

## John C. Austin

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[John Austin: Brookings Expert](#)

## Education

***Master of Public Administration. 1990. Harvard University – John F. Kennedy School of Government***

***Bachelor of Arts in Economics & Political Science. 1983. Swarthmore College.***  
***High Honors, Phi Beta Kappa. Concentration in Public Policy.***

## Professional Experience

### Summary

John Austin currently serves as a **Senior Fellow** with the [Eisenhower Institute at Gettysburg College](#) (EI) leading the organizations' work on international economy-building and democracy strengthening. Austin also serves as a Non-Resident Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and the Upjohn Institute. where he has for over twenty years [led efforts](#) to support [economic transformation in the American Midwest](#) and in the [industrial heartlands of Western democracies](#).

In recent years Mr. Austin has created and facilitate impactful international partnerships and initiatives, including the transatlantic [Transforming Industrial Heartlands Initiative](#) (with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and international partners); [partnerships](#) to promote and implement [allyshoring](#), (with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies) along with [international collaborations](#) to help democracies [maintain global innovation and economic leadership](#).

John Austin is the former state-wide elected President of the Michigan State Board of Education. For 12 years Austin created and directed the [Michigan Economic Center](#) for ideas and network-building to advance Michigan's economic transformation. Mr. Austin also Lectures on the Economy at the University of Michigan.

### Work Experience

**Creator and Director, [Transforming Industrial Heartland Regions Initiative](#), 2019- present.**

Beginning in 2019, Austin pulled together Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Georgetown University's BMW Center for German and European Studies, his Michigan Economic Center, Policy@Manchester at the University of Manchester, the Ruhr-Konferenz, the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Chicago, and the European Commission's Directorate of Regional and Urban Policy in a transatlantic alliance to advance policies, practices, and strategies that foster economic and community development in industrial regions.

The initiatives' work including [learning exchanges](#), [convenings](#), [events](#), [study tours](#), [presentations](#), [publications](#), [articles in journals and media outlets](#) have informed the work of economic change leaders across countries, helped shape [the US policy agenda](#) for place-based industrial policy, the work in the UK to "level-up", European [cohesion policy](#), the OECD's [regional economic development strategy](#), among many other important impacts. As part of this initiative, Austin has been the lead author of the [project reports](#), as well as influential articles published by [Foreign Policy](#), the [Brookings Institution](#), the [National Interest](#), among others, promoting the urgency of accelerating economic change in heartland regions, and sharing insights from the work of the initiative.

***Architect – "Allyshoring" , 2020- present.***

Working with colleague Elaine Dezenski of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, we have successfully [introduced](#) and [elaborated](#) the allyshoring concept, now embraced as a powerful paradigm and practical response to strengthen the economies' of democracies, our alliances, and effectively check the ability of China and other authoritarians to break apart the rules-based, international order. Today, the policy construct is being amplified by dozens of [business](#), [government](#), and [foreign policy thought leaders](#) across the globe-- from [Australia](#) to [Nigeria](#), the [Phillipines](#) to [Guatemala](#), [Mexico City](#) to [Miami](#). Spread through international media forums and publications that include [The New York Times](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [The Hill](#), [Korea Times](#), [Newsweek](#), [Mexico Today](#), [Politico](#), [The National Interest](#), [Fortune](#), [Forbes](#), [Barrons](#), among many others.

***President, Michigan State Board of Education, 2001-2016***

Elected twice by Michigan citizens to policy leadership role over Michigan education. Elected President by peers in 2010. Led Board's work to put in place rigorous academic standards, including high school exit requirements and assessments, and Common Core; restructured teacher preparation and quality improvement policies; expand early childhood education; build state school accountability system and turnaround policy. Currently leading examination and reworking of Michigan's school finance system. Education reformer, policy-shaper, advocate and bi-partisan coalition builder.

***Director, Michigan Economic Center, 2012-2024***

Mr. Austin created and led for twelve years the [Michigan Economic Center](#), a network- building and policy development organization to spur the transformation of Michigan's economy. As part of this work Mr. Austin coined the term "Blue Economy" to describe the way our waters, and water innovation contribute to economic growth, and created the "[Growing Michigan's Blue Economy](#)". Initiative to support stakeholders in leveraging Michigan's water, and water research, education and innovation assets for economic development and new business and job growth. Mr. Austin also initiated the [Global Detroit](#) program to welcome immigrants as a source of economic strength and renewal, and supported its replication in communities across the country. Through the Center, with support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, created the "Michigan Dream Restored" initiative to develop citizen-informed messages and strategies for better supporting Michigan's foundational assets – the "public goods" that drive Michigan's economy and support economic opportunity for families and children: strong education and higher education institutions; improved transportation and communications infrastructure; vital and attractive cities and communities; protection of our lakes, waters and outdoor recreation assets. Formed the [Michigan Higher Education Attainment Roundtable \(MIHEART\)](#) bringing together the state's business, labor, education, higher education leaders, Governor's office and bi-partisan legislators to forge a new broadly supported roadmap and policy/program agenda to help more Michigan citizens access higher education and complete valuable credentials and degrees.

***Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, 2005-present***

***Director, Great Lakes Economic Initiative.*** Conceived and led the design and execution of multi-year, multi-state, multi-stakeholder initiative to develop and advance an economic vision and action agenda for Great Lakes states. Authored, commissioned and implemented seminal Brookings Great Lakes economic reports that have shaped federal, state and local agenda and actions for Great Lakes economic development. Also supported Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program state and national policy work in support of urban, export, innovation, talent and workforce policy initiatives.

***Lecturer on the Economy, University of Michigan, 2013-present.***

Designed and teach a course for undergraduates on Michigan's emerging "Green and Blue" Economy: how taking good care of our natural water, land, and food assets, and starting new sustainable enterprises in energy, water, food systems, and mobility—grows jobs and supports sustainable economic and community development in Michigan and the Great Lakes region. Lectured at *University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning*, economic development policy graduate course.

***Visiting Research Scientist, University of Michigan Institute for Research on Labor, Employment and the Economy, 2009-12***

Faculty appointment to facilitate University of Michigan participation in Brookings Great Lakes Economic Initiative, and support University engagement in regional economic, community development and workforce development projects.

***Director, New Economy Initiative (NEI) for Southeast Michigan, 2008-2009***

Founding Director of the \$100 million philanthropic collaborative to improve the economy of Southeast Michigan. Organized and seeded the successful Global Detroit Initiative, to welcome and support immigrants and immigration as an economic and population driver for Detroit. Led to Global Michigan effort under Governor Snyder. Initiated strategies and funding for entrepreneur support and business incubation and innovation/commercialization programs in Detroit. Managed grants, staff, evaluation, supervised contractors, managed communications with partners.

***Michigan Lieutenant Governor's Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth, Policy Director 2004-2006.*** Supervised policy development, research and staff work for 41-member Governor appointed commission charged to make recommendations to enhance the number of Michigan citizens with post-secondary degrees over the next ten years, and leverage higher education institution's role in economic growth. Principal author of Commission report. Managed implementation of recommendations for Governor's Office.

***Senior Fellow, National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, University of Michigan, 2005-2007.*** Advisor to staff and students of Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, concerning involvement in public policy initiatives and research.

***Public Policy Associates, Senior Project Manager, Lansing, Michigan. 1995- 2004***

As Senior Project Manager with Public Policy Associates, created and led a number of significant public policy research, policy development and evaluation projects:

- *Reshaping Michigan's Workforce Development Strategy* - Organized the initiative to assist new Michigan Governor and administration design and implement a new workforce development strategy. Led team of consultants from Public Policy Associates and the Corporation for A Skilled Workforce (CSW) in an intensive nine-month planning process

supported by outside funders including the C.S. Mott Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation. Organized and supported an interagency staff and national expert consultant team leading to a new strategy, described in the *Reshaping Michigan's Workforce Policy* paper and follow-on work.

- *Regional Workforce Collaboratives Evaluation* - led the team evaluating a multiyear initiative of the James Irvine Foundation in three California labor markets designed to build effective career-ladder programs in key industry sectors for adults with little labor-market attachment and skill sets.
- *Genesee County Tax-Reverted Property Community Development Initiative* – led in developing a national model program to expedite use of abandoned and tax reverted properties for community redevelopment, with Brookings Institution, C.S. Mott Foundation, Genesee County.
- *People and Land Initiative* – key advisor and evaluation team leader for ongoing Michigan land use planning and policy reform effort funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, with Public Sector Consultants.
- *National Correctional Education Reform Policy Development Project* – designed policy initiative to promote enhanced education and training of inmate populations – with U.S. Dept of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Soros Foundation.
- *County Executive Research Project* - assessed the opportunities, benefits and challenges for Genesee County, Michigan to implement a county executive form of Government
- *Role of Community Foundations in California's Sustainable Development* – described role community foundations can play in sustainable growth – for the James Irvine Foundation.
- *Connecting the Urban Poor to Work; A Framework and Strategy for Action*. On behalf of the C.S. Mott Foundation, conceived and led a major policy-development process focused on human-investment strategies to connect the urban poor to the economy. Managed an interdisciplinary team of leading urban scholars from Wayne State University, University of Maryland, and University of Michigan-Flint along with policy makers and practitioners from leading Michigan urban communities. Report published in December 1998.
- *Employer-Linked Charter Schools - National Technical Assistance Initiative*. Architect of national project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to enhance the number and quality of charter schools nationally that build learning programs with strong employer and institutional partners. Conceived project, and recruited and managed national team led by Public Policy Associates. Partners include the National Alliance of Business, State Charter School Learning Network, Michigan Future, Inc., and dozens of individual schools as well as business and higher education partners around the country
- *Overarching Assessment of the Community Foundations Initiative (CFI)*. Assembled and organized program to assist the James Irvine Foundation of California to assess the impact and lessons learned from its \$10-million, 7-year investment in improving the capacity of regional community foundations across California. Developed project vision and

