

May 29, 2025

Dr. Joe Hamm
Faculty Supervisor, TRUSST Lab
Associate Professor, Michigan State University

Dear Joe,

Bill McEvily, Shani Saxon, and myself have been asked to provide our assessment of your lab's activities for inclusion in your 2025 Annual Report. Bill McEvily, University of Toronto, has provided a letter that reflects upon the written materials and student presentations made on April 25, 2025. Shani Saxon of Turning Corners Consulting, Inc and Michelle Chambers, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, has made comments on those student presentations. Those can be found in full at the end of this document for your reference. Here, I integrate their comments with my own thoughts.

Overall, we continue to be confident that the TRUSST Lab is moving in a good direction to achieve its goals, which cover notions of vulnerability, motivation and power in the context of social and political trust. The student presentations were varied and interesting, showing dynamism among the lab, and a real commitment to extending the extant literature. The 2024 lab report sets out a strong and interdisciplinary structure and the projects presented this year continue to demonstrate the embodiment of those ideals.

VISION

To the best of our knowledge, the TRUSST Lab is still the only scholarly research center dedicated to advancing PhD-student-led trust research. If correct, the Lab may want to 'lean into' this a bit more by explicitly emphasizing its distinctiveness in how it represents itself, particularly on the website, and the Lab may want to build out why this distinctive approach is so valuable (e.g., the impact of the Lab's resource are amplified across the students' scholarly publications, related outreach activities, teaching, and eventually their own mentorship of students), in particular with the university-wide effort to embody stronger ethical frameworks through the MSU Ethics Institute, in which I believe the element of building trust should be thoroughly woven. We continue to be impressed with the thoughtful and measured approaches the Lab is taking and we believe others will be as well.

We appreciate the dual operationalization of success (scholarly and practitioner) articulated in the Strategic Plan. We continue to implore the Lab to embrace research opportunities to broaden impact beyond individual publications through, for example, new measures, methodological advances, novel datasets, etc. Likewise, on the practitioner side, beyond individual research reports, there may be opportunities to develop research 'translations', toolkits, infographics, etc.

STRUCTURE

Given the interdisciplinary nature of trust research, we were excited to see that the composition of the Lab draws students from a number of different academic disciplines. Continuing to attract students from across campus will be of great benefit to the Lab and we would encourage you to consider academic areas with a tradition of trust research, but not yet tapped by the Lab (e.g., Eli Broad School of Management). Related, to the extent that faculty in other academic units are engaged in trust research, there may be opportunities to engage them in Lab activities and scale up the Lab's impact. Likewise, perhaps, with greater engagement of the aforementioned, Ethics Institute.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The three primary foci of the Lab continue to resonate strongly with our sense of theoretical topics at the forefront of trust research. We found the emerging ideas and findings challenging conventional views of *vulnerability* to be particularly novel and thought provoking, with considerable potential to garner scholarly

attention and alter the trajectory of future research. Taken together, the three foci of the Lab provide a diverse portfolio of projects with considerable potential to make an impact on the field of trust research.

PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Lab's partner organizations also represent a diverse array of settings and issues where trust is highly relevant and consequential. We were encouraged to learn that the Lab is actively addressing some of our 'societal grand challenges' by providing the partner organizations with training, evidence-based research, and scholarly insights on pressing issues. Equally significant is the opportunity for the students in the Lab to interact with those on the frontlines and learn about their understanding of how trust may play a role in the challenges they face.

Finally, in our overall judgement, we are confident that the TRUSST lab is working to achieve its strategic goals and would great encourage the University to further support this effort, particularly in a time when the population as a whole has seemingly experienced a shift away from trust in academic and scientific expertise – this research will benefit many trying to restore the confidence that these institutions so long took for granted.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Chambers, MA
Division Director, Bureau Operations Office
Environmental Health Bureau
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services



Bill McEvily
Rotman School of Management
Jim Fisher Professor of Leadership Development
Professor of Strategic Management



Shani Saxon, PhD
Turning Corners Consulting, Inc

These are Shani Saxon's comments on the lab and synergistic projects.

TRUSST Lab student presentations

Tiffany Williams:

Tiffany, thank you for your thoughtful presentation on cultural betrayal. Your engagement with this concept highlights a critical lens for understanding how harm is uniquely felt and internalized within vulnerable communities, particularly when it stems from those whom the community is supposed to trust, such as institutions, political entities, or even individuals within their cultural group.

