

PPIC's Summer Intern Program provides an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students interested in a public policy career to work in a policy research environment. Intern projects are proposed by PPIC researchers and designed around a specific set of tasks and deliverables that can be accomplished within the term of the internship.

The 2021 intern program will be conducted remotely. The application period is now closed.

PPIC values the wide variety of backgrounds and experiences of our research staff, and key elements in the consideration of qualified candidates include excellence; diversity of talents, backgrounds, and viewpoints; and a strong fit with the institute's mission, values, and priorities.

The Research Environment

Interns are offered the opportunity to participate in the collegial atmosphere of PPIC through daily interaction with all aspects of the institution. They are invited to join the research staff in their regular meetings and to attend PPIC's outside events, including the institute's public affairs programs and research briefings. PPIC offers access to the Institute of Governmental Sciences library at the University of California, Berkeley, allowing interns to work with many important databases, journals, and statistical datasets. The intern program also includes a discussion of California state policy by PPIC's government affairs staff.

Each intern's project will include an initial meeting with research staff, evaluation and feedback at the beginning, midpoint and end of the project, and a briefing by the intern on the goals, findings, and significance of the project. Interns are encouraged to discuss their work throughout the course of the project, to meet with research staff to discuss careers in research, and to meet with communications staff to learn about outreach and building an audience of policymakers.

Project 1: Assessing the Financial Impact of Covid-19 on California's Colleges and Universities

Project Directors: Kevin Cook and Radhika Mehlotra

Project Summary

The global pandemic has upended higher education finance in California. Immediately, public four-year colleges faced critical cash flow shortages as students were sent home, instruction was moved online, and revenues from auxiliary enterprises (housing, food, parking, etc.) evaporated. The University of California and California State University systems reported revenue declines of about \$600 million and \$350 million respectively during the Spring semester of 2020. This project will focus on the pandemic's impact on institutional finance to better understand how institutions will be able to meet the needs of students going forward. Key questions that will be explored include: What are the projected near-term financial impacts of various recessionary scenarios on UC and CSU institutions? To what extent will state budget reserves and federal stimulus funding be able to mitigate these financial impacts?

Responsibilities

The intern for this project would be an active participant in the initial phase of this research. Their duties would include conducting a literature review, compiling and assessing institutional financial data, and conducting basic descriptive analysis. The intern would also participate in regular research team meetings to discuss findings and participate in qualitative analysis and outreach.

Qualifications

The intern for this project should have:

- Training in education, public policy, sociology, economics, or a related field
- Strong organizational and analytical skills
- Experience reading and analyzing research
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to work independently and with a team
- Interest in California education policy

Project 2: Environmental Health and School Achievement for California's Children

Project Directors: Paulette Cha and Julien Lafortune

Project Summary

In recent years, large wildfires have increased smoke exposure for students across California. Adverse health events due to poor air quality can disrupt school attendance and learning, with the potential for long-term negative educational consequences. Even in the absence of severe health events, ongoing exposure to bad air has been shown to depress academic outcomes. The intern will help develop research at the intersection of environment, health, and education policy for young children.

The goal for the summer project is to better understand the connection between environmental health and school achievement. The intern will clean and organize air quality data for analysis with guidance from the project directors, link these to available data on health and educational outcomes, assess additional data possibilities, and conduct descriptive analysis. The intern will also review related academic publications and policies on wildfires, air pollution, and air quality, and their connections to child health and educational outcomes.

Responsibilities

The intern will:

- Prepare air quality, health, and school data for analysis
- Evaluate potential data sources for quality and feasibility
- Review academic literature
- Review state and local policy
- Contribute to developing research questions

Depending on project status, the intern may also contribute to a related blog post. The intern will be a member of both the Education and Safety Net policy groups, and may collaborate with members of the Water Policy Center.

Qualifications

The intern for this project will need:

- Statistical programming experience in Stata, R, or Python
- Training in economics, public policy, education, environmental science, epidemiology, or other quantitative field
- Strong research and communication skills
- Ability to work independently, handle feedback well, and change direction when necessary

Project 3: English as a Second Language and AB 705 at California's Community Colleges

Project Directors: Olga Rodriguez and Bonnie Brooks

Project Summary

With its adoption in 2017, Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705) is becoming one of the most transformative pieces of legislation affecting California's community colleges. To date, it is likely better known for its reforms to developmental (or remedial) math and English which have begun to show very encouraging results for equitable course access and success (Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez & Johnson 2020). Importantly, the law also included stipulations for English as a Second language (ESL). First, the law mandates that a student who enrolls in a credit-bearing ESL course sequence will maximize the probability that they complete transfer-level English within three years (this requirements is one year for students who enter math and English course sequences). The law also requires community colleges to use high school records (e.g., high school GPA and prior coursework) as the primary criteria for placement and provides flexibility for colleges to use guided self-placement in the event that high school records are not accessible. Notably, the bill acknowledges that ESL is distinct from remediation in English, in that it serves foreign language learners seeking proficiency in an additional language. With an implementation deadline of fall 2021, this summer intern project will aim to better understand the changes that colleges across the state have made to their ESL placement policies and curricular structures in response to AB 705.

Responsibilities

To inform PPIC's research on the implementation of AB 705 in ESL, the summer intern on this project will collect and assemble information from community college documents and websites about the changes to ESL placement policies and the curricular structures being adopted by colleges across the state in response to the legislative changes and system office recommendations. With guidance from the project supervisor, this data will be coded and analyzed to better understand new placement policies and the extent to which colleges are adopting various curricular reforms, including acceleration, integration, corequisites, and transferrable ESL coursework. Over the course of the summer the intern will develop insights into the diverse ways colleges across the California community college system are implementing reforms in response to AB 705. The intern will create periodic summaries of the work for the supervisor and will prepare a presentation summarizing this work for presentation to PPIC staff at the end of the summer.

Qualifications

The intern for this project should have:

- Training in sociology, education, economics, public policy, or a related field
- Strong analytical and organizational skills
- Experience mining qualitative and quantitative data
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to work independently as well as seek feedback and direction when appropriate
- Interest in California higher education policy

Project 4: Land Transitions in the San Joaquin Valley: Air Quality Impacts and Feasible Mitigation Measures

Project Directors: Andrew Ayers and Ellen Hanak (PPIC), Jaymin Kwon (CSU Fresno)

Project Summary

This internship will focus on understanding how farmland retired as a result of California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) may generate nuisance in the form of fugitive dust and other air pollutants. The intern will work with PPIC staff to undertake research that characterizes the nature and scope of the problem, who would be impacted, and which mitigation actions are available and potentially cost effective. In particular, this work will involve summarizing information about how pollutants may be generated and transported, estimating costs of mitigation actions, and gathering, manipulating, and analyzing data on air pollution in the Valley.

Responsibilities

The intern will work with a research team to track policy and management developments, perform background research, and undertake novel data collection and analysis. The ability to understand and summarize the physical & chemical characteristics of pollutants, as well as the economics of pollution exposure and abatement (with guidance from PPIC experts) will be an important asset. Furthermore, this work requires basic familiarity with manipulating monitoring data and some spatial analytical work. This project may also include participation in interviews and workshops with relevant stakeholders and decision makers. The intern will also present a summary of this work to PPIC staff at the end of the summer.

Qualifications

The ideal applicant will bring