Mission (Why do we exist?)

To develop or enhance projects that demonstrably improve life for people in Colorado facing difficult challenges

Vision (What is the future we seek to bring about?)

Leaders in the public, private, social, and academic sectors routinely work together and alongside Coloradans in their communities to address complex social problems

Our Theory of Change:

The best way to address complex social problems is to bring together and capitalize on the resources of all sectors—public, private, social, and academic—and to work alongside the people most affected

When do we act?

The Barton Institute takes action when our unique blend of financial resources, knowledge, connections outside of and within the University of Denver, and expertise positions us to make a significant difference in addressing a problem or taking a solution to scale.

Values (What core ideals guide our decisions and actions?)

Respect
Agility
Integrity
Service
Excellence

Situation Analysis/Environmental Scan

David Miller founded the Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise in 2016. The Institute is a free-standing organization at the University of Denver (DU), not associated with any particular college, department, or school. As Executive Director of the Institute, David reports to the Chancellor and the Provost of DU. The University of Denver provides office space and a few services for the Institute. All other needs and functions of the Institute must be paid for by money raised by its staff.

When David first began work at the Institute in 2016, he conducted an extensive listening tour to determine the best focus for the mission and work of the Institute.
The first part of the listening tour consisted of talking individually to hundreds of people at DU. This included all of the Deans and Vice Chancellors as well as a large number of faculty and students. David was particularly impressed by the number of connections already in existence between DU and the outside community. While additional bridges can always be built, there are already countless ways in which DU faculty and students are involved in the local community and the outside world. Among the biggest challenges is that many of these activities are “under the radar” and unconnected to similar work that is going on elsewhere at DU.

The external listening tour consisted of contacting other institutes related to philanthropy and social enterprise around the country. There are now more than 60 such institutes housed at various colleges and universities nationwide. The focus of these institutes varies significantly.

At the end of the listening tour, David reached several conclusions about the scope of work for the Institute at DU. First, he confirmed that philanthropy and social enterprise were the appropriate areas of focus. They are exciting, growing, and diverse fields that have substantial appeal to younger generations in particular. Also, philanthropy and social enterprise are where David’s passion and expertise lie. Although the definitions of philanthropy and social enterprise are varied and ever-changing, for now they accurately capture the spirit the Institute seeks to embody and the work the Institute seeks to undertake.

Second, David concluded that the Institute’s work should concentrate on populations in Colorado facing difficult challenges. The practices of philanthropy and social enterprise have significant ability to help improve people’s lives. While DU students and faculty will be involved in much of the work of the Institute, helping students and faculty is not an end in itself, but is a means to the end of helping people in the community. For that reason, the Institute will not focus on teaching or granting degrees as do programs like the Indiana University School of Philanthropy.

Similarly, the Institute will not be a think tank. There are other important and successful think tanks around the country, most notably the Stanford Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS). PACS is doing work all over the world, it produces a number of important scholarly journals and publications, and it is constantly hosting conferences, webinars, and symposia. David concluded that is not necessary to have another think tank in this field.

Another conclusion resulting from the listening tour is that the geographic focus of the Institute should be local – focused on metro Denver and the State of Colorado. Because there are other institutes in almost every other state, it did not make sense for the footprint of the DU Institute to be regional, national, or international. The Institute is the only one of its kind in Colorado.

In the fall of 2016, David completed a conceptual plan for the Institute that was distributed to interested people. One of the people he consulted about the plan was Laura Barton. After numerous meetings and conversations, Laura and her family decided to endow the Institute and put their name on it. As of November, 2016, the Institute became the Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise at the University of Denver. Laura's extremely generous gift gave the Institute sustainability and notoriety. The gift allowed David to begin hiring staff in
January, 2017. The first staff members he hired were Rebecca Arno as Director of the Barton Institute and Mellissa Lewis as Program Coordinator of the Barton Institute.

In the first half of 2017, the three-person staff put in place much of the Barton Institute’s infrastructure. We also established the Advisory Board, which complements and enhances the governing role of the Executive Committee. After considering a wide range of possible projects and programs, we selected a handful to begin our work.

