

**Troy D. Mix**  
**RESEARCH STATEMENT AND PLANS**

My research focuses on understanding the determinants of long-run, regional economic competitiveness. Within this overall framework, my contemporary efforts examine two major topics—1) how competitiveness is affected by the structure and process of regional economic development policymaking and 2) how regional economic structure impacts competitiveness. Drawing from scholarship in regional development, strategic management, and political science, I seek to assess the empirical evidence on how institutionalized relationships among firms, governments, and civic actors impact the adoption and implementation of economic development policy and, ultimately, regional competitiveness.

For my dissertation—“Entrepreneurial universities and collective action in regional development”—I developed cross-sectional data on the organization of university-based economic development activities and am conducting case studies of four universities with research parks to test and refine hypotheses on the relationships between a university’s organizational design and its ability to influence subnational public policy. This work tests two main contentions: 1) that the diversity and organization of a university’s economic development activities impact its relationships with regional policymakers and 2) that a university’s ability to influence regional development policy depends, in part, on its persistent centrality in policy networks. The design for testing these relationships entails case study research on two pairs of universities selected strategically to isolate and determine the impacts of the hypothesized relationships in comparative settings. Within these cases, I am using network analysis techniques to map and characterize universities’ organizational designs for economic development and the structure of universities’ relationships with regional policy networks. To determine university influence on policy, I am using pattern-matching techniques to assess and refine hypotheses in light of comparisons of expected causal patterns with empirical evidence.

Based on this research, I plan to publish in three areas. First, the cross-sectional review of universities’ organizational designs for economic development will afford a clearer picture of the extent and character of entrepreneurial university activities than that provided by existing, single-site case studies. Insights from strategic management scholarship will be used to characterize these organizational designs with conclusions drawn regarding regional development implications. Potential publication outlets include *Economic Development Quarterly* and journals that focus on issues in higher education, such as *Minerva*.

Second, literature on the lobbying strategies of firms will inform case study analyses aimed at gaining insight into the purposes and forms of universities’ interactions with their regions. While much can be gained from new insights on the entrepreneurial university, the broader import of this contribution is to understand the motivations of and strategies used by nongovernmental actors to influence regional development policy—a pertinent topic in light of regional governance frameworks that claim a wide array of actors in the policy process. Work on background case studies and the four noted case studies will yield publications on this topic, with suitable venues including the *Journal of Planning Literature* and the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, respectively.

Third, my application of policy network concepts from literature on interest group politics will help to build theory on how the structure of relationships among regional actors affects the adoption and implementation of economic development policy. Scholars have subjected firm

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relationships to network analysis studies, but work relevant to regional policymaking has been limited. Potential outlets for this work include *Regional Studies* and *Research Policy*.

I am completing three manuscripts for journal submission. First, a collaborative evaluation of recent case study research in planning aims to detect the use of emerging case study methods and recommend options for improving case study scholarship. We aim to submit the completed manuscript to the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. Second, I am co-authoring an article that uses literature review, case study evidence, and logical arguments to scrutinize the value, limits, and potential forms of regional cooperation in economic development. We plan submission to either *Economic Development Quarterly* or *Public Administration Review*. Third, I analyzed survey data to test for relationships between local government interaction with development stakeholders and the provision of business incentives. I also used this survey data to characterize the structure of economic-development policymaking across U.S. municipalities.

I am serving as the project manager for an Appalachian Regional Commission-funded study focused on measuring the diversity of economic activity in counties across the United States; conducting case studies of Appalachian counties that have implemented diversification strategies; and providing guidance on how the concept of diversity might inform federal funding decisions and regional development policy. The study examines long-standing assumptions about the connections between economic structure and performance—that diversity is a sign of a healthy regional economy and diversity affords regions with stability in the face of cyclical economic fluctuations. In addition to the applied components of this study, I envision four particular avenues for scholarship. First, the data acquired for this project will be used to produce a descriptive analysis of economic diversity across the United States measured in multiple ways and at several aggregations of industrial specificity. This study would ground policy discussions in the context of nuanced understandings of what constitutes a diverse economy. Second, a study using multivariate regression techniques could test and refine the common economic development wisdom associated with diversity. Particularly worthy topics include the connections between diversity and economic performance and the identification of diversity typologies significantly related—both positively and negatively—to economic performance. Third, comparative case studies of counties selected based on variation in economic diversity and performance could yield insights on the causal mechanisms that connect various forms of diversity with economic performance. Fourth, an applied demonstration of methods developed to assess regional economic vulnerability and opportunity should suggest useful enhancements to economic development practice and education.

In summary, my research aims to build and test theories on the importance of institutional context for regional economic competitiveness. My contemporary efforts include building theoretical understanding of the strategies of nongovernmental actors in regions, assessing the regional policymaking process, and analyzing economic structure across the United States. By employing both multivariate and case study analyses, I seek to make multiple types of contributions to policy and scholarship—assessments of the distribution of regional characteristics, cross-sectional studies of how these characteristics relate to economic competitiveness, and rigorous analyses of carefully chosen case studies to develop and test theories of the causal mechanisms connecting these characteristics to economic competitiveness.