The Magazine of the DeVoe L. Moore Center

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The DeVoe L. Moore Center has come a long way since DeVoe Moore established our endowment in 1998. The content of this first issue of DMC Focus illustrates our evolution.

Since its founding, the center has published nearly 40 policy reports and briefs. We have convened 30 symposia with the nation’s top scholars, policy analysts, and public officials on growth management, housing affordability, public transit reform, water management, and effective public-private partnerships.

Nowhere, however, is our influence most palpable than in ways we touch the lives of students every day in the classroom and in our operations. Since 2011, we have educated nearly 1,420 students on land use, economic development, and urban policy. In the classroom, we have provided upwards of 4,875 credit hours of high-quality instruction. We have proudly produced 40 research papers with a strong commitment to student involvement throughout the research and editorial process.

Our internship program has grown to include more than 30 graduate and undergraduate students annually. Since we started to ramp up our program in 2012, more than 100 students have completed internships with about one third of our graduates going into the for-profit sector, about one third going into graduate school, and another third moving into the nonprofit sector.

In 2019, we produced two policy reports that illustrate our continuous aim towards excellence and commitment to the mission. Working with partners including the James Madison Institute, a statewide public policy think tank based in Tallahassee, we published a major empirical study on how occupational licensing unnecessarily impedes the process of transitioning ex-offenders back into mainstream society.

We also released a major analysis of cost overruns on public infrastructure projects. We dug deep into timelines, change orders, and meeting minutes to find out why Tallahassee’s Cascades Park and Trail Project went over its initial budget by at least $30 million and took twice as long to complete than planned. We didn’t stop there: We provided 13 tangible recommendations local governments can use to improve project performance and increase transparency.

We hope you enjoy reading our first issue illustrating a sampling of the dynamic and exciting work going on at the DeVoe L. Moore Center. We welcome your comments, feedback, and suggestions for improving our impact as we move forward.
Cascades Park Case Study
Cost Overruns & Public Infrastructure

Josalin Hughes

This article summarizes Cost Overruns and Public Infrastructure, a policy study by Samuel R. Staley, PhD, Catherine Annis, MPA, and Thomas Boordry. The full report can be found on the DMC’s website at coss.fsu.edu/dmc/.

As a popular family-friendly attraction for Tallahassee locals and tourists alike, the Cascades Park and Trail Project is an example of how cost overruns occur in large infrastructure projects. Tallahassee voters learned about the $23 million Cascades Park and Trail Project as part of a list of longer infrastructure endeavors. As the large infrastructure project evolved over time, researchers at the DeVoe L. Moore Center calculated that the full project budget increased to anywhere from $49 million to $65 million. In an effort to account for the increase DMC analysts examined the sources for these extra costs.

The Cascades Park and Trail Project encountered post-contract upgrades, funding source issues, and technical problems during construction:

- In 2000, when plans for the park were announced, Cascades was marketed to voters as a stormwater facility that would double as a quiet and passive park. Later, the initial design was modified by additions to the park, including playground areas, an amphitheater, and an upscale restaurant named The Edison.
- There were also issues regarding the sources of the funds used for the Cascades Park and Trail Project. While $4.3 million of the project’s cost came from community partnerships, the study’s authors found more money was being donated by local government agencies than private sources. Nonprofit organizations and private contributions amounted to just 25% of the partnership funds. The rest came from taxpayer funded government budgets.
- The Cascades Park and Trail Project took twice as long to complete as proposed. Originally scheduled to be completed in 730 days, post-contract changes and technical difficulties added 693 more days.
One citizen in particular, a city commission candidate, expressed his frustration with the previous commission, stating: “Sometimes they use poor judgement. And you know why they do it? Money.”

Large-scale infrastructure initiatives like the Cascades Park and Trail Project provide a window into identifying potential sources of public mistrust in local government. Community tensions can increase when project implementation lacks transparency about the nature of a project and its budget. Public skepticism can also arise when decision-making does not account for a surrounding community’s values and preferences.

How can these inefficiencies and delays be avoided? The authors outline 13 tangible recommendations in their policy study, Cost Overruns and Public Infrastructure: The Case of Tallahassee’s Cascades Park & Trail, which can be found on the DeVoe L. Moore Center website.

