Gary Dymski received an MPA from Syracuse University in 1977, and served as staff director in the Indiana State Senate before earning his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1987. He was a research fellow in economic studies at the Brookings in 1985-86. Gary taught at the University of Southern California from 1986 to 1991, before coming to UCR, where he is now Professor of Economics. Gary has been a visiting scholar at Tokyo University, the Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Gary is a Research Associate of the Economic Policy Institute and a member of three editorial boards. Gary’s publications include the 1999 book The Bank Merger Wave and three co-edited volumes. Gary has written more than 100 articles and book chapters on topics including banking, urban development, discrimination, financial crises, and housing finance.


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The proposed Center for Sustainable Suburban Development (CSSD) represents the convergence of a number of different forces at work on the UCR campus and in the Inland Southern California region as a whole. In the 1990s, San Bernardino and Riverside counties added over 650,000 people, reaching 3.25 million. At the same time, UCR took on the challenge of being the “growth campus” in the UC system. The result is in process – a doubling of the campus’s student population to 22,000 between 1999 and 2010. Growth on this scale demanded careful planning. Executive Vice Chancellor Dave Warren set into motion a large-scale, inclusive effort to identify a “Vision 2010” for UCR. Under Vision 2010, UCR initiated some distinctive research initiatives, building, to the extent possible, on features of Inland Southern California. The success of the Bourns College of Engineering’s Center for Environmental Research and Technology demonstrated this strategy was feasible.

From the mid-1980s onward, one distinctive feature of the region surrounding UCR was the accelerating pace of housing construction and population growth. In the last several years, Inland Southern California has become recognized as one of the growth poles of the entire nation: Inland Southern California has become ground zero for the national trend of suburban growth. Needless to say, expansion on this scale creates unprecedented challenges of infrastructure, economic development, and local services.

The opportunity to make regional growth a focal point of UCR’s research came about through the conjunction of three elements. The first is the Environmental Initiative, authorized under Vision 2010. Under this Initiative, Professor William Jury and a diverse faculty team are developing research on the local eco-system, considered among the most challenged in the U.S. The second element was the provision of a planning grant for a center on sustainable suburban development by Ali Sahabi, a Southern California business leader and local developer, in conjunction with his close collaborator Edward J. Blakely, a UCR graduate and a leading thinker on planning and growth issues (see box inside). The third element was the interest of Professor Gary Dymski in developing research that would respond to the needs of the region’s diverse residential and business communities. Gary, then serving as associate dean of UCR’s College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, agreed to serve as director of the center planning process. Gary’s first act was to hire Andy McCue as associate director (see box on back). Thus, in mid-May 2002, the CSSD came to life.
The CSSD’s activities thus far have included extensive consultations with individuals and organizations on and off campus, and also the following events:

- A Nov. 2002 breakfast meeting soliciting the views and ideas of 65 county and local political leaders.
- A breakfast meeting in January 2003 for 100 local business and community leaders, exploring local policy challenges and the role of the center.
- The February 20-22 conference on sustainable suburban development, in which internationally-renowned academics and practitioners will debate the future of Inland Southern California and discuss the role of the CSSD in charting a course to this future.
- Collaborative research with natural and social scientists and humanists on the UCR faculty — planning for several prospective collaborative research projects is underway.
- An innovative policy-based research seminar for advanced undergraduate students. Gary is leading a two-quarter policy-research seminar for 25 upper-division students. Student teams are conducting fundamental research on housing, Native American reservations, education, and public finance. They will produce student policy briefs that CSSD will web-publish by mid-year.

These activities all are creating links between the intellectual purposes of UCR as a research university with an international reputation, and the region that nurtures it. Over the next several decades, Inland Southern California will be a laboratory for growth management issues that are affecting suburban areas across North America and throughout the world. By investigating policies and problems relevant to its surrounding communities, UCR and the CSSD will be furthering the campus’s mission of doing relevant, world-class research.

UCR’s campus environment, with the broad range of knowledge represented on its faculty, makes it possible to create truly multidisciplinary approaches to social, economic, and ecological problems. But the skills the university needs are not only academic. Understanding this rapidly growing area and devising realistic programs requires that CSSD forge strong bonds with the region’s businesses, political leadership and community groups. The breakfasts and the February conference are the first steps in building strong alliances between the campus and practitioners. Too often, whether it’s a report on sprawl, or commuting patterns, or housing costs, Inland Southern California has been held up as an example of what not to do. The partnership that the Center will forge between the university and supporting communities has the potential to create programs that not only change the perception, but serve as models that will be applied around the world. To do this:

- We are pushing ahead with UCR’s formal process of center approval even while continuing our consultative process with local business and community leaders.
- We are establishing cooperative and synergistic relationships with faculty at UCR and other universities and colleges in Inland Southern California.
- We are identifying initial research projects that will further the center’s academic mission, help our supporting communities and insure we have the financial structure to achieve our goals.

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Draft Mission Statement

The Riverside-San Bernardino area in which UCR is located represents a hub of the new wave of American suburban and exurban development. It faces severe challenges of planning and coordination - not only because it lacks a single central business district, but also because, as a subarea of a major metropolitan area, it often lacks the political and economic autonomy to resolve its most crucial issues independently. It faces these challenges in an area with remarkable ethnic diversity, significant differences in residents’ economic status and education levels and a remarkable number of endangered plant and animal species.

Given this context, the Center for Sustainable Suburban Development will generate research and policy analyses that focus on the economic, social, planning, and ecological challenges of the suburbs. The center will use a multi-disciplinary approach to these challenges, drawing on faculty, students and researchers from the social and natural sciences, engineering, the professions and the humanities.

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Ed Blakely

Edward J. Blakely is both the Dean of the Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy at New School University in New York City and a dean of public policy thinking in the U.S.

Ed is familiar with the region’s challenges for two reasons. First, he is a local product: he graduated from both San Bernardino High School and UCR (class of ’60). Second, he is an internationally recognized scholar in urban community development, and he has been a successful practitioner in strategic planning, financing, real estate development and project management. Prior to his current position, he ran urban planning and public policy programs at USC and UC Berkeley. He was a candidate for mayor of Oakland in 1998.