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THE CITY OF THE FUTURE
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FROM THE DEAN

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TO THE TOP

WE HAVE WRAPPED UP ANOTHER GREAT ACADEMIC YEAR.

After hitting a record $23 million in externally funded research in fiscal year 2017, we have secured a top 20 spot on the U.S. News & World Report’s list of Best Graduate Schools in Public Affairs. Our departments and centers are all generating buzz, and our stakeholders are taking notice.

Within our pages, you will read about the vision and work of several of our outstanding faculty and staff. Urban Studies Institute Director Jan Nijman and his team are working on policy solutions critical to addressing the problems cities around the world are facing. Distinguished Professor Tim Sass has created a new lab through which he, Dan Kreisman, other faculty and external partners will develop and evaluate policies and programs. Their first challenge is to provide better outcomes for K-12 and technical school students. And our Georgia Health Policy Center is advancing research and helping create policies and programs that improve health and well-being in our schools and communities.

Our students and alumni continue to make waves around the world, and their stories are inspiring. Criminal justice alumna Brian C. Harris, aka the “Hurricane General,” led the U.S. military response in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria last fall. M.P.P. candidate and Fulbright student Kirill Protasov was a delegate in a working group of Stanford University’s prestigious U.S.-Russia Forum. M.P.A. alumna Christina Cummins is helping a historic Atlanta neighborhood strengthen its business corridor. And M.S.W. candidate Kimberlee Beasley is leading a local housing authority’s campaign to end smoking. We’re immensely proud to call these students and alumni our own.

Today, advanced technologies, the gig economy, data analytics and artificial intelligence are quickly changing the landscape for everyone. Our school is engaged at several levels, investing in the infrastructure our faculty and staff will need to help our students and alumni compete in this new world. That investment will enable our faculty to produce quality research that best advises policy-making for new challenges.

I’m thrilled to have joined the university as Dean of the Andrew Young School and invite you to follow our work. We’re on a journey to develop leaders in public and nonprofit management and stewards of policy who are prepared to meet the collective obstacles of the future.

Sally Wallace
Dean

Sally Wallace
Dean
Lost Class
Middle-income Americans are a dying breed.

BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013, the share of middle-income households in the United States dropped 3.6 percentage points to 45.6 percent. Where did this population go? The Midwest also showed the largest increases in high-income households, although the differences across regions were not large. The policy brief, “The Loss of the Middle Class,” explores occupation, industry composition and other factors associated with the interstate differences in the nation’s household income shares.

A HEALTHY FOUNDATION
New Initiative improves health and wellness for public housing residents.

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION has awarded Georgia more than $390,000 for a partnership that will create opportunities for improving health and wellness with residents in public housing. The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) and Southface, a nonprofit organization that promotes sustainable communities, will create Healthy Green Building plans to inform housing and grounds renovations in collaboration with local public housing authorities and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The joint venture will also design a Health and Housing Learning Academy to build capacity with local stakeholders, including residents, and conduct a multi-year evaluation to quantify impacts over time.

“What this initiative not only aims to implement health-promoting programs and policies at public housing authority partner sites,” said Leigh Alderman, a senior adviser at GHPC, “it is designed to contribute to the evidence base on how housing and public health organizations can intentionally build health and well-being into housing policy and programs.”

NEWS

$23 MILLION
Sponsored research funding in the Andrew Young School reached a record high of $23 million in fiscal year 2017, a 74 percent increase over the previous fiscal year. This record includes grants for interdisciplinary research with other Georgia State colleges and schools.

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE, A CITY
The Center for State and Local Finance and the Fiscal Research Center provides analysis for city feasibility studies in Georgia. Andrew Young School students have included those for the proposed cities of Eagle’s Landing (Henry County) and Skidaway (Chatham County), as well as South Fulton and Tucker, which both incorporated in 2016.

WHAT VALUE CULTURE?
South Africa’s cultural communities can now track the economic impact of their events with the South African Festival Economic Impact Calculator. Developed by economist Bruce Seaman and the South African Cultural Observatory’s chief research strategist, the new online tool allows communities and sponsors to estimate the degree to which the cultural economy can increase the size of the local economy.

CLIMATE CONTROLS
FEDERAL AND LOCAL HOUSING POLICIES such as mortgage tax deductions, minimum lot sizes and tax regulations may inadvertently contribute to higher carbon emissions, according to economist Kyle Mangum. His latest research on the regional impact of such policies found some may tilt homeowners towards higher-emission lots. It also suggested the need for a more thorough examination of these policies he said. “Policies that reduce a consumer’s housing costs increase the demand for larger homes that use more energy,” he said. “Policies that determine lot sizes often create lower-density lots, leading to more gasoline consumption. Both results have direct effects on carbon emissions.”

WELCOME HOME
Immigrant-friendly cities are on the rise.

A new wave of local government policies aimed at improving the success of immigrant populations has emerged across a number of cities nationwide. Joining traditional integration efforts that focus on the legal status and rights of immigrants, these new policies emphasize their economic integration and contributions to community development and economic revitalization.

As of July 2015, 50 cities in 31 states — including 15 cities in the South — had joined Welcoming America, a national grassroots cooperative that started in 2009 to provide a place for immigrant-serving organizations to share resources and ideas. Researchers Xi Huang and Cathy Yang Liu recently examined these cities’ characteristics in a Center for State and Local Finance report. They looked at geography and demographics, the cities’ programs aimed at helping immigrant populations and the rationale behind establishing a Welcoming City.