With that, here are my thoughts upon listening to your presentation. At the core of cultural betrayal is the rupture of expected solidarity, and when historically oppressed communities experience harm from entities that have either contributed to or been conditioned to rely upon (e.g., gov't agencies, educational systems, or healthcare institutions), the result is a compounded trauma. This trauma is not simply the result of individual acts of harm but arises from what Dr. Jennifer Gómez (2016) describes as betrayal within-group, where shared cultural ties heighten the severity of the violation.

The importance of the community perspective cannot be overstated in this framework because it shapes how betrayal is experienced, but also how healing must occur. Often, these betrayals are more than interpersonal; they are structurally embedded in systemic and institutional violence.

The Flint water crisis is a stark example of systemic and institutional betrayal. Flint's predominantly Black and low-income population was subjected to a catastrophic failure of environmental stewardship when state officials (whom we should have more faith and trust in) knowingly switched the water source to a contaminated supply without proper corrosion control. Despite community complaints, governmental agencies dismissed their concerns over and over, ultimately poisoning thousands. This was not merely an environmental disaster; it was a profound ethical and racial betrayal, demonstrating a callous disregard for Black life and health.

This brings me to two reflective questions you might consider as you develop your framework further: a. How do you define "cultural mistrust" in your project, and is it rooted in historical patterns, lived experiences, or both?; b. Do you see mistrust as more of a cultural phenomenon (rooted in shared heritage and values) or a communal one (focused on localized and relational trust networks within a specific group)?

Your work impacts environmental and social justice, particularly by advocating for restorative and reparative policies grounded in community-led initiatives and fostering transformational trust-building between marginalized communities and institutions through accountability and transparency.

By explicitly incorporating cultural betrayal into environmental justice frameworks, your research aids in creating more equitable interventions that acknowledge the distinct layers of harm faced by marginalized populations.

I look forward to seeing how your project develops and how it may offer practical tools for justice, healing, and systemic accountability!!

Tayo Bakane:

Your project raised vital questions about how people come to trust (or resist) guidance from authorities during crisis events, especially when historical and contemporary betrayals have eroded institutional legitimacy among marginalized communities.

Cooperation is not simply a behavioral response; it is deeply relational, contingent upon perceptions of leader competence, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). If these traits are not demonstrably present, particularly in times of disaster, communities (especially those historically disenfranchised) have valid reasons to distrust directives, even those meant to protect them.

Your discussion about building a trust model that is rooted not only in ability and consistency but also in moral alignment and justice is amazing. This model could account for historical harms influenced by race and the ongoing impact of systemic and institutional racism, as for many, social and safety directives come from a system that has already abandoned them. The Flint water crisis will always serve as a sobering example of that. Your framework could also greatly benefit from exploring Dr. Gomez's cultural betrayal theory. The intersection of environmental justice, racial equity, and trust in crisis response is not incidental; it is foundational.

It made me wonder how social norms surrounding "worthiness" and "responsibility" prevent low-income people from accessing even basic necessities like food and healthcare during a crisis. Also, why is competence in addressing systemic racism critical to establishing trust between institutions and historically vulnerable communities, especially in high-stakes situations like evacuations or environmental crises (e.g., social contracts)? I would also encourage you to reflect on how cultural mistrust differs from general mistrust of institutions, and whether this mistrust is rooted more in cultural identity and shared experience, or in local, communal relationships and histories of betrayal.

Wonderful job!

Miyeon Kim:

Thank you for your engaging presentation on vulnerability mapping with patients with head and neck cancers. This population often faces intense physiological, emotional, and social challenges, and your research centers the lived experience of illness within a framework of structural awareness and justice nicely!

By focusing on vulnerability, your work implicitly raises critical questions about health disparities, medical racism, and systemic neglect. A key body of research underscores that the sicker and more disenfranchised a patient is, the worse the quality of care they receive (Williams & Mohammed, 2009; Hoffman et al., 2016). This is a point worth emphasizing in your research, as it is not the complexity of their illness that determines the quality of care, but rather implicit biases, systemic neglect, and institutional mistrust that shape treatment trajectories.

Who or what are your targets for vulnerability mapping, and at what levels are you making this focus (e.g., individual patient level, institutional, care delivery, or all of the above)? Clarifying this will help you refine the scope and potential impact of your research. Also, have you considered using a mixed-methods research design, and if so, how might qualitative narratives and quantitative data highlight the lived and structural aspects of vulnerability in patient care? It is helpful to explore not just the what of disparities, but the why for analytical depth and policy relevance.

