Greetings:

Cities are increasingly viewed as exciting, hip, and thriving places to live and work. At the same time, racism, climate change, widespread homelessness, and degradation in the health of our communities and environment make for a pretty daunting set of challenges. The pursuit of equity, health, resilience, justice, and well-being in these complex places can seem a far off dream. And yet these challenges, no matter how complex, can be addressed in parts and step by step. But it is unlikely to be one individual who solves any one of these problems, or even one discipline that mounts a viable and productive response. Instead, we are coming together, as researchers, teachers, professionals, and civic leaders to find new ways to have the greatest and most productive, combined impact on the world around us. This is the vision of Urban@UW, an initiative of UW's Office of Research and CoMotion, launched in Summer 2015.

Faculty engaged in Urban@UW are catalyzing a collaborative response, by identifying the big and wicked questions and then pulling together innovative teams to design and implement inclusive solutions. With almost 400 faculty members, researchers, and teachers on our 3 campuses focused on urban questions, we have an unprecedented opportunity to be boundless in our thinking, our creativity, and our responses. As a public university, we are called to harness the brilliance of our community to address the greatest urban challenges and opportunities.

In our first year Urban@UW explored such grand challenges with faculty, staff, and students, and with community leaders. During our inaugural workshop we discussed topics from food security to big data to natural disaster preparation and response. Over the course of subsequent conversations, we collectively identified five initial areas where Urban@UW could facilitate great work of UW scholars to catalyze robust responses. These topics engage some of our best faculty and students while building on the immense knowledge of our city partners from government, industry, and across the community.

Urban Environmental Justice: One of the greatest challenges ahead is building **environmental resilience and justice in a time of increasing urbanization and climate change.** Communities of color and those struggling with poverty have been marginalized in most climate mitigation and adaptation conversations. We must design climate resilience plans that address the priorities of people disproportionately harmed by climate impacts. Leaders from UW's Climate Impacts Group are coming together with faculty and community leaders in the environmental justice fields (from colleges and schools across campuses) to improve plans and policies. In addition, we partnered with the Impact Hub global network on their *Unlikely Allies* conference, engaging with communities around the world. And, we are hosting a [symposium](#) and launched a lecture series featuring a breadth of national and international leaders in the fields of just sustainability, climate equity, economic justice and urban development.

Homelessness: In 2016 the crisis of growing homeless populations is a challenge faced by most any city across the nation, with Seattle hosting one of the largest populations of homeless individuals. Addressing the needs of **diverse homeless populations** requires a collaborative effort on the part of practitioners, leaders, those with a lived experience, and researchers to determine inclusive knowledge-driven responses. A collective approach allows us to move beyond the question of how many shelter beds we might need, to focus on culturally systemic dynamics that lead to homelessness. Efforts led by a core group of faculty from six colleges seek to address this, one of the most pressing social issues of our time.

UrbAnalytics: We are assisting in the design, scoping, and project sourcing for UrbAnalytics, a campus-wide effort to advance municipal big data projects being established by Bill Howe (iSchool, eScience Institute, and Urban@UW). **Bringing 'big data' to address significant urban challenges** — from clean air to housing to transportation to healthcare, UrbAnalytics will bridge the expertise of the eScience Institute, the Center for the Study of Demography and Ecology, and faculty in the Urban@UW network. Funding from the MacArthur Foundation supports initial work including the ongoing leadership of the summer Data Science for Social Good program. By linking research centers, faculty from the social

sciences, engineering, urban planning, and the humanities we push the boundaries of urban data science to address the very real, human-centered challenges faced by cities everywhere.

MetroLab Network: In 2015, President Obama announced the creation of MetroLab Network, with Seattle and the UW as founding partners, to build better, smarter cities across the nation. UW and Seattle have taken a lead to define our contribution as building a more just and inclusive smart city. We are calling this a shift from the **smart to the wise city**, where technological systems are positioned to foster human and environmental health and wellbeing. Building on the UrbAnalytics effort, we are pursuing projects that build capacity in urban data science for smart cities. A workshop this winter will launch the *Big Data + Human Services Lab,* bringing both city and civic leaders together with academic researchers to develop innovative approaches to human service challenges.

Livable City Year: As a public university we have the privilege and responsibility to prepare the next generation of leaders. With hundreds of courses addressing urban-related topics, students have opportunities to learn about cities and urban dynamics from multiple disciplines and perspectives. Building on this strength, in collaboration with the College of Built Environments, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and the UW Office of Sustainability, Urban@UW is a foundational partner in UW's Livable City Year. This is an innovative program that pairs UW faculty with projects self-identified by one Washington city for one academic year, addressing their sustainability goals through the work of multiple student classes. In its inaugural year Livable City Year is partnering with the city of Auburn, and **catalyzing opportunities for students to get involved in civic initiatives** such as community and cultural engagement, parks and trail connectivity, siting and development of new civic infrastructure, and many others.

To successfully build impact that is both holistic and inclusive, Urban@UW is focused on productively addressing the grand urban challenges through deep partnerships and innovative responses with faculty and with research centers including the West Coast Poverty Center and the Pacific Northwest National Labs. Building on the work of CoMotion, each area is being developed as lab led by faculty teams who bring academic research into urban practice. The labs are multidisciplinary and community engaged, offering opportunities for transformative learning among all participants. Urban@UW provides initial leadership, funding, and administrative support as well as facilitating bringing the right people to the table. We will also seek to catalyze collaboration among the labs, bringing data science to the challenges of homeless populations to better meet the needs, sharing social science and climate science approaches to shape equitable change policies, and creating opportunities for students to learn in all contexts.

Across these projects, Urban@UW faculty leaders are building on existing strengths and integrating new opportunities to generate real, collective impact. Urban@UW as an initiative seeks to be nimble in our capacity to identify, catalyze, incubate, and accelerate research and teaching that will steward more resilient, sustainable, and equitable cities and communities. We are inspired every day by what we can do together- join us in this exciting adventure.

Sincerely,

Co-founders: Thaisa Way, Thom Dunning, Bill Howe, Vikram Jandhyala, Margaret O'Mara,
Executive Committee:
Scott Allard, Professor, Evans School of Public Policy and Governance
Thom H. Dunning Jr, Battelle Fellow, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
Bill Howe Associate Professor, I-School; Associate Director of the eScience Institute
Vikram Jandyhala, Vice President for Innovation Strategy; Executive Director, CoMotion
Susan P. Kemp, School of Social Work
Margaret O'Mara, Associate Professor History, College of Arts & Sciences
Radha Poovendran, Director, Network Security Lab; Professor and Chair, Electrical Engineering , CoEng.
Thaisa Way, Professor, College of Built Environments

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