SRPC for Foundations, Government and Corporate Sponsors*). Moreover, it is the seed money needed to leverage the University of North Carolina's institutional commitment to help ensure the Center's permanent presence in Southern affairs and to establish the importance of its mission in the region.

The Center seeks to effect *fundamental change* in a number of areas, and most importantly in the South's utilization of all its human resources, as the broad talents and potential contributions of currently "dependent" populations are the region's most underutilized asset.

The mission of the Southern Regional Policy Center (SRPC) is to further organize and actively collaborate with those constituencies who realize that mutual gain will accompany the implementation of fundamentally sound, regionally-oriented development policies.

A clear consensus is evolving in the South that new opportunities exist for genuine regional policy collaboration among Southern leaders and scholars, and that this plan's fresh and workable approach to public policy research is an idea whose time has come. The Southern Regional Policy Center will seek to create a regional vision by capitalizing on the unexploited networks that already exist and the natural symbiotic relationship of policy research professionals, educational and policy organizations, and the decision makers in the communities they serve.

Professor Edward Bergman (UNC Department of City and Regional Planning, or "DCRP"), Rick Carlisle (DCRP graduate, 1980), Dr. Stuart Rosenfeld (DCRP adjunct faculty), and Dean Judith Wegner (UNC Law School) have designed and now propose a permanent Southern center for policy research at the University of North

Carolina. Sufficient groundwork has been laid to allow the SRPC to begin its operations very quickly after funding, with an experienced internal core administration and research staff comprised of the principals, fellows, and policy colleagues in many Southern institutions of higher learning, including faculty scholars and graduate students from historically black colleges and universities.

The Southern Regional Policy Center is conceived as the means by which the South will link its many scattered policy sources and build a new region-wide set of Foundation Factors essential to its development. The Center will operate with an "inclusionary" policy that actively engages many organizations, officials, scholars and communities across the South.

The region's people and leaders face a formidable challenge in the coming years to correct the downward trends evident across a wide spectrum of social and economic concerns, and the Southern Regional Policy Center will seek to provide strong leadership toward meeting this challenge.

Perhaps the greatest of these challenges is to include historically disadvantaged and dependent populations in this revitalization. Even if driven only by the simple calculus of self-interest, unavoidable demographic changes mean that historically significant white advantages will pale as the region becomes ever more dependent on previously dependent citizens who are destined to become the South's most numerous (and productive) workers. President Clinton says it best: "we don't have a person to waste."

The historically dependent populations must be expected and enabled to make significant contributions to the growth of median family and per capita incomes, and accordingly, this plan looks to them as genuine partners in the revitalization of the Southern economy.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) will be expected to become major partners in ensuring the economic emergence of these populations, by increasing policy research capacities and the effectiveness of curricula in preparing our region's graduates for meaningful and productive careers.

The principals and staff of the SRPC intend to develop an effective regional institution that can serve as a long term source of high-quality, consistent, non-partisan information for state policy makers and practitioners. The model envisioned for SRPC's internal operation is based on the long-established traditions of professional schools, which stress involvement in community service and public affairs. A very key feature will be a research process that blends research scholarship provided by university faculty and the policy

savvy of experienced professionals, forming networks of academic researchers, interested public policy partners and client communities throughout the region.

A critical element of the SRPC's mission is to identify and develop new approaches and solutions to the challenges facing the region. Toward this end, the principals will invite local, state, regional and international organizations with an interest in influencing development policy to be part of the process of reinforcing the direction and importance of the Center's research agenda.

Among the first action steps will be to systematically create a research network of scholars from local & regional colleges and state universities. This beginnings of a "policy partner" network will increase and sustain the SRPC's ability to identify and quantify its research agenda, and to identify other "partners."

These potential partners are numerous, and include state and local governments, "think tanks," and non-profit organizations such as the Southern Growth Policies Board, MDC, Inc. and the Southern Rural Development Center, numerous foundations including the Mid-South Foundation, Southern corporations, and the thousands of local officials in communities around the region. A primary objective of the Southern Regional Policy Center is to cooperate and interact with these officials, and to provide information and assistance they put can put to good use in their policy planning and implementation.

The Center will be able to focus the immense research potential of this network in a way that heretofore has not been exploited. By coordinating, stimulating and combining the efforts of researchers throughout the region, what is now a collection of widely-dispersed, narrowly focused, and at times redundant research projects will flourish under the umbrella of the Southern Regional Policy Center.

The unique backgrounds, research goals, and established peer networks of the principals will be put to immediate and direct use in erecting this umbrella. Utilizing and building upon the skills and experience of the principals, the core staff and the network of scholars (the beginnings of which already exists within the contacts of the principals), the Center will carry out a large and ambitious "research agenda" focusing on the Foundation Factors that are presented fully in *Southern Regional Policy Center: Action Plan*.

The research agenda of the Center has been formulated from the combined expertise and interests of the principals, which includes service in state and local government, academic research, public policy development, advocacy, and consulting across a broad spectrum of issues that effect the South. Under this plan, the principals will organize their projects on a regional basis with direct

access to and support from networks of potential research colleagues, policy partners, and public policy clients.

The third cornerstone of the Center's plan is the development of a network of client communities from around the region. This will include state and local governments and community-based organizations, who will be involved in the Center's program development in order to:

- take advantage of their practical experience to understand regional economies and identify knowledge gaps
- stimulate demand for information, and
- encourage new and innovative policy designs and programs - in an environment in which these decision-makers are able to reflect on experience and share information with others.

The Center will link its networks, disseminate its findings, and get valuable feedback by establishing electronic policy bulletin boards, sponsoring regional seminars, symposia, and forums.

SRPC will commit itself to an active publishing schedule with products tailored to intended audiences, including annual reports, periodic newsletters, research reports, and occasional policy monographs. The possibility of endorsing and soliciting important manuscripts for an independently edited series of policy books and monographs will also be explored with a publisher.

The principals are committed to making the Southern Regional Policy Center a pre-eminent force in the revitalization of the region's prosperity, and are certain that all groups of people in the South (including many previously dependent populations) will ultimately benefit from more effective policy research, design and implementation.

Each of these groups will be called upon to contribute to this revamping of the economic structure of the region. As a result of their contributions to regional development, productivity will increase, payrolls will rise, tax revenues and public services will expand, and the entire South may yet enjoy levels of prosperity and growth commensurate with the talent and resources of the region.