Patients need to feel that their care providers see them as whole people, not merely as diagnoses. For Black, Indigenous, and other historically vulnerable people/patients, centuries of medical exploitation, neglect, and racism (from the Tuskegee Study to contemporary disparities in pain management) make trust particularly hard-won and easily eroded. These histories shape how difficult it can be for vulnerable groups to seek help or disclose vulnerability. Your framework might consider integrating a historical perspective to more fully situate patient vulnerability in a larger context of structural trauma and erasure. This lends to sharing how patients and caregivers can use your research as a guide to advocate for care, understand systemic vulnerabilities, and participate in rebuilding medical trust.

One final note- your presentation referenced targeted trust vs general trust, which sounds like an important distinction worth further elaboration. Your project sits at the intersection of health care, equity, and justice, which is an urgent and promising place to be. I look forward to seeing how your research continues to develop!

These are Michelle Chambers' comments on the lab and synergistic projects.

Active Lab Project Summaries

LP5. Mobilizing the Law: The Role of Vulnerability and Court Process in the Decision to File a Small Claims Suit

"This study explores the role of individual perceptions of vulnerability, and how they relate to various dispute resolution processes, in the decision to mobilize legal processes to address a legitimate claim. A sample of MTurk workers completed a survey in response to a hypothetical landlord-tenant dispute."

Michelle's Feedback:

The way the abstract is written, it's unclear if vulnerability is proposed as a positive or negative predictor of the respondent's willingness to enter into the legal process. In addition, how was vulnerability defined – SES? Immigration status? What/who are MTurk workers? Are they representative of a diverse population to the point this can be generalized appropriately?

LP6. Disentangling Trust and Risk as Drivers of Compliance with a Governance Agency

"The results suggest that evacuation—as a risk reducing behavior—is more connected to the extent to which the individual feels that the hurricane poses a risk. Not evacuating however—as a risk increasing behavior—is more connected to trust in the Center. The analyses are now complete, and the team is writing up the manuscript."

Project study completed.

- Trust > willingness to cooperate with government agencies
- Trust can fluctuate under different circumstances – looking at it in a longitudinal weekly assessment
- Competence (Ability) + Benevolence + Integrity (stabilized trust) → Trust
- How agency personnel interact with citizens is important - professionalism and integrity leads to trust that people will have and keeping that relationship stable.

NEW study: How do risk attitudes shape compliance with local evaluation orders?

- Likelihood and severity
- NHS makes recommendations to local authorities to make evacuation orders

NEW study: Perceived severity and agency trust associated with evacuation compliance;

consistency and clarity in communication

- Public Housing programs designed and access to housing – wait time in housing (2 years)
- Implications – efficiency

Michelle's Feedback:

I missed the connections between the various studies, but maybe they weren't actually meant to be totally connected; but think all are important and valuable. The Hurricane findings/future study can be very well likely correlated to other governmental interactions – from COVID to vaccines to other behavioral change outcomes. Isolated events of gov't effect overall perceptions. Very important topic and excited to see the results.

LP13. Examining the Intersection of Generational (Dis)Trust and Cultural Betrayal in Flint, Michigan

"Betrayal, particularly within marginalized communities, is a complex experience with deep psychological and societal implications. This study explores the generational impacts of betrayal through the experiences of nine participants from three families in Flint, Michigan, who endured compounded betrayal, notably including the Flint Water Crisis....Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated remarkable resilience through personal faith, community initiatives, and efforts to promote inclusivity. Notably, younger generations expressed optimism and commitment to rebuilding their community, offering hope for future restorative efforts. The findings highlight the importance of understanding the dynamics of distrust and betrayal in marginalized communities and advocates for further research to explore broader, multi-city, and longitudinal perspectives."

- Betrayal Trauma Theory, Freyd, 1996
- Institutional Betrayal Trauma Theory, Smith & Freyd, 2014
- Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory

Fairly limited study sample: Nine people; 3 families; Oldest 69 years old; youngest – ??

- “betrayal is the action not the person who commits it”
- Intensified existing feelings of distrust toward systems and authorities
- “Suspended trust because they don’t know enough.”
- Older participants: looked backward toward slavery, etc
- Younger : emerging resilience, faith, grassroots,

Lasting effects – span generations – did they identify a confounding effect of older generations to younger; relationship strengths

Michelle’s Feedback:

Agree with the expansion factors, I think that would address my questions.