constructed, recruited and managed team of evaluators and practitioners working with communities.

- *Career Management Account Demonstration Evaluation*. Developed project concept, recruited team, and directed execution of national evaluation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Career Management Account Demonstration Program, an experiment using individual vouchers for providing publicly funded training services, an approach then mandated under the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

- *Technical Assistance to National Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities* – for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

***Additional Research and Policy Initiatives: 2000—2005***

- *German Marshall Fund - Transatlantic Initiative Fund – Rapporteur*. Organized policy background and content, and led 4 U.S. delegations on German Marshall Fund-sponsored exchanges to European counterparts, exploring issues of regional economic development, urban planning, immigration, land use, higher education and related policies.

- *National Governor's Association Pathways to Advancement Academy* – Asked by Governor's Office to serve as Michigan Team Leader and architect of state planning for Michigan delegation selected competitively to participate with seven vanguard states in Policy Academy designing and implementing state strategies to improve post-secondary education success among low-income adults.

- *Michigan Urban Policy Development Initiative* – Conceived and executed development of a forward-looking urban agenda for newly elected Governor of Michigan, with Michigan Future, Inc., Wayne State University, Hudson-Webber, C.S. Mott Foundations. Led to the report, *Revitalizing Michigan's Urban Communities*, authored with Lou Glazer, that served as text for Governor Granholm's 'Cool Cities' initiative. Conducted follow-on policy design and implementation for Governor and Director of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

- *Auto Career Preparation Initiative* – Designed and organized elements of a career preparation system for skilled workers in Southeast Michigan automotive industry – with Big 3, Tier One suppliers, Lawrence Tech University, and regional foundations. Funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation.

***Consultant. Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint MI, 1997-1998.***

- Assisted with long-term strategy-making for Poverty Mission of the Foundation. Developed new youth grant-making strategy, and supported sectoral economic development and workforce program implementation. Managed grants, supervised contractors, managed communications with funding partners.

- Conceived, developed, and implemented collaborative community strategies for educational improvement, leading county-wide organization of CEOs from business, labor, government, higher education, education and community organizations. Architect of strategy and implementation of nationally-recognized school-to-work and related school readiness initiatives.

***Community Specialist. Michigan Partnership for New Education. East Lansing, MI. 1990-1991.***

Developed and implemented education, business, and community partnerships for education reform in distressed Michigan communities, as a collaboration among leading state universities, state government, business and community partners.

***State Economic Development Policy Associate. Jobs for the Future. Boston, MA. 1988-1990.***

Managed four-state economic and workforce policy project funded by U.S. Department of Labor, and state and private sources. Included staffing the Mississippi Special Task Force on Economic Development appointed by Governor Mabus, and the Jobs for Missouri's Future Project, sponsored by Governor Ashcroft and Missouri business, education, and labor leaders. Authored major project reports; principal author of final report, "Economic Change and the American Workforce," published by the U.S. Department of Labor, 1990.

***Lead National Advance. Scheduling- Issues Advisor. Dukakis for President Campaign. Boston, MA. 1988.***

As Governor Dukakis long-time advance man and personal aide, lead advance for Governors Presidential exploratory and early trips to Iowa, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Oklahoma. Staffed and developed linkage between issues and scheduling functions during general election.

***Director of Special Projects. Office of Business Development and International Trade. Massachusetts Secretariat of Economic Affairs. Boston, MA. 1987-1990.***

Developed and managed Massachusetts Metalworking Partnership, multi-sector program to support competitiveness of metalworking industry. Managed visiting trade missions and international program development.