On average, these cities differ systematically from others in demographic characteristics, economic conditions, fiscal capacity and political orientation, suggesting that participation as a Welcoming City is a complex decision conditional on a series of urban realities. Welcoming Cities tend to have more foreign-born residents as a percentage of their population along with a denser network of immigrant-serving organizations than other cities, showing the strength of interest groups and local support. However, they have higher unemployment rates on average: 11.4 percent in 2010 compared to 8.9 percent in other cities. Welcoming Cities also had a smaller share of manufacturing in 2010, with manufacturing jobs making up 9.7 percent of local employment compared with 11.6 percent in other cities.

The researchers identified four primary sets of strategies these cities use to attract and retain immigrants: business development, workforce development, community development and public safety. There are strong economic development rationale behind these policies, they conclude. The analysis serves as a framework to better understand the Welcoming Cities initiative and to further the conversation around and implementation of improved immigration policies.
Atlanta is a greenspace paradise. On the one hand, it is a place of lush greenery where our communities and neighborhoods are nestled within a rich urban forest that is its defining ecological feature. On the other hand, the City of Atlanta lacks publicly accessible parks. While two-thirds of Atlantans live within a 10-minute walk of a park or publicly accessible greenspace, one-third do not.

Another defining feature of our city is its booming population growth. The development associated with that growth creates tensions as trees are felled daily under the banner of progress, and opportunities to create new parks take a back seat to market forces. However, the City of Atlanta is attempting to bring these tensions into balance through an ambitious long-range planning effort led by Tim Keane, who is attempting to think big about the role parks, trails, and greenspaces could play in the future of Atlanta.

We are aided by partners like Trees Atlanta, which brings expertise about our tree canopy and The Conservation Fund that helps to acquire parkland on behalf of the City of Atlanta’s parks department. As city leaders plan for a doubling of population over the next 25 years, Park Pride has encouraged a similar goal by setting a specific set of policy actions designed to increase access to nature and to protect nature as the city grows and develops.

Keane recently pointed out that we’re in a position to see nature as a parameter around which we design things. How to do that? One way is by increasing population density in areas of the city that already have the infrastructure to support it, ensuring access to transit, sidewalks, and parks already in existence. Another way is to rely more heavily on our emerging trail network — including the Atlanta BeltLine and PATH — to connect people to people, the city and nature. Atlanta stands to be the most trail-connected city in the United States by 2025 should all the proposed trail projects come to fruition, according to the PATH Foundation.

The Atlanta City Design process is leading the way to heavily involve communities to activate the inventory of the city’s natural assets and to protect nature as the city grows and develops.

In “Demand for New Cities: Property Value Capitalization of Municipal Incorporation,” (Regional Science and Urban Economics), Patrick and Christopher M storefronts examined the incorporation of seven new cities in metro Atlanta over a decade, beginning with Sandy Springs in 2009.

“The formation of new cities is one response to counties in metro Atlanta and across the U.S. providing urban services to increasingly diverse populations in unincorporated areas,” said Patrick. “People have voluntarily chosen to incur additional costs to receive the real and perceived benefits of having a municipal — rather than county — government provide services. They may also use it as a way to limit redistribution through taxes and public goods.”

The most important predictor for putting a parcel “at risk” of being included in a newly incorporated city, they found, was its property value. “The study will help county and new city governments consider the fiscal consequences of incorporation.”

“I expect we will continue to see a demand for cities in metro Atlanta and similar cities,” Patrick said. “If that is the case, it is important for policymakers to know a couple of things: first, whether home buyer behavior reveals that, on average, they value the net benefit of incorporation and second, how the new city’s property tax base might be expected to change.”

**Chartered Economy**

Charter schools’ economic impact on communities

**NEW CITY DOLLARS**

When people voluntarily choose to form a city, residential property values and property taxes in the new city are more likely to increase, according to economist Carianne Patrick. Property values can increase 4 to 5 percent within a model for other cities that have historically been victims of sprawl. We’re in a position where embracing both of our defining features — growth and greenspace — could result in a scenario, if done right, of having our forest and having more people live in it, too, of growing and urbanizing, while at the same time protecting, preserving and even expanding the ecology of our city.

*GEORGIA HOMES CLOSER TO startup charter schools new higher property values than those farther away, according to a report by the Center for State and Local Finance. “Georgia households were willing to pay three-to-five percent more to be within a half-mile of startup charter schools with priority attendance zones. This effect increased to roughly eight percent in the city of Atlanta,” said economist and coauthor Peter Bluestone. The report authors examined home sales from 2004-13 near 52 startup charter schools. In Atlanta’s suburbs, households seemed willing to pay 2 to 6 percent more for charter schools without priority zones, depending on their relative distance from the schools. This suggests that a startup charter school can diminish the relationship between the quality of a zoned traditional public school and higher home values by offering an alternative. The findings suggest there could be similar effects in other large metropolitan areas.*

*GROWING WITH GREENSPACE*

by Michael Halicki (M.P.A. ’08), Executive Director, Park Pride

While two-thirds of Atlantans live within a 10-minute walk of a park or publicly accessible greenspace, one-third do not.

Another defining feature of our city is its booming population growth. The development associated with that growth creates tensions as trees are felled daily under the banner of progress, and opportunities to create new parks take a back seat to market forces. However, the City of Atlanta is attempting to bring these tensions into balance through an ambitious long-range planning effort led by Tim Keane, who is attempting to think big about the role parks, trails, and greenspaces could play in the future of Atlanta.

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Atlanta has the opportunity to serve as a model for other cities that have historically been victims of sprawl. We’re in a position where embracing both of our defining features — growth and greenspace — could result in a scenario, if done right, of having our forest and having more people live in it, too, of growing and urbanizing, while at the same time protecting, preserving and even expanding the ecology of our city.
HELD BACK

Institutional challenges in desegregated schools may undermine opportunities.