Institutional betrayal: local gov’t and public institutions were in mind; city council, policing courage

LP14. Trust in Providers, Community, and Family as Moderators of Cancer Patient Reported Outcomes

“Miyeon is leading a lab project exploring the extent to which trust moderates the relationship between severity of diagnosis and patient-reported outcomes among cancer patients. The project theorizes that the extent to which patients trust the groups and individuals they hold responsible for protecting their potential for harm after receiving a recent cancer diagnosis can serve to insulate them from the most significant impacts on their subject well-being, perceived disease progression, and prognosis.”

- Vulnerability Mapping
- Longitudinal Test
- Provider Intervention
- 30 participants is a small sample size
- recruit: newly diagnosed HNC patients
- FACT-H&N psyc wellbeing
- Aim 3 if funded by NCI – training – patient trust, perceived vulnerability, psychological outcomes
- Leverages psyc insights to address medical racism and social inequality

Better understanding of patient trust networks, provider-patient dynamics; improved outcomes, reduced disparities

Michelle’s Feedback:

One suggestion is to consider use of phrase *their perception of their clinical disease progression* vs. *perceived disease progression*. It’s a very small nuance, but I think a critical one. The disease is progressing one way or another regardless of how they view it, and it could be important to measure perception vs reality, as that could also affect trust.

Vulnerability is central to your model - is it emotional, socioeconomic, social (eg: immigration status), racial – that you’re using as your counter measure.

Equity framework explicitly called out – I think this is great to make it explicit.

LP15. Vulnerability as a Lens for Reconceptualizing the Implications of Trust as Policing Theory

“Joe is leading an integrative conceptual piece that will use the lab’s developments in thinking about vulnerability within social systems to argue that they allow for much needed reconceptualization of the reason why trust is important in the relationship between governance agents and the public. Rather than pursuing trust as a license for governance actors to pursue their own agendas, our thinking on vulnerability suggests that trust is important, primarily, because it helps to negate the role that vulnerability plays in stymieing community well-being.”

Michelle’s Feedback:

Similar to a previous comment, I think ensuring that you're defining your use of vulnerability in each of these cases – is it emotional, socioeconomic, social (eg: immigration status), racial – that you're using as your counter measure.

Active Synergistic Project Summaries

SP6. Dissertation Research: The Influence of Judicial Attitudes on Efficiency, Satisfaction, and Legitimacy Perceptions among Court Users

"John has successfully proposed a dissertation that will use data collected as part of his role with the Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office to understand relationship between judicial officer attitudes and court user experiences through interviews with Michigan judges and data collected as part of the statewide court user satisfaction survey."

Michelle's Feedback:

Congratulations! No comments, as dissertation is approved and underway.

SP7. (Dis)Trust, Community Health, and Subjective Well-Being

Dioxin survey... "We expect that concern will have a negative impact on subjective health and well-being but hypothesize that this impact will be attenuated for individuals who report greater trust in the agencies responsible for keeping them safe. More plainly, we argue that—when faced with a salient community health concern—trust plays an inoculating role, severing the impact of that concern on subjective well-being."

Michelle's Feedback:

I'm too close to this topic to be thoroughly objective; but I posit that most individuals on a day-to-day basis do not hold or recognize government agencies as separate entities. MDHHS is now primarily known as the COVID leaders – but I hypothesize few people could tell you what we do beyond that as people don't care until it directly affects them in a negative way. So, I think the data will be flawed in collection unless a control is initiated in which you ask people to define the agencies and their expected responsibilities in a more qualitative method at the beginning of the survey to set the baseline. Otherwise, the government is the government.

SP8. Dissertation Research: Military Sexual Trauma Among Female Veterans in Michigan: Exploring Experiences, Dynamics, and Responses

"In partnership with veteran affairs agencies across the state of Michigan, project activities include utilizing a mixed methods design where participants are recruited across the state to complete a survey followed by in-depth interviews for participants who want to further their participation in the study. Results will shed light on whether the military's culture and power dynamics are harmful to victims, the consequences of MST, and what the state of Michigan can do to support and provide for survivors."

Michelle's Feedback:

This is a very important and interesting topic; no comments on design at the moment.

SP9. Dissertation Research: Assessing Research University Stakeholder's Trust in and Acceptance of AI Technology

Qualitative studies have shown that concerns over these vulnerabilities and a lack of trustworthiness in leaders and higher education data infrastructure are barriers to new technology use within higher education. In this quantitative survey-based study, I explore staff, faculty, and student perceptions of trustworthiness and their willingness to accept different applications of AI. In addition to introducing new methods and conceptual frameworks for exploring technology adoption in higher education, this study will have practical implications for how organizational leaders can improve trust relationships within changing colleges and universities."