***Special Assistant to the Governor. Office of the Governor of Massachusetts. Boston, MA. 1985-1987.***

As the Governor's lead and lone advanceman planned and coordinated all gubernatorial public events, traveled with Governor as personal aide Developed and implemented communications strategy around priority issues such as economic and regional development, education, drug abuse, and housing

***National Staff. Mondale for President Campaign. 1984.***

Organized field operations in 7 states. Staffed Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. for VP Mondale during General Election.

**Civic Leadership – Elected, Appointed, Volunteer Positions**

- ✓ President, Michigan State Board of Education, 2000-16
- ✓ Midwest Higher Education Compact – Governor's appointee 2006-10
- ✓ Education Commission of the States – Governors appointee 2006-10
- ✓ Head of Delegation - Governor's Representative, Michigan - Shiga Province (Japan) Sister State Mission, 2006
- ✓ Genesee County Road Commission, Member and Chair 1997-2001
- ✓ Planning Commissioner, City of Fenton, 1995-97
- ✓ Board of Directors, Ozone House, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2004-2010

## Publications and Research

### **Brookings Institution Publications**

*Brookings The Avenue Blog Series (2017- present). [Numerous articles](#) on the “Tale of Two Rust Belts” on Midwest Economy and Politics*

[\*The Vital Center: A Federal State Compact to Renew the Great Lakes Region\*](#) (2006), Principal author

[\*Healthy Waters, Strong Economy\*](#) (2007), Bob Litan, Paul Courant, Don Scavia co-authors

[\*The Vital Connection: An Agenda for Renewing the Bi-National Great Lakes Region\*](#) (2008), Principal author

[\*The Next Economy: Economic Recovery and Transformation in the Great Lakes Region\*](#) (2009), Jennifer Vey, Jennifer Bradley co-authors

*The Federal Role in Supporting Public Universities’ Global Mission* (2009), co-authors Lou Anna K. Simon, Richard M. Foster

*Leveraging the Great Lakes Region’s Water Assets for Economic Growth* (2009), co-authors G. Allen Burton, Don Scavia, Samuel N. Luoma, Nancy G. Love

*Michigan’s Metropolitan and Urban Strategy* (2012), with Public Sector Consultants for Business Leaders for Michigan; Bruce Katz, Jennifer Bradley, Julie Metty-Bennett, Shanna Draheim co-authors

### **Other Publications**

[\*Industrial Heartland Transformation Initiative\*](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Numerous Articles, Reports, Working Papers

*Allyshoring*: Multiple reports around case-making and implementation strategies including for the [US-Mexico Foundation](#)

[\*Jobs, Michigan, and Leadership in the Economy of Tomorrow\*](#). Michigan Economic Center report a blueprint for Michigan and the Great Lakes Leadership in the Green-Blue Economy of the Future. 2017.

[\*We Are All Migrants Here\*](#). Michigan Economic Center Report on contributions of Immigrants to Michigan’s Economy – Damage of Current Federal Policy. With Global Detroit. Akaash Kolluri, Steve Tobocman Co-Authors, 2017. [www.GlobalDetroit.com](http://www.GlobalDetroit.com)

[\*Total Talent\*](#). *An Action Plan to Increase Michigan’s Postsecondary Credential Attainment*, Michigan Economic Center, 2015. [www.MiTalentGoal2025.org](http://www.MiTalentGoal2025.org)

[\*Michigan’s Blue Economy\*](#): *Making Michigan the World’s Freshwater and Freshwater Innovation Capital*. Michigan Economic Center, (2015.)

*The Michigan Dream At-Risk*. Michigan Economic Center. (2014).

*Water, Michigan and the Growing Blue Economy* (2013), White Paper Commissioned by Governor's Office of the Great Lakes to inform Michigan State Water Strategy

*Michigan Dream Restored: Report on Citizen Research* (2013), Michigan Economic Center at Prima Civitas Foundation.