... - systems or environments inside and outside educational institutions that affect underrepresented populations? 

In general, I explore how institutions like school districts or schools affect outcomes for these groups. For example, structural racism and institutional biases are being discussed nowadays. I want to learn more about how people operate in these situations that dictate what they do," said Capers, assistant professor of public management and policy.

In a recent study published in the American Review of Public Administration, Capers used data from the nation’s 1,800 largest school districts to compare the level of disparity in academic grouping across racial groups. The topic was suggested by her dissertation, which examined why school districts would continue to pursue desegregated schools when the courts have suggested there’s no need, and the effect this decision has on school boards, teachers and students.

I realized the systems in racially balanced, diverse schools and districts are probably a little different than those in segregated schools, but I didn’t know how," she said. "How do the people in these two different school environments interact with the students? Does the environment make it more or less challenging for minority teachers to use their positions to push for equity in gifted education for minority students?"

Although Capers found minority students underrepresented in gifted education courses in desegregated and segregated school districts, they were more likely to be underrepresented in desegregated districts. The research supports her theory that structural factors are important in predicting student outcomes.

"The broad assumption and desegregation literature finding that desegregated schools that underrepresent the opportunities that minority students receive.

"The racial balance of school districts is a structural factor that should continue to be considered in discussions of school equity, quality and performance."
BREAKING THE HABIT

Student Kimberlee Beasley (M.S.W.) plans smoking cessation campaign for public housing residents.

ATLANTA 911 DISPATCHER KIMBERLEE BEASLEY responds to calls from people who find themselves in a variety of health and safety crises, speeding assistance their way. Now an intern with the East Point Housing Authority, Beasley is learning how to prevent residents from suffering their own personal health crises by co-leading planning for the authority’s smoking cessation campaign.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) introduced regulations in 2017 requiring housing authorities to create smoke-free campuses. All East Point Housing Authority properties, which house about 560 individuals, will be smoke-free by July 31.

Beasley is helping the authority build resident buy-in by holding public feedback sessions to determine the scope of the ban — whether to allow smoking areas — and to help finalize its violation process. Their comments will also inform the authority’s “Smoke-Free Campus” marketing campaign.

“The agency is trying to decide which way to go,” said Beasley. “We are also trying to get our residents to understand the bigger picture, that it’s a HUD policy change. We do expect there will be a backlash.”

To date, most resident feedback has been from non-smokers, many of whom allow others to smoke in their homes. Concerns have centered on how the policy will be implemented and whether violators will have to move. Some fear being falsely accused and penalized.

“The residents are giving us potential issues to consider,” Beasley said. “We have some who’ve been here 30-plus years. To tell them now they can no longer smoke in their home can be traumatic. We have to consider these residents and reevaluate the penalties and violation process. We also want to make sure they understand we will provide smoking cessation resources.

“We know quitting smoking is hard, but we also want the residents to realize that continuing smoking is harmful for them and everyone who lives with that smoke. Everyone is impacted. We will find the best way to convey that message.”

Best in Class

Georgia APEX program provides school-aged children access to mental health services.

One in five children in the United States has a diagnosable mental health disorder, but only 21 percent of those who need mental health services receive care, research has found.

It is difficult for schools to ignore issues that may impair a child’s ability to focus, engage and learn in the classroom. For this reason, Ann DiGirolamo and Deana Farmer of the Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC), in partnership with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), are exploring integrating children’s mental health programs into schools as a potential way to address these issues.

The Georgia APEX Program builds infrastructure and increases access to mental health services for school-aged youth throughout the state. During the 2015-16 school year, DBHDD funded APEX to improve access to needed behavioral health services.

“Children’s behavioral health is a serious public health problem that affects the children involved, their families and society as a whole,” said DiGirolamo. She directs the GHPC’s Center of Excellence (COE) for Children’s Behavioral Health, which provides technical assistance in program implementation, evaluation and program sustainability to Georgia APEX Program grantees.

APEX granted funding to 29 community mental health agencies that worked with schools across the state to increase access to care, expand early detection and increase partnerships with community mental health providers. The program served an average 991 students per month during 2015-16, according to a preliminary COE program evaluation. Providers formed partnerships with 136 schools throughout Georgia and provided more than 20,000 mental health services in the schools.

“The program has made significant progress towards meeting its objectives,” said Daniel McKay, director of the Office of Children, Young Adults and Families at DBHDD. “We will leverage the lessons learned to inform future program planning and administration.”

PLAN GLOBAL, SHOP LOCAL

Alumna Christina Cummings (M.P.A. ’11) leads underserved business districts to sustainability.

ATLANTA’S CASCADE HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD has a champion in Christina Cummings, a project manager in the Department of City Planning’s new Economic Development unit. Once a small business owner herself, she helps communities strengthen sustainability through their small businesses.

Cummings manages Cascade Next, the city’s new “community activation tool.” The initiative, a partnership between Economic Development and the department’s Atlanta City Studio, is building momentum among the more than 100 businesses in the Cascade Heights Commercial District and support from its neighboring community.

To start, she helped put together a series of strategic listening sessions that brought together more than 250 stakeholders from the neighborhood. A group of area business leaders then decided to create the Cascade Business Association. Cummings helped the new association get organized, get its leadership seated and write the organization documents. The association provided the framework for its volunteers to take the lead and move the initiatives further.

“We knew that to make substantive change to the commercial corridor, businesses had to be at the center of the conversation,” she said. “We support them, but they have to be the drivers.”

