Our Mission

Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship accelerates entrepreneurship to end global poverty and protect the planet. We draw inspiration from the Jesuit, Catholic tradition of Santa Clara University, and fuse that with the entrepreneurial spirit of Silicon Valley to catalyze innovative, sustainable solutions to poverty. We are guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the vision of integral human development articulated by Pope Francis in his encyclical Laudato Si’.

Social entrepreneurship is a practical social change movement that deploys innovative business strategies to promote practical social justice. Social entrepreneurs measure their success by the beneficial impact they have on the world, as well as profit. Globally, social entrepreneurs use the SDGs to orient their work. They use principles from private enterprise, such as business model strategies, revenue diversification, rigorous application of metrics, and investment to achieve economies and efficiencies in driving social change.

Unlike traditional aid and charity organizations, social enterprises have greater financial sustainability due to their innovative business models. Social entrepreneurship has distinct advantages over other means for promoting social justice: it creates inclusive local markets for local economic development, and fosters agency among the poor themselves. Social entrepreneurs create passports out of poverty.

The Catholic Action for Social Entrepreneurship Initiative

Miller Center achieves its mission in partnership with social enterprises and other organizations. We build upon our university’s Jesuit Catholic tradition by creating more intentional partnerships with Catholic institutions through an initiative called CASE (Catholic Action for Social Entrepreneurship). CASE focuses our partnership efforts toward Catholic religious orders and institutions, with special attention to the needs of Africa and North America. Our goals are to:

1. Transform Catholic social ministries into social enterprises, using Miller Center methodology.

2. Provide formation for religious order members to become apostles (leaders and influencers) for social entrepreneurship, by providing experiential, hands-on training.

3. Engage youth by providing opportunities to realize their vision of social entrepreneurship as a vocation.
The following have requested partnerships with Miller Center.

**JESUITS IN RESIDENCE**

This program provides customized formation experiences for individual Jesuits. Fr. Phil Cooke SJ, our pioneering **Jesuit In Residence**, was drawn to Miller Center in 2012 because he recognized how social entrepreneurship could provide a more sustainable strategy for social ministries that also promotes human dignity. In his words, “Authentic development requires a mutual exchange between the giver and the receiver. Every person on this Earth, no matter how rich or poor, has something to give.” Many African Jesuits – while graduate students at SCU -- have been attracted to the mission of Miller Center, and five Jesuits have collaborated with us to offer nine **GSBI Boost** accelerator workshops in 7 countries, a majority of them in Africa. Miller Center and Jesuits delivered five “Social Innovation: A Workshop for Pastoral Agents” workshops in West and Central Africa to 125 participants, including approximately 50 religious sisters. We continue to receive requests for this program from individual Jesuits.

**JESUIT INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AFRICA**

What began as an apprenticeship for individual Jesuits is evolving into an institutional partnership with the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, which convenes an existing network of 14 social ministry centers. With a strategic priority of youth employment and entrepreneurship, through this initiative, this network will apply the principles of social entrepreneurship throughout all dimensions of its ministries: programs with youth, engaging young entrepreneurs, business models of the social ministry centers, and the strategy of the Jesuit African Social Centres network. In addition, a number of Jesuit educational ministry leaders have requested assistance in teaching social entrepreneurship to youth, in both secondary schools and universities.

**ASSOCIATION OF CONSECRATED WOMEN IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

This regional body is composed of National Associations of Catholic Sisters from ten English-speaking countries of Eastern and Central Africa, representing 302 congregations that provide direct service to the poor. This association has requested Miller Center collaboration with leading congregations in the “Sisters Blended Value Project” that seeks to transform the social ministries they sponsor into social enterprises. The Sisters in this association recognize the limitations of a charity model, and have real assets that can be leveraged to support their outreach to the poor.
In July 2018, Miller Center and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County partnered to deliver a GSBI Boost accelerator workshop focused on Bay Area social enterprises. Eight of the 30 enterprises that participated were Catholic Charity programs seeking to make themselves financially sustainable, moving away from a donor-dependent charity model. A subset of the 30 enterprises were invited to continue their enterprise journey by participating in the GSBI Online Accelerator, beginning early 2019. Miller Center has also partnered with Innovation Works, based in Baltimore. Over the next three years Innovation Works will replicate the work Miller Center does with social entrepreneurs in Baltimore. This will be done in partnership with Catholic Charities of Baltimore, to support their organizational transition as well to a more entrepreneurial delivery model for services to the poor.
Social entrepreneurship is an inherently pro-woman form of economic development. Investment in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path toward gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. In 2017-2018, 38% of our social entrepreneurs were women, and even more deploy gender inclusive strategies. Last year we partnered with one of our Global Social Benefit Institute (GSBI®) alumni, Solar Sister, to publish Turning On The Lights, which describes the multi-dimensional impact of women selling solar lanterns door-to-door in their communities.