The Advisory Board conducted an analysis on the Barton Institute’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Among the major challenges identified are the following:

- Intense and growing competition for philanthropic dollars will make it increasingly difficult to raise money for the Institute
- Bureaucracy at a large institution like DU may present difficulties when nimbleness might be required to meet community needs
- Many new players are entering the social enterprise sector
- The sector is fragmented and not well defined
- There are numerous external threats, such as climate change and future economic recessions
- The need to leverage resources
- The need to document impact

Guiding Principles

The conceptual plan also identified ten principles to guide the work of the Institute. These will help the Institute take action and choose which projects to undertake. In no particular order, the guiding principles are:

- Pass the “but for” test: “Would this have happened if the Institute didn’t exist?”
- Address major social issues
- Create definable impact
- Use expertise and resources from the private, public, and social sectors
- Employ and amplify expertise and resources from the University of Denver
- Contribute to and build on Impact 2025, DU’s strategic plan
- Focus initially on metro Denver and Colorado with the possibility that this work will inform other parts of the U.S. and the world
- Practice servant leadership and community-based approaches
• Strike a balance between working deeply and working broadly

• Using an equity lens, assist groups of people in Colorado facing difficult challenges

Four Pillars

The conceptual plan identified four pillars of work for the Institute. These are the four areas in which the Institute will conduct its work. Those pillars are:

• Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab
• Interdisciplinary Social Enterprise Fellowship Program
• Cross-Sector Partnerships
• Strategic Opportunities

The three-year goals and strategies below are organized around these four pillars.

GOALS and STRATEGIES

I. Build and sustain a successful Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab

A. Meet all of the milestones in the grant agreement with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, including raising matching dollars.

B. Have several successful evaluations that have been implemented by Colorado state government.

C. Have a good working relationship with the new Governor of Colorado and her/his administration.

D. Determine the ongoing staffing and structure of the Lab, including how much of the evaluation work is done in-house and how much is outsourced.

E. Have a sustainable and operating business model for the Lab.

F. Have funding for at least three more years after 2020.

II. Build and sustain a successful interdisciplinary Social Enterprise Fellowship program
A. Complete the first year of the Fellowship program and conduct an evaluation of the program to improve it for future years.

B. Secure funding for years two and three of the Fellowship program.

C. Complete three successful cohorts that have made demonstrable contributions to local social enterprises.

D. Learn from each year’s activities and make improvements in the program for the following year.

E. Secure ongoing funding for the Fellowship program, ideally with an endowment from a named sponsor.

F. Follow the progress of Fellows after they graduate. Among other things, determine if they get involved in social enterprises.

G. Develop a Fellowship Alumni Association.

III. Engage in at least two cross sector partnerships that demonstrably improve life for people in Colorado facing difficult challenges.

A. Evaluate the tiny homes project. If it is not successful, work to improve it. If it is successful, work to replicate it.

B. Ideally, the tiny homes project will lead to changing the Denver municipal ordinance to allow tiny homes for longer than six months. Also ideally, help develop other tiny home villages, possibly through a pay for success funding mechanism.

C. Evaluate the Denver Public Schools restorative practices project. If it is not successful, work to improve it. If it is successful, work to expand it.

D. Ideally, the Denver Public School district will continue to fund the restorative practices project and will take it to scale district wide.

E. Connect the work of these cross-sector partnerships with expertise and resources within the University of Denver.

F. Develop at least one other cross sector partnership.

G. Raise money for ongoing Barton Institute cross sector partnerships to keep this pillar sustainable.
IV. Successfully find one or more unforeseen opportunities for the Barton Institute to demonstrably improve life for people in Colorado facing difficult challenges, and to build its capacity to do so.

A. Host at least two events per year that educate DU students, the public, and community leaders about key issues in philanthropy and social enterprise and their ability to improve life for people in Colorado facing difficult challenges.

B. Do not undertake any other new programs unless: (a) they meet almost all of the ten guiding principles of the Barton Institute and (b) there is ongoing funding for all staffing and other expenses related to the project.

V. Integrate the work of the Barton Institute for maximum impact in achieving its mission.

A. As much as possible, connect the four pillars of the Institute so they do not become silos.

B. Have a strong but agile governing structure. This includes an Executive Committee, Advisory Board, Faculty Advisory Committees, and project-specific Advisory Committees. It is important to balance the need for broad input with the administrative burden of staffing numerous committees.

C. Secure permanent office space for the Barton Institute that is commensurate with its position at DU and in the community.

D. Develop and strengthen the Barton Institute's database, website, communications strategies, and other infrastructure.