

CPO VISION SEPTEMBER 2025
WORKING DRAFT 8-21-15

What follows is our vision for the Center for Positive Organizations for the year 2025. It began in September 2015. With the input of faculty, staff, students, and organizational leaders, our vision paints a picture of what CPO aspires to become in the next 10 years.

The Center for Positive Organizations, based at the Ross School of Business, conducts high impact research with the purpose of transforming organizations and individuals to become their best selves. Our mission is to inspire and enable leaders to build positively deviant organizations that make a positive difference in the world of and help individuals and groups achieve their full potential. We are the central, catalytic hub for those seeking to study and build positive organizations. We are the beacon to enable positive organizations to become the norm rather than the exception. If we are successful, POS-principles and ideas will be embedded in every issue of top journals in management, in classrooms across the world's business schools, and in the practices of leaders and organizations.

We seek to have an impact in three inter-related domains. We call this our flourishing triangle:

- Impact on and by researchers
- Impact on and by students
- Impact on and by practice (leaders and organizations)

I. Impact on and by researchers through high quality scientific research

Research is a foundation of all we do. It is integrated into our education programs, our work with organizational change leaders, and our day-to-day life in the Center. Our work with students and practice also enriches our research as we generate research questions inspired by opportunities and problems inherent in the world of organizations.

We are a highly productive research center. POS-inspired research can be seen in almost every issue of top scientific journals in management, and related disciplines such as psychology and sociology. Our researchers are known as thought leaders for their original ideas but also for their ability to translate the research for the students and practitioners. Our research is regularly drawn on in the press for its insights in enabling positive organizing. Our research also feeds into the development of tools and practices that are used by faculty, consultants, HR professionals, and leaders to enable themselves and others to become their best selves and to build positive organizations.

Our CPO research community is vibrant. Our core faculty members are full professors as well as up and coming young faculty. We also have a cadre of great doctoral students and have funding for several postdocs who are the engine behind the research activity of the Center. Our former doctoral students and postdocs promulgate the POS community at top institutions around the world. We regularly have professors and doctoral students from other universities, as well as organizational leaders, visit to enrich the intellectual environment. Our POS research community

is enriched by other Ross faculty members beyond Management and Organizations; faculty members in other parts of the University of Michigan who are interested in positive business or applying positive organizational research to areas such as health, public policy, and innovation.

The intellectual environment is rich. We are completing our 27th year of the Research Incubator and have helped produce dozens of high-impact articles. Students, faculty, and visitors feel safe to present ideas, and we help them in a critical but developmental way. CPO members feel a sense of joy, inspiration, and rejuvenation talking about and conducting research. Positive Links is in its 20th year, and presenters have provided practical insights based on research to attendees and viewers around the world.

CPO also serves as a linking pin to a thriving community of scholars at business schools and in research centers around the world. New leaders of the field have emerged—many of whom come from our doctoral student alums and former postdocs. We have birthed more microcommunities under the positive organizations umbrella. What started at the University of Michigan is now a self-sustaining field. Scholars are studying new research topics to help organizations be places of growth, learning, thriving, resilience, and virtues—the best of the human condition. When scholars are interested in doing organizational “science with heart,” we are the community they gravitate to first. We provide funding to members of our research community for research projects and for their own professional development. We have a strong presence at the Academy of Management Meeting as we just completed our 28th POS Gathering complete with many regular attendees (a kind of annual reunion) as well as many new faces. We also conduct Professional Development Workshops to help encourage scholarship in this field. We also have a big presence at other conferences such as SIOP and IPPA. Our biennial Positive Research Conference is attended by hundreds of scholars, and the research continues to improve and inspire scholars around the globe.

II. Impact on and by teachers and students through Inspiring Teaching and Learning

One hallmark of the Center is translating core ideas from our research into high impact teaching and learning. We offer electives at all levels—BBA, MBA, executive education, etc.—that are highly-subscribed and life-changing. POS principles and tools are embedded in many of the leadership development programs offered at Ross. We are not only giving students tools—we are changing how they see themselves as leaders who can make a positive difference in the world.