"Community tensions can increase when project implementation lacks transparency about the nature of a project and its budget."
Released individuals face numerous barriers to securing gainful employment. One such barrier is occupational licensing. To receive a license for a job, a person must complete the costly tasks of training and passing various exams established by state law. Many recently released prisoners are prohibited from applying for these licenses, limiting their employment options. Without the opportunity to secure jobs, they may fall back into criminal activity and return to prison. Upon looking into the occupational licensing policies in Florida, researchers Vittorio Nastasi and Samuel R. Staley found that state-created employment restrictions may be contributing to the high growth rate in Florida’s prison population.

In their policy brief *Bridging the Divide: Licensing and Recidivism*, published by the James Madison Institute, Nastasi and Staley found that “lowering barriers to entry by de-regulating occupational licensing laws could have a one-for-one impact on reducing recidivism.” Although their analysis had a limited sample and short time frame, the results were consistent with those of broader research studies.
The mission of a social enterprise is to do more than generate revenue and produce long-term profit: it also implements ways the business model can leverage societal impact. BetterWorldBooks, a self-sustaining, triple-bottom-line company, promotes and advocates for literacy around the world. Their online book-selling platform enables consumers to be participants in the company’s Book for Book™ initiative. Launched in 2011, this program ensures that every online purchase made on the company’s site results in one book donated to children in developing countries.

Three friends from the University of Notre Dame founded this company in 2002 as a small venture selling textbooks online. The startup built momentum and formed the social enterprise that it is today—a business with a mission to promote literacy. BetterWorldBooks believes that education and access to books are basic human rights. To support this foundational ideal, the company assists in funding high-impact literacy projects in the United States and around the world.

As a Certified B Corporation, BetterWorldBooks values the reusability of books and the collective societal impact they serve in economically disadvantaged communities. With distribution warehouses in Mishawaka, Indiana, Reno, Nevada, and Dunfermline, Scotland, the company has a domestic and global footprint that contributes to individual literacy and the potential for a better life for people in underdeveloped areas. As of September 2016, BetterWorldBooks has donated more than 21 million books. Their partnership fostered with Books for Africa, a nonprofit organization that collects and distributes books to children and adults in Africa, resulted in 28 percent of the donations being college textbooks going to schools in Africa.

Two other literacy partners that work closely with BetterWorldBooks are Room to Read, a nonprofit organization that strives to improve literacy and gender equality in education, and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), a national nonprofit organization which creates educational and economic opportunity for at-risk children and parents in the United States. Collectively, these organizations have donated more than 5.3 million books to underprivileged children and adults in both the United States and in developing countries.

BetterWorldBooks has domestic influence in the United States through a network of over 2,300 college campuses and partnerships with over 3,000 libraries nationwide. The company has converted more than 250 million books into over $24 million in funding for literacy and education efforts. The company not only capitalizes on the value of unwanted books, but also earns a reputation for its philanthropic approach in investing in the reusability of books. This in turn contributes to the social and economic well-being of people around the world.

BetterWorldBooks is aware of its impact on the environment and values its stakeholders. Since its founding, the company adopted a commitment to environmental sustainability. If any books are not sold, they are recycled and kept out of landfills. To promote environmental sustainability, the company uses carbon-neutral shipping. For every ton of CO2 that a package or parcel of books produces in transport, an equivalent amount of CO2 is saved by a verified emission reduction project somewhere else in the world.
A Snapshot of Our Interns
Isabella Matarrita & Josalin Hughes

Looking for an Internship?

The DeVoe L. Moore Center takes on 30 interns each year who work on a variety of market-oriented projects. Take a look at the work groups who provide essential services to the DMC team!

Policy Research

The Policy Research team examines a wide range of public policy issues relevant to Florida and presents this information at state and national levels. The research is also presented within the center to keep account of progress and for review purposes.

Arnel Garcesa is a senior member of the team. He is researching the implementation of solar power and energy by utilities in the state of Florida, with an emphasis on economic and political factors that influence its differences among elements such as customer base or firm type (investor-owned versus municipally managed).

Other members of the Policy Research team include Jordan Berry, Jason Blackthorne, Shayna Cohen, Chelsea Gow, Jordan Leu, Patrick Martin, Mazi Rhodes, Jacob Robinson, Donald Sizemore, Gianni Vasquez, and Jordan Wilson.