**Our Vision**

Miller Center imagines a world where all people are architects of their own futures. We are guided by the SDGs and Laudato Si’ with its call for the renewal of the human family. Daily we witness the transformative impact of social entrepreneurship in the lives of beneficiaries, enterprises and their employees, and social entrepreneurs themselves. Our social entrepreneurs embody passion for a more just and sustainable world and are catalysts for sustainable human development; our accompaniment of them convinces us that innovation and entrepreneurship are essential strategies in fulfilling the vision of Laudato Si’.
Laudato Si’ calls for a profound reorientation of society: the transformation of human identity for an ecological era, the renewal of our collective moral consciousness, and the conversion of markets and institutions toward a more sustainable future. Integral human development demands the transformation of humanity and its institutions. Social entrepreneurship provides the poor access to essential goods and services, and does so by creating markets that respect human dignity, thus overcoming the trap of dependency inherent in traditional development and charity models. Locally embedded enterprises catalyze socioeconomic relationships by stimulating agency among the poor and their participation in community life. Social entrepreneurs create access to goods, services, and human dignity, providing opportunities for the poor to architect their own futures.

Climate change has disproportionate negative impacts on women and the poor. Laudato Si’ calls for robust responses to this challenge and notes the ecological debt accrued by the global north. In particular, poor communities are more dependent on ecosystem services for food, water, and energy needs, all of which are impacted by climate change. Climate resilience is the ability of communities to absorb the stresses of climate change and to develop the capacity for economic stability and growth; social entrepreneurship helps communities adopt more sustainable practices locally to navigate climate disruption. Approximately one-third of our social enterprise partners foster climate resilience using diverse strategies, such as enhanced access to water and energy, community-based health care, and the creation of sustainable rural livelihoods. For examples, see Creating Climate Resilience.

We practice a “pedagogy of accompaniment” as fundamental to accelerating social enterprises. Listening and responding to our social enterprise partners is essential to our success, and is core to our GSBI methodology.
The special role that Silicon Valley executive mentors play in our accelerator programs is in the spirit of the Ignatian spiritual exercises: our mentors are trusted advisors who walk with our social entrepreneurs, helping them discern how to scale their enterprises and to develop as entrepreneurial leaders. In the same spirit, Miller Center accompanies our partners, whether institutions, universities, private corporations, or development organizations. Recently, we have begun to collaborate more closely with Catholic religious orders, including the Jesuits, and their social ministries. Our most successful partnerships combine our experience and expertise with the knowledge and spirit of entrepreneurial leaders in local communities around the world. The power of accompaniment gives us hope that we can architect solutions to the world’s most pressing problems.
IMPACT INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Miller Center has been a pioneer in impact investing and a leader in orienting new entrants to this sector, including the Catholic Church, other religious organizations, and international NGOs. We have trained more than 300 investment managers, program managers, and intermediaries in the impact investment landscape. We have created new financial tools to increase access to capital, including the Variable Payment Obligation (VPO).

ACTION RESEARCH

Miller Center hosts the Global Social Benefit Fellowship, a mentored program of undergraduate practical research that adds real value to GSBI social enterprises. We co-create research projects to help these social enterprises measure and scale their impact. At the end of the nine-month Fellowship, fellows deliver customized action research portfolios, some of which have been successfully used by enterprises to raise investment funds.

MILLER CENTER FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Miller Center is the largest and most successful university-based social enterprise accelerator in the world. Founded in 1997, Miller Center is one of three Centers of Distinction at Santa Clara University, located in the heart of Silicon Valley—where Miller Center leverages this entrepreneurial spirit with the University’s Jesuit heritage of service to the poor and protection of the planet.

Since 2003, Miller Center has accelerated more than 900 social enterprises that have collectively improved, transformed, or saved the lives of more than 320 million poor people living in over 100 countries around the world.

To learn more, visit scu.edu/MillerCenter