The Center’s +LAB and Magnify education programs serve as incubators for innovation in learning that inform our electives and are shared with our broad community of teachers at Ross and around the world. The +LAB brings together undergraduate and graduate students from across the University in an emergent and dynamic extracurricular learning environment designed to immerse students in the theory and practice of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). It equips student to become change agents in making organizations and groups more positive and productive. Magnify, our action learning immersion for undergraduates, has grown significantly and is increasingly adopted by other business schools. In both programs, action-learning projects not only are highly impactful to students and the partner organizations but they also feedback to enrich practice ideas and research questions in the Center going forward. The students bring

great energy, optimism, and heart to the Center while they are Ross students but also when they come back regularly as alumni.

Our impact on students also extends beyond the University of Michigan to teachers at colleges and universities around the world. This outreach gives us a powerful reason to develop new curricula, invent innovative teaching tools, compose inspiring cases and videos, and experiment with various teaching approaches. The result is that a large percentage of business students around the globe are being exposed to a positive lens in their classrooms and then using it in their lives.

III. Impact on and by leaders to positively change organizations, and the world

Our thought leadership directly influences organizational leaders and employees in those organizations. Our faculty members publish best-selling books that have generated substantial momentum in creating positive organizations in the world of business and beyond. Our faculty members give TED-like talks viewed by thousands. We speak at high-profile practitioner-oriented conferences that bring notoriety to the Center but more importantly that impact practices in organizations. Our faculty members are regularly quoted in the media and are featured in business outlets such as the Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Businessweek, Harvard Business Review, and Fast Company. The Positive Lens and Positive Links videos are each viewed by thousands. Our Center website is vibrant in sharing research insights, highlighting POS practices, and celebrating applications/best practices from companies, students, and scholars around the globe.

We directly impact the world through our tools. Our tools are regularly used in Fortune 500 companies as well as in degree and executive education programs. We validate our tools through research to document how they transform organizations for the better. Our Consortium of Positive Organizations is thriving. Member organizations regularly participate in faculty research projects and often are the source of new puzzles and research questions for future research.

Our aspiration is to have POS-based practices embedded within every organization. We train future business leaders in our BBA and MBA programs and current leaders in our Executive Education programs and customized programs. We work in partnership with leaders who want their cultures to have “POS on the inside.”

We Practice What We Preach as We Build a Thriving Community

The people make the place. Perhaps the most attractive aspect of CPO is its thriving community. The community is focused on learning, vitality, and energy. On possibility, purpose, and meaning. On cooperation, trust, listening, fun, health, and bringing one’s whole self to the Center. We are not afraid of conflict and even encourage it because we know conflict is critical to be excellent. However, conflict is handled respectfully because we trust one another’s intentions. We remain proud of our community but we are also humble because we know we can always improve. Staff are attracted to work at Ross and stay even when they have outside job offers because of how POS principles guide work practices across departments at Ross. Students at all levels tell us they came to Ross over our top competitors because of the work of our center.

A student club with POS at its core is the most popular club at Ross. Recruiters tell us they want to hire Ross students because they have a strong background in POS.

In addition to faculty, students, and business leaders, our staff are making powerful and essential contributions to our mission and vision. Our staff members are gifted interpersonally, operationally, and strategically. They engender the rare combination of competence and warmth—they are brilliant at what they do and also are wonderful to be around. One reason for our remarkable culture is our physical space. The Center for Positive Organizations is housed in a generative space with cutting edge ideas in design and collaboration. The energy produced by scholars, students, and leaders is palpable. Along the back wall lies the ever-cherished sugar cube wall, with an envelope of gratitude for each community member. There is a large wall of cubbies or open lockers so that all who visit feel like they have a place of their own within our home. People come here to thrive, and to heal and recharge when needed from the toll negative organizational experiences can take on us. We live the positive practices we espouse. The artifacts, colors, photos, and physical design of our space helps reinforce the values of the community. We even regularly give tours to others who are interested in understanding how physical space can enable a positive culture.

Our programs for researchers, students, and leaders, and our supporting infrastructure, are supported by various means. Several of our programs earn revenue to fund both themselves and contribute to covering the expenses of the Center. We are also the grateful beneficiaries of an eight-figure endowment. Our secure and diversified funding streams enable us to build programs with a long-term perspective, and give us a sound foundation from which to undertake experiments to enhance our impact. We are dedicated to creating a better world through the science of helping organizations be more positive.

We look forward to working with all of you to bring this vision to life!