[\*Growing America's New Mobility Economy\*](#) (2013), with Susan Zielinski, University of Michigan, SMART Transportation Initiative

*Advancing the Regional Role of Two Year Colleges, New Directions for Community Colleges; Chapter: Reanimating the Vital Center: Challenges and Opportunities in the Regional Talent Development Pipeline.* Allen Phelps, Editor, Number 157, Spring 2012

*The Vital Commons: A Policy Agenda for the Great Lakes Century* (2011), with University of Toronto Mowat Centre

*Report of the Lieutenant Governor's Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth* (2004), with Dr. James Jacobs, Dr John Burkhardt

*Revitalizing Michigan's Central Cities: A Vision and Framework for Action* (February 2003), with Lou Glazer

*Reshaping Michigan's Workforce— An Action Plan for the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth* (2003), with Jeff Padden and Larry Good

*Evaluation of the Great Valley Center* (Report to the Hewlett and Irvine Foundations, 2004), with Julie Shattuck

*Flint (Michigan) Relative Tax Burden* (report to the C.S. Mott Foundation, 2003), with Brian Reed

*Evaluation of the Community Foundation's Initiative* (report to the James Irvine Foundation, 2003), with Julie Shattuck.

*Assessment of California Community Foundations' Ability to Lead on Sustainable Communities Effort* (report to The James A. Irvine Foundation, 2001)

*Correctional Education and Training: Raising The Stakes* (conducted for the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Soros Open Society Institute, 2000)

*County Executive Form of Government, Challenges and Opportunities* (for the Genesee Area Focus Council, 2000)

*Connecting the Urban Poor to Work; A Framework and Strategy for Action*, co-author (report commissioned by the C.S. Mott Foundation, 1998), with Lou Glazer

*The Career Management Account Demonstration Project Evaluation Final Report* (technical report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, October 1998), with Jeffrey Padden, Nancy Hewat, Larry Good, and David Toombs,



*Issues and Insights Regarding the People and Land Initiative* (conducted for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1999)

*Summary of Research and Discussion of Emerging Issues Around Individual Training Accounts*, coauthor (briefing paper prepared for U.S. DOL senior staff, April, 1998)

*Employer-Linked Charter Schools: A Practitioner's Guide* (report prepared under contract with U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

*Learning From Experience: Case Studies of Employer-Linked Charter School* (report prepared under contract with U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

*Redefining Public Education: The Promise of Charter Schools and School-to-Work*, co-author (report prepared under contract with U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

*Institutionalization of Change, Promoting and Sustaining Change in Organizations, Career Management Accounts and Implications for Market Making*, co-author (briefing paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, 1997)

*From School to Economic Security* (testimony to the US House of Representatives - Education Subcommittee, 1993)

*Flint-Genesee County Urban Investment Plan*, co-author (report of City-County Leadership Task Force, 1993)

*Great Lakes States School-to-Work and Work-Based Learning Strategies; Recommendations for Regional Collaboration*, co-author (report to the Great Lakes Governors Council under contract to Corporation For A Skilled Workforce, 1992)

*Economic Change and the American Workforce*, co-author. Research and Report Series 92-B, U.S. Department of Labor (1992)

*Special Michigan House Committee on Workforce Readiness for Economic Competitiveness, Interim Report*, co-author (1992)

*Creating A Market In Education and Training: The Case of the Missing Demand*, co-author (paper commissioned by National Governor's Association, 1990)

*The Missouri Challenge* (final Report of the Jobs for Missouri's Future Project, State Economic Development Strategic Plan sponsored by Governor John Ashcroft, U.S. Dept. Of Labor, and Missouri business, labor, and civic leadership, 1990)

*Human Investment in Missouri* (report prepared for Jobs for Missouri's Future project, 1990)

*Workforce Preparation in New England: Building A High Performance Economy; Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island State Reports* (prepared for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, and The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1989-90)

*Seizing the Future, A Commitment to Competitiveness. Final Report of the Mississippi Special Task Force for Economic Development Planning, co-author (1989)*

*The Impact of Canadian Free Trade Pact on Massachusetts Economy (report commissioned by Massachusetts Office of International Trade, 1989)*

*Globally Competitive People. Report of the Human Resource Committee of the Mississippi Special Task Force for Economic Development Planning (1989)*

### **Presentations and Media**

Hundreds of Great Lakes and US speeches, keynote presentations, conference, seminars, and panels to national, state, local public, education, higher education, business, environmental, civic and governmental forums on work, and topics around economy, education, workforce, and public policy innovations and projects. Mr. Austin has also lectured and keynoted events [around the world](#) on the themes of economic development and renewal, strengthening democracy, and fostering a dynamic innovation-led economy.

Austin's work has been published by [Foreign Policy](#), the [Brookings Institution](#), [National Interest](#), [The New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Hill](#), [Korea Times](#), [TIME Magazine](#), [Newsweek](#), [Mexico Today](#), [Politico](#), [Fortune](#), [Forbes](#), [Barrons](#), The [Economist](#), the BBC, [Voice of America](#), [Times Higher Education](#), the Nikkei News --among dozens of local, national, and international media.