Michelle's Feedback:

Sounds like an interesting topic; no comments on the design at the moment.

SP10. Dissertation Research: Third-Party Contractors and Education Stakeholder Trust

"Private companies are often exempt from the regulation and compliance policies that govern public institutions. Without a similar system of checks and balances, private company managed school services

are vulnerable to business operational inefficiencies. Failures in contractor quality can negatively impact other, dependent educational functions – leaving public schools to take the wrap for market problems. With universal enrollment and enrollment-based funding becoming common place in state education policy, reduced trust in schools has the potential to negatively impact funding and performance in these institutions. Using interviews with public school stakeholders in Detroit, MI – a school district that experienced food shortages caused by labor strikes at the contractor's distribution point – I explore how failures in contracted services impact stakeholder's trust in public schools."

Michelle's Feedback:

The author notes that most schools have resorted to this model. I recommend supporting these types of generalizations with data, as the rural school districts I'm aware of in the area do not seem to have these contractual relationships as broadly as stated. However, the study hypothesis will be an interesting one – albeit limited to one school district and not likely generalizable to the population as a whole without further study after this potential pilot.

SP11. The Roles of Control, Trust, and Vulnerability, Postsecondary Data Use

"Advances in data storage and computing power now make it possible to track and analyze professionals' interactions with one another and students in minute detail. Higher education leaders have embraced data-driven tools in an effort to serve students more effectively, efficiently, and equitably. Yet, both historical evidence and empirical studies suggests that the implementation of new technologies within postsecondary education often generates conflict, threatening the trust necessary for colleges and universities to be effectively governed. In order for all higher education stakeholders to have trust in postsecondary data and to strengthen collaboration through its use, I argue that leaders must accept two truths. First, data use is not only a technical challenge but a deeply social and relational one. Second, as higher education adjusts to the era of big data, it is imperative that those seeking sustainable and ethical change tend to how new digital technologies often generate vulnerability and distrust. After calling for this more nuanced view of data-driven change, I conclude by outlining the new directions for scholarship and practice that emerge by centering trust and vulnerability in postsecondary education's systemic data use efforts."

Michelle's Feedback:

Sounds like an interesting topic; no comments on the design at the moment. The nuances of academia are extremely lost on me.

Funding Convo

Lab beyond the 5 years of funding – \$1.5M gift per student endowment to support

- Finding a way to completely fund students within the lab itself. Center the trust-lens of the Lab into three main frames: theory, community – beyond scholarly perspective and elevate community
- MacArthur Foundation
- City of Lansing partnership – 6 assistantships
- Community partnerships – placements
- Centralizing the lab
- If you're not engaged with the MSU Ethics committee, that may be a partnership to pursue: <https://ethics.msu.edu/contact>
- External Internships – might be

Following is Bill McEvily's letter to the lab for inclusion in this year's report.

Bill McEvily
Professor of Strategic Management
Jim Fisher Professorship in Leadership Development



Rotman School of Management
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Rotman

May 12, 2025

Dr. Joe Hamm
Faculty Supervisor, TRUSST Lab

Dear Dr. Hamm,

I enjoyed reading the 2024 Strategic Plan and Annual Report for the TRUSST Lab and to having the opportunity to discuss the activities of the Lab with you during the External Advisory Board (EAB) meeting on April 25, 2025. As requested, I am providing feedback on the materials you shared with the EAB. The comments below are organized following the format of the Annual Report.

Before doing so, let me first state that I enthusiastically endorse the activities and work that you and the PhD students of TRUSST Lab have done in 2024. You continue to be highly focused on executing your vision to advance understanding of the social science of trust through PhD-student led research that has impact both from a scholarly and practical standpoint. With nine current PhD students, two undergraduate students, three alumni students, and a host of collaborators inside and outside of MSU, the scale and scope of the research activities is remarkable. As has been the case in the past two years, the impact of the Lab is clearly evident in the number of dissertations, PhD student placements, working papers, conference papers, published papers, and reports that have been produced. And, this does not even account for the lagged effects of the research (e.g., citations) that will accrue in the coming years. The Lab has also been successful in attracting additional external financial support for its activities in the form of grants, fellowships, and other awards. Taken together, the Lab continues to build on its past history of success and continued to deliver on its vision and mission across the board in 2024—bravo!