Cummings produced the Cascade Next Business Breakfast Series to expand financial literacy, helped form strategic planning and signature-event planning steering committees, produced a comprehensive marketing profile to attract investment and brought in a panel of financial experts to discuss loan programs and resources.

She has introduced Cascade’s business owners to a Storefront Redesign Program that provides matching grants to bring business owners together with architects and a design team from the Atlanta Design Studio. Together, they plan façade improvements.

“Business districts are stronger when the owners see, talk, network, know and pool their resources with each other,” Cummings said. “Cascade’s owners are starting to see themselves as a collective.”

The district is also attracting the attention of others.

“Cascade Heights is the pilot for our model: convene, engage, share overall goals and then let the community drive the initiatives to get the end results,” Cummings said. “More communities are being considered.”
In the late 1990s, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce president Sam Williams brought the city’s top executives in industry, higher ed and government together for an Industries of the Mind economic development initiative. Their goal was to attract more technology workers and investment while a “War for Talent,” as many called it, was being waged among cities around the nation.

“We were all trying to recruit, grow and retain a highly educated workforce – millennials!” he said. “The top criteria for companies looking to relocate were highly educated workers and an ability to hire them quickly. Atlanta had a competitive edge in both retaining local college grads and attracting them from around the Southeast. We needed to tell our story nationally, and much louder.”

Atlanta’s message worked. But “unintended consequences,” including gentrification, began pushing lower wage earners out of the city.

“Now we’ve got to fix that issue,” says Williams, a distinguished professor of practice in Georgia State University’s new Urban Studies Institute (USI).

“The jobs of the future are increasingly found in major urban areas,” agrees Distinguished University Professor Jan Nijman, the institute’s director. “As this development continues, metropolitan and regional areas will continue to grow.”

Nijman’s research has taken him to cities in West Europe, South Asia and various parts of North America.

Atlanta is projected to add a population about the size of metro Charlotte, N.C., by 2040.

“Atlanta is a prime example of vigorous urban growth accompanied by new possibilities, but it also demands the right policies and management,” says Nijman.

“How do you manage the growth and challenges of the city, and those of the suburbs and exurbs around major cities? The stability of neighborhoods, the ability to provide affordable housing, transportation, mobility and access to healthcare and other public goods are becoming increasingly important.”

Cities of the future must be dynamic in providing decent livelihoods. They must be resilient, the policy-induced ability of an economy to withstand – or recover from – the effects of external shocks like extreme weather events or those that arise out of economic openness. They must provide social inclusion and make all groups of people within a society feel valued and important.

Sustainability is also a necessity.

“Cities must meet the needs of today’s population without compromising those of future generations,” Nijman says. “Sustainable development includes environmental, social and economic sustainability, urban and regional systems that must be fed and kept moving. As urban populations increase, the management of society becomes the management challenge of cities.”

A fundamental challenge is how to align the traditional foci that guide the development of growing cities – housing, transportation, safety, health, education and economic development – with the citizenry’s demand for more equitable governance, responsive policies and responsible public management. Economic resilience, equity, inclusivity, environmental justice and sustainability are the new framework with which urban communities will build better futures for all.

Urban research universities have a unique responsibility in researching and addressing these challenges. The Urban Studies Institute advances Georgia State’s urban mission through interdisciplinary research and teaching. Its work, examples of which follow, will lead to a better understanding and more effective management of the complex challenges facing cities and urbanizing regions.

HOW WILL TOMORROW’S METROPOLIS ADDRESS THEIR PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES?

by JENNIFER GIARRANTANO

THE CITY OF THE FUTURE
He cautions that housing finance policies can have a segregating impact on who lives where.

“Overly tight mortgage markets hurt both rental and homeowner options,” he says, “because we need to loosen up those credit markets a bit and provide more options, provide a little more help with down payment assistance and more flexible, yet still responsible, underwriting.”

He points to proposals to remake Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, as totally privatized:

“We don’t want to privatize the housing finance system,” he says. “Risk-based pricing is a problem. If Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac pool the risk, and everyone is offered roughly the same rates. If they are privatized, that won’t happen. High-risk families will be priced out of the market. While they are least able to afford it. The higher the rate you give them, the more likely they are to default, or its cost will force them to buy into lower-income neighborhoods where the houses are cheaper.”

There are policy solutions that, if adopted, would support an inclusive city.

“We need to begin looking at housing as ‘infrastructure for cities,’” Immergluck says. We need to provide much more local and state funding for housing, in general, especially in growing cities.

We build transportation infrastructure with bonds that fund that infrastructure. We need to do the same thing with housing.

“To do this, we must understand there’s a public benefit to investing in affordable housing that serves folks who work in restaurants and provide basic services, like city and office workers, the young and elderly, a very diverse set of folks, including those who need it the most,” Immergluck says. There has been some recent, incremental action along this line in Atlanta, he says.

“The city has just issued $45 million in housing opportunity bonds to provide more affordable housing. These bonds allow housing to be less expensive by financing development at a low cost. It’s not enough, but it is a start.”

Immergluck follows the affordable housing policies emerging in other states. Chicago, he notes, has mandated inclusionary zoning — like Atlanta’s BeltLine — where neighborhoods are targeted.

His policy research has brought national attention to the topics of affordable housing and finance.

SUSTAINING SOUL AS CITIES, SUBURBS GROW

Growth in cities, and growth in suburbs, is not happening in established urban cores, he says. “It is happening on the periphery in increasingly diverse and dynamic ‘suburban’ fringes. Between the wealthy outer suburbs and downtown, there is an amorphous, de-centered urban fabric which, some of my Toronto colleagues have termed the ‘in-between city.’”