Public Affairs

The Public Affairs team handles the community outreach operations of the center, which include creating social media campaigns, publishing newsletters for the general public, releasing public policy reports, and educating students on campus about the center’s mission and values. The group is also involved with updating the center’s website.

Isabella Matarrita was a junior studying international affairs and public relations. Her work with the DeVoe L. Moore Center was dedicated toward producing the magazine, Focus, of which she was the editor-in-chief during her time. Diego Roncancio serves as our outreach coordinator and is passionate about ways to organize and facilitate action on campus and in the community.

Other members of the Public Affairs team include Annica Ortiz, Cassidy Hidalgo, and Kyle Jones.
The Data Analytics team gathers and models data from state agencies and other government entities. Its goal is to identify useful information that supports improved decision-making in regulation and public policy areas. The group is also involved in interpreting this information for practical use.

Dakota Davy is a senior studying economics from Clearwater, Florida. He is the manager of the Data Analytics team, which coordinates the FloridaOpenGov transparency project.

Alex Flores is a senior studying economics and statistics from Punta Gorda, Florida. He has used software to create data visualizations for the new FloridaOpenGov website.

Winston Lee III is a senior studying information, communication and technology (ICT) whose work as a web developer for FloridaOpenGov.org has helped prepare him for working in a professional environment. Other members of the Data Analytics team include Joshua Durham and Janelle Otero.

The Editorial team is a group of skilled writers and editors who facilitate the publication of articles on the center’s blog for public review and commentary. Students from the FSU English department’s writing, editing, and media major are an integrated component of the center’s Writing Coach Program. They provide constructive criticism and guidance during the publication process.

Peter Woodley is a senior majoring in Editing, Writing, and Media with a minor in Commercial Entrepreneurship. He has a focus in copyediting and digital content curation/marketing and currently serves as editorial manager at the DMC.

Abbygale Cloud was a sophomore also studying Editing, Writing, and Media. Over the course of the summer semester, she developed and expanded her design skills by re-imagining the center’s newsletter. Along with her contributions to the DeVoe L. Moore Center, Abbygale has written for local publications such as Tallahassee Woman Magazine, FSView, and The Tally Wire.
Hello readers! Welcome to the inaugural issue of Focus, the DeVoe L. Moore Center’s magazine. The DMC values empowerment, opportunity, innovation, fairness, and justice. Throughout creating this issue of Focus magazine, we’ve tried to embody these values in our stories. Our goal is to leave readers feeling empowered. Whether it be in life, working with local communities, or creating policy, we hope our readers feel inspired to learn more and create change.

As coeditor-in-chief, it brings me great joy to see our work come together. The DMC has taught me so much in my short time here. I have learned about the amazing work and research being conducted by our own Florida State University students. Before this internship, I never thought we would be capable of creating a magazine from scratch. However, that’s what the DMC does; it shows us how to accomplish what seems impossible. I hope you all enjoy this first issue and continue with us for future issues.

At the DeVoe L. Moore Center, we value opportunity and innovation. In this first-ever edition of Focus, we wanted to make sure our readers got a real sense of who we are and what we do. Our intern story highlights some of the best and brightest of the DMC interns, some of whom I’ve grown close with as we’ve tackled projects together. The Cascades Park and occupational licensing and recidivism articles emphasize work that our director, Dr. Sam Staley, and our researchers, such as Vittorio Nastasi, have conducted to move forward key policies both locally and nationwide.

As this kickoff edition of Focus comes to a close, I want to remind our readers that being involved in the decisions made by our government is vital to the safety and growth of our communities. There are so many ways to get involved. Keeping up with the DeVoe L. Moore Center is a small step on a road under construction, but I hope it’s one we can take together.
The DeVoe L. Moore Center is a mission-driven public policy think tank examining the role the private sector plays in creating value in the economy and how public policy encourages or discourages this entrepreneurial activity.

The DMC was founded in 1998 when Tallahassee entrepreneur DeVoe L. Moore attempted to develop property on a former industrial site as high-density student housing. His ability to provide housing was thwarted by behind-the-scene politics that ignored his interests as the owner of the property.

He was troubled by this process and believed a public policy research center, or “think tank,” that exposed these problems and offered constructive solutions would address these issues and lead to reform. Thus, he endowed the center with $5 million of his own money that was matched by the State of Florida to create a $10 million endowment to fund these activities.