VISION

Given the Lab's track record of success and impact I continue to endorse its focus on advancing PhD-student led research. In 2024 the Lab further elevated its profile through scholarly engagement and practical outreach and I encourage it to continue to pursue opportunities to share and promote the great work it is doing with interested stakeholders. The lab's tripartite focus on Theory-Practice-Community is the bedrock of its activities and goals, and continues to serve as an effective means of guiding and directing the Lab's key goals and priorities. In discussing the goals flowing from the Lab's foundational perspective (i.e., Figure 1) I noticed that the theory and practice elements are explicitly highlighted, but not the community element, so you may wish to reflect on the tradeoffs of adding a goal specifically targeted on the third element of the perspective.

STRUCTURE

The Lab's structure is well-aligned with its emphasis on interdisciplinary trust research, in terms of drawing students (11), and a growing list of collaborating faculty (8), from a number of different academic disciplines (6), institutions (3) and research centers (1). The gradual expansion of the Lab's engagement with new PhD students and faculty has served it well the past couple of years and would appear to be a sensible approach to growing its footprint in the near term. In this regard, the addition of Dr. Jennifer Carrera as a co-Supervisor of the students was a particularly noteworthy change in 2024 in terms of ensuring the sustainability of the Lab's growth. At the same time, as the Lab evolves it would be worthwhile to periodically review the scale and scope of its involvements with its vision and mission in mind.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

I continue to view the Lab's theoretical contributions on a concentrated set of topics of central importance to trust research as a significant way that it stays focused on its mission and differentiates itself from other similar centers. In particular, the ongoing and expansive research into the concept of vulnerability has been the Lab's flagship foci and its numerous papers and presentations on the topic has established the Lab as an authoritative voice in the literature. I appreciate evolution of the Lab's thinking on vulnerability *across social contexts* as the integrative glue that connects the subthemes characterizing specific papers and projects. It is exciting to learn that, under Joe's leadership, the Lab is developing an integrative conceptual piece that brings together its various strands of work on vulnerability to develop a unique lens for understanding governance relationships and I look forward to hearing more about this work as it evolves. This past year the Lab's portfolio of research continued to evolve with the addition of new student with novel interests. Continuing to monitor the overall portfolio of research to maintain a healthy balance between 'exploration and exploitation' is important.

PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This past year the Lab continued a number of ongoing partnership, while also adding a number of new organizations that are addressing an interesting array of practical questions of related to trust. I continue to see, anecdotally, a trend toward heightened interest in trust in the broader public and, concomitantly, a thirst for actionable knowledge. If anything, the trend may have accelerated further recently given the considerable political and economic uncertainty that has rippled through countless facets of society. If correct, the Lab's approach of partnering with organization on the front lines of emerging challenges is all the more important, both in terms of guiding inquiry with carefully designed research and in terms of informing practice with robust evidence. I applaud the Lab's efforts in this regard and encourage it to continue to make this a priority.

STUDENT TRAINING CONTRIBUTIONS

The benefit of the Lab's approach to working collaboratively on student projects is clearly evident in the number of projects being supported with external funding and, critically, in the number of dissertations that have been completed. Training PhD students is inherently challenging and requires a great deal of commitment from the intellectual community of which they are a member. The Lab fulfills a critical role in this regard in terms of providing the

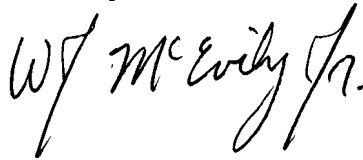
scholarly, financial, and personal support that allows students to surmount the inevitable difficulties they will undoubtedly encounter, and develop the resilience required for a product career as an academic.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

I am very encouraged to learn that the Lab is looking ahead to consider additional source of funding to sustain its activities. It is especially exciting to see the Lab applying to the Levers for Change, Trust in American Institutions Challenge, given the clear alignment of this opportunity with the Lab's vision and mission. The idea of implementing a city-wide trust-building effort is both ambitious and inspiring. Should the Lab be selected for the award, it would undoubtedly provide a major boost to its activities and profile, which I believe the Lab is well-poised to seize. At the same time, if the Lab is not selected for the award, it will want to continue to consider and pursue alternative funding sources that closely dovetail with its core mandate and mission.

I hope you find my comments helpful as you continue your important work at the Lab.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bill McEvily Jr." in a cursive script.

Bill McEvily