The in-between city is both disconnected and hyper-connected. There are interstates connecting vast areas, airports, massive intermodal facilities, power stations and refineries alongside large educational institutions. There’s wealth and there’s poverty.

“This is an important landscape. We are witnessing the suburbanization of race, of poverty, of working-class and immigrant communities. When these things are pushed out, they challenge a lot of the ideas we have that associate inequality and racialized neighborhoods with being inner city and urban. ‘Urban’ problems are now found in the suburbs, and we need to talk about this specifically when we mention and address such issues.”

Addie’s research in this area began in Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, a working-class neighborhood which had a housing vacancy rate for cities globally. “They are really well-positioned to think about and tackle urban challenges at a scale that transcends local city politics.”

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE, EQUITY, INCLUSIVITY, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE THE NEW FRAMEWORK WITH WHICH URBAN COMMUNITIES WILL BUILD BETTER Futures FOR ALL.

“We have a lot of evidence that when housing financing is fair and affordable, home ownership provides benefits to both families and neighborhoods,” he says. “How so? It builds a way for families to build a financial asset. It gives them the opportunity to put their sweat equity into the asset, and by doing that, they not only improve the house, they benefit the neighborhood. They become more invested. The key is to provide good rental and home ownership options.”

Addie’s research examines the role universities play in this landscape.

“Universities house a tremendous wealth of knowledge and experience on engaged community development,” Addie says. “They are really well-positioned to think about and tackle urban challenges at a scale that transcends local city politics.”

The in-between city is both disconnected and hyper-connected. There are interstates connecting vast areas, airports, massive intermodal facilities, power stations and refineries alongside large educational institutions. There’s wealth and there’s poverty.

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WHAT “CITY” MEANS.

IN TOWNS AND CITIES, ADDIE WITH MORE THAN HALF OF THE SPRING 2018 ANDREW YOUNG SCHOOL Rushing co-founded the Citizens for Progressive Transit (CfPT).

and Georgia Health Policy Center research associate Michelle MOVING TO THE EQUITABLE CITY our universities. “ To recognize the value of the urban expertise housed within institutions along with a broadened geographic understanding of changing metro landscapes? Here it becomes important in this line of research. “Transportation is important. It’s the lifeblood of a city. We get around, or we don’t have a city,” he says. “So we have to look at public investments like public transportation, where there has to be some social equity.”

In his first article, published in Regional Science and Urban Economics, Wyczalkowski and his co-authors looked at bus transit and where low-income people live in metro Atlanta. “Our goal,” he says, “was to better understand how public transportation can be used to expand their choices.” They found that census tracts with better access to public bus transportation — in both cities and suburbs, but particularly the suburbs — had a higher proportion of low-income households.

“Policies that improve bus access to transit in underserved areas, like the suburbs, expand residential opportunities for the poor and help decentralize poverty,” Wyczalkowski says. “Governments that fail to expand transit access — whether due to fiscal problems or discriminatory planning — run the risk of re-concentrating poverty in certain neighborhoods.”

For his dissertation, Wyczalkowski examined the effects of MARTA transit stations on neighborhood change. “My analysis looked at the whole system and the pieces as they developed,” he says. “The key finding seems to be that we actually saw a gentrification around MARTA stations overall, as people with higher educations and higher incomes moved into those areas.”

His overall goal is to better understand how transportation policies can be used to expand housing choices. “Low-income people use mass transit more than higher income,” he says, “but there also seems to be a difference in the modes used. Heavy rail attracts more high-income people. You don’t see them riding a bus. They will pay a higher price for accessibility to those stops.”

Buses, on the other hand, have greater potential as a policy solution for low-income riders. Bus routes are also better designed to serve Atlanta’s lower-density land use. “There’s nothing inherently different between the modes of public transportation. Ridership is simply a cultural phenomenon,” he says. “Atlanta needs more buses than rail. This is where advocacy comes in.”

MANAGING THE NEW URBAN DIVIDETechnologies such as the internet and smart phones are changing how people perceive and use city spaces, according to the institute’s newest faculty member, assistant professor Fei Li.

“Advancements in information and communication technologies greatly extend the outreach of a person, making an average individual who may have never left her hometown more of a ‘global citizen,’” she says. “However, the growing dependence on these same technologies can be detaching people from the cities and neighborhoods they live in. An immigrant worker in New York City, for example, may feel in every sense ‘closer’ to his people back home in a small Irish town than to those living across the street from his apartment.” Li explains that technological innovations, rather than simply neutralizing the significance of physical distances, may be preserving, if not enhancing, certain distances in urban societies. “The stratification of technologies in cities goes beyond the traditional ‘digital divide’ between haves and have-nots,” she says. “It goes to the spectrum of different devices/services people can afford or have access to, their various levels of technology literacy, and the different ways they make use of technologies.”

“To understand inequalities and inclusion in the future city will require a better understanding of the new digital divide, and how it affects individuals’ behavior and well-being in the physical city.”

WITH MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION NOW LIVING IN TOWNS AND CITIES, ADDIE BELIEVES IT IS TIME TO REDEFINE WHAT “CITY” MEANS.

MOVING TO THE EQUITABLE CITY

Christopher Wyczalkowski was a financial planner living in Atlanta’s Buckhead neighborhood when he and three others, including MPH alumna Rebecca Sema and Georgia Health Policy Center research associate Michelle Rushing co-founded the Citizens for Progressive Transit (CfPT). “I had an office and apartment on MARTA stops and decided to get rid of my car. Then I decided more people should be doing this,” he says. “Our purpose was to get like-minded people together to discuss how we can improve transit in Atlanta.”

They formed CfPT as a grassroots, all-volunteer coalition of concerned Atlanta citizens and organization leaders interested in public transit.

“We met a lot with the Sierra Club, Jobs With Justice, Concerned Black Clergy and everyone who had a stake in transit in Atlanta,” he says. “We had several quarterly meetings with MARTA’s executive committee to give them grassroots views of things. We also disseminated information and raised awareness for transit. We were cheerleaders for it.”

Wyczalkowski’s interest in public transportation didn’t stop there, however. As a doctoral student in the Andrew Young School’s joint public policy degree program with Georgia Tech, he pursued research on the effects of transportation systems on neighborhood change. Now a postdoctoral researcher with the Urban Studies Institute, he continues in this line of research.

“The question is, how do you mesh higher education institutions along with a broadened geographic understanding of changing metro landscapes? Here it becomes important to recognize the value of the urban expertise housed within our universities.”

LEADING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON URBAN RESILIENCE

Georgia State’s Urban Studies Institute (USI) faculty received $1 million from a $12 million National Science Foundation grant in October 2017 to support a project that will help cities prepare for climate change. It will do so by co-developing the knowledge needed to promote resilient cities in a future that will look very different from today.

Sustainability scientist David Iwaniec is a member of the National Science Foundation’s UREx Sustainability Research Network’s (UREx SRN) executive team and a senior sustainability scientist with the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability. Now an assistant professor at Georgia State, he is leading the research and management for this new transdisciplinary initiative. “The UREx SRN echoes the Urban Studies Institute’s interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving and innovative thinking, with a focus on social justice and implementing solutions,” he said. “In co-developing solutions to address extreme events — flooding, storms, drought and heat waves — we need to use this opportunity to look beyond the typical five-year time horizon and fail-safe adaptation strategies to build not only resilient, but sustainable and equitable cities.”

The grant brings Georgia State into the UREx SRN, a five-year project joining 25 institutions in teams of social scientists, planners, engineers, ecologists, climate scientists and policymakers. Their research focuses on building resilience to climate-driven extreme events in nine cities in Latin and North America.
As natural disasters unfold at an ever more rapid clip, professor Ann-Margaret Esnard is researching how cities can prepare better and bounce back faster.

by ANN HARDIE

The unrelenting howling.

G rowing up in the Caribbean, Esnard experienced hurricanes as something to be feared and avoided, not studied and observed over. “Disasters were a bad experience that I stored somewhere in the back of my brain,” she says. “I never thought that my journey would one day take me to a point where disaster is an ever-present thought.”

Although her home of St. Lucia is known for its laid-back culture, Esnard was educated in schools that followed a strict British model, where students were ranked according to their grade point averages. She floundered under the pressure. “It was tough love. I always wanted to make sure I was in the top,” says Esnard, who describes herself as “competitive,” “highly motivated” and “highly organized.”

After a short stint as a high school teacher, Esnard left St. Lucia in 1987 to attend the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in agricultural engineering. She followed that with a master of science degree in agronomy and soils from the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez.

“I always assumed I would stay in the Caribbean,” she says. “I thought I would be out there in the fields, helping to make sure that we had good crop yields using appropriate irrigation systems.” It was the subject of her undergraduate thesis.

That assumption fell apart when Joseph Esnard, her high-school sweetheart whom she married in 1990, was accepted as a doctoral student in plant pathology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. “I quickly realized that I needed to get back to studying,” she says. (Today, Joseph develops algorithms for automated systems, and the couple has two sons: Josh, an entrepreneur whose hair- and beard-shaping patented tool, The Cut Buddy, was featured on the reality TV competition “Shark Tank” and Kriston, a ninth grader at Decatur High School.)

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As natural disasters unfold at an ever more rapid clip, professor Ann-Margaret Esnard is researching how cities can prepare better and bounce back faster.

by ANN HARDIE
Esnard and her team identified several factors that affect displacement: social networks (the more support, the more likely people are to return), homeownership (renters are less likely to go back) and area of employment (those who work in the tourist industry may not have jobs to go back to in coastal cities).

Esnard has a keen interest in the recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, which was hit with a one-two punch from hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. As the American territory struggles to restore even basic services, more than 200,000 Puerto Ricans have sought refuge in Florida and elsewhere.

“For the recovering communities, there are all kinds of issues to consider,” Esnard says. “How do you provide adequate housing, job opportunities and resources at schools for traumatized children?”

Esnard says, “We can’t prevent natural disasters. The question is, how do we minimize the loss of lives, God forbid, and the loss of property?”

A t the core of strong cities are strong schools. Esnard and colleagues from the School of Public Health are in the middle of a research project to help schools recover more quickly following a disaster. The implications of their work, which is being funded by the National Science Foundation, extend far beyond the classroom.

“How fast communities get back on their feet depends on how fast schools get back on theirs,” Esnard says. “If schools are closed for long periods of time, children’s educational attainment and job prospects dim, which makes communities — particularly those facing repeated disasters — less resilient over time.”

Esnard is co-leading the project with Betty S. Lai, an assistant professor in the School of Public Health and an expert on post-traumatic stress in children who have experienced large-scale natural disasters. Lai calls Esnard the perfect partner.

“I’m a child psychologist with a background in statistics who is very focused on individuals,” Lai says. “We know that after disasters, children are at risk for developing mental and physical health problems. Yet we can’t really understand individuals without an understanding of the larger community, which is where Ann-Margaret — and her focus on infrastructure and community resources — comes in.

Esnard credits the collaboration with better educating her on the human-scale impact of disasters.

“Working with Betty,” she says, “my research has become more informed by an understanding of the dilemmas that children and families face.”

Their research team is analyzing eight years of data on 465 Texas schools affected by Hurricane Ike, which occurred in 2008. They are looking at a wealth of information — including academic performance, attendance and the length of a school’s closure — trying to discern why some of the affected schools have thrived while others haven’t.

The researchers aren’t far enough along to provide answers, but by focusing on data common to most schools, they believe their initial recommendations will be on point for institutions no matter where they are, whether the Gulf Coast or St. Lucia or Atlanta.

“It’s clear. There will be future disasters. Climate change is real,” Esnard says. “There is so much to study. There is so much to plan for.”

“We can’t prevent natural disasters. The question is, how do we minimize the loss of lives, God forbid, and the loss of property?”
THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN WAGING A WAR ON DRUGS FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on this long campaign to thwart the production, distribution, sale and use of illegal drugs. This sustained investment has resulted in millions of drug offenders being processed through the American criminal justice system. It has also influenced crime control strategies used by American police.

Under President Barack Obama, there was a period of reform and moderating of tactics. But President Donald Trump’s administration is turning back to “law and order” approaches, such as aggressive intervention by law enforcement and use of mandatory minimum sentences by prosecutors.

I recently co-authored a book with University of Louisville criminal justice professor Richard Tewksbury on the role of confidential informants. In my view, a return to a “law and order” approach would undo recent gains in reducing crime rates as well as prison populations and would further strain tense police-community relations.

DRUGS ARE DIFFERENT

Unlike violent or property crimes – which usually yield cooperative victims and witnesses – police and prosecutors are at a disadvantage when fighting drugs. Drug users don’t see themselves as crime victims or their dealers as criminals. Police thus have limited options for identifying offenders. Alternatives include the use of undercover operations or conducting aggressive crackdown operations to disrupt the market in real time. But sneaking up on or infiltrating secretive and multilayered drug organizations is not easy to do, and usually produces only low-level offenders. Poor police-community relations don’t help. Heightened enforcement and punishments have made matters worse by increasing the secrecy and sophistication of the illegal drug market and forcing police to develop criminal intelligence on offenders.

So how do police gather criminal intelligence on drug crimes? The most honorable way is to rely on law-abiding sources who see the criminal activity and feel compelled to report it to the police in order to stop the problem.

The second option is for police to turn to a paid informant who is familiar with the drug operations to set up a buy or inform on the criminal activities of others in exchange for money. A third option is to apprehend known drug offenders and coerce them into divulging information on higher-ups in exchange for a lighter sentence. We call these folks “indentured informants” because they “owe” the police information. If they don’t follow through on their end of the deal, they face the weight of criminal prosecution, often through heavy mandatory minimum sentences.

As police-community relations have eroded over time, police have slowly but surely increased their reliance on criminal informants – especially to develop cases on higher-level criminals.

CONSEQUENCES OF COERCIVE TACTICS

Mandatory minimum sentences serve as a strong motivator to snitch. It has become the “go-to move” for authorities. Not surprisingly, drug dealers fight back against this coercive method of getting evidence with a “stop snitchin’” campaign. Retaliatory violence often erupts, and it becomes harder for police to get evidence from both criminal and civic-minded informants who fear reprisals from drug dealers. Anger grows against police who are perceived as not following through on promises to protect witnesses or clean up neighborhoods.

There exists yet another wrinkle in the equation. Reliance on harsh drug sentences and confidential informants has become part and parcel to how other types of criminal cases are solved. Witnesses or persons privy to information in homicide or robbery cases are routinely prodded into cooperating only after they find themselves facing a stiff penalty due to their involvement in an unrelated drug case. Here again, this produces short-term gains but long-term complications for criminal justice authorities as states move to decriminalize or legalize drugs. What happens when police gather criminal intelligence on drug crimes?

by DEAN DABNEY

An officer and his dog walk the halls at a school in Indianapolis. AP Photo/Michael Conroy

Dean A. Dabney is a professor of criminal justice & criminology.
Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Brian Harris (B.S. '87) commanded the U.S. military’s Hurricane Maria relief effort in Puerto Rico.

by RAY GLIER
When the wind stops and the water is rising, Maj. Gen. Brian Harris (B.S. ’87) will have his boots in the mud as the destruction mounts. Harris specializes in military response to civil emergencies, especially hurricanes. He worked the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey.

Last October, Harris was deployed to Puerto Rico to support relief efforts after Hurricane Maria crippled the island. A 155 mph Category 5 monster, the storm caused about $100 billion in damage and knocked out power and cell phone service. It was the worst disaster to ever hit the U.S. territory. 155 mph Category 5 monster, the storm caused about $100 billion in damage and knocked out power and cell phone service. It was the worst disaster to ever hit the U.S. territory.

As of January 2018 — four months after it made landfall — the death toll was still unknown, and more than half of the island was still without power.

Back when Harris, now 53, was studying criminal justice at Georgia State some 30 years ago, his social work professor gave him a piece of advice. As vital as the boots Harris faces up, this advice has riddled with him from war zones in Afghanistan and Iraq to poverty-striken neighborhoods around Atlanta.

“Dr. Howard told me, ‘Always look at things through the eyes of the person you are trying to help,’” Harris says. “That really stuck with me.”

As a police officer and a soldier, Harris has been helping people in terrible situations for the last three decades. He’s frequently face to face with distressed, angry and despairing people, those who have lost hope entirely.

People can lose everything. Harris understands.

Tested by wars, hurricanes and crime, Harris has fused his doctrine of empathy with the military discipline he first acquired from the Georgia State ROTC. He earned his commission in the Army National Guard in 1984 when he was still a student.

Shortly after graduation, Harris began another career in uniform as a police officer with the DeKalb County Police Department. He was a full-time cop and a part-time Army officer. He excelled at both.

As a cop, he oversaw the Tucker Precinct and led the Special Operations Team for the county until his 2015 retirement. As a soldier, he served two tours of duty in Afghanistan and multiple infantry and armor officer assignments and became a combat adviser to the Afghan army in a region with nine provinces and 9,000 Afghan soldiers.

Harris’ ability to channel sternness and empathy at the same time reflects his vast experience as a lawman and infantryman.

“With his demeanor and the way he does things, he was the right guy for this job,” says Capt. Jason Mercado, the public relations man for Harris’ troops in Puerto Rico.

Mercado is not just some apple polisher for the boss. He’s Puerto Rican, and those were his people who were homeless and desperate for assistance from the mainland. “Trust was in short supply, and Mercado endeared Harris to his people.”

“He knows people,” Mercado says.

Mercado says Harris helped cut through bureaucratic red tape when he took over in Puerto Rico.

“He told us, ‘We’re here to alleviate human suffering and support the people of Puerto Rico,’” Mercado says. “So when we had a FedEx F-160 pickup outside, we didn’t wait. We loaded it up with food and water and delivered it to a church, and the church took it up to the mountains.”

There are 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico, but the 21 mountainous towns in the center of the island posed the biggest challenges.

“The problem was the storm hit the whole island so hard that a lot of their capabilities were knocked out,” Harris says. “We had to help the government of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rico National Guard stand up and catch their breath.”

Using military helicopters to replace power poles one by one, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had installed about 600 generators by mid-November. One of Harris’ jobs was managing the logistics of tons of supplies arriving all at once.

“Everyone threw everything at us,” he says, “but there were only two working ports. You can only unload so much at one time. It was like trying to fit a bowling ball down a funnel.”

After weeks of structuring and galvanizing the island’s relief and rebuilding efforts, Harris turned over control to the Puerto Rico National Guard at the end of November.

“We stay above the fray of all the political gnashing of teeth. Our job is to provide services for saving lives and bring comfort to the people of Puerto Rico.”

In Afghanistan, there were two ways of dealing with insurgents. U.S. troops could overwhelm a village with superior numbers and firepower and question every male walking around. They might find the bad guys, but they’d also offend everyone and pit the whole village against the rude Americans.

“Instead, we’d go talk to the village elders,” Harris says.

“Then we could isolate the two or three insurgents and pluck them out. That’s when they started to have confidence in the American Army.”

He used the same tactic when he was put in charge of the Tucker Precinct of the DeKalb County Police Department.

“In the past, when you’d have a spike in robberies, law enforcement would flood the area and lock up everything that moved, and the robberies would go down,” Harris says. “A couple of weeks later, of course, the robberies would go back up because you hadn’t removed the problem.

“Instead, we started doing more community events and neighborhood watches, and we focused on getting information. It was not about arrests. It was about finding these crews of criminals. We cut crime in half in our precinct.”

Harris then took over the department’s Special Operations Team, becoming the assistant chief for the whole force. Still, he managed to stay on the street.

“You’d never expect to see an assistant police chief anywhere listening to the radio and jumping in a command car and turning on his lights and sirens because he heard an armed robbery go out,” says Maj. Scott Gassner, chief of staff for the DeKalb police. “Brian did that. He was a police officer first and a chief second.

“If there was a hot call in his precinct, he was going. If there was a traffic fatality or a bomb threat, he was going. The guy never turned off.”

Harris worked the more mundane tasks too, like pulling cars out of ditches during Atlanta’s ice storms or getting a water buffalo out of a man’s thoroughfare. He was everywhere.

“When he asked me to come with him over to Special Operations, my only hesitation was I’d had enough energy to keep up with him,” Gassner says. “That’s just the way he is. The man really cares. In our line of work, that’s big.”
For the MAPLE project, Sass is working with five school districts in the metro Atlanta area to use data and analytics to evaluate existing policies and design new initiatives to improve outcomes for students across the state. Led by economist and Distinguished University Professor Tim Sass, the labs will work with school districts and state agencies to identify research priorities, analyze existing policies, design enhanced programs and train public officials how to embed evaluation into decision-making.

The labs, funded by a grant from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, houses the Georgia Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE) directed by Sass, and a multi-state Career and Technical Education Policy Exchange (CTEx) directed by assistant professor and economist Dan Kreisman. In partnership with school districts in Atlanta, CTE systems in Arkansas, Tennessee and Michigan, and researchers from the University of Connecticut, the University of Tennessee and the University of Michigan, CTEx will analyze the impact of CTE programs and share their findings with policymakers across the country.

Kreisman was also recently awarded a $400,000 grant from the Smith Richardson Foundation for his research project, “Are Schools Building a Skilled Workforce?” Sass received another grant of nearly $112,000 from the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research for his research.

“MAPLE will use cutting-edge research methods to evaluate current policies and determine potential new policy initiatives to improve outcomes such as attendance, discipline, test scores and graduation rates,” he said. “Our goal is to reduce dropout rates, increase post-secondary enrollment and give all students the opportunity to live productive, successful lives.”

CTEx, the second initiative, is focused on career and technical education (CTE). In partnership with school districts in Atlanta, CTE systems in Arkansas, Tennessee and Michigan, and researchers from the University of Connecticut, the University of Tennessee and the University of Michigan, CTEx will analyze the impact of CTE programs and share their findings with policymakers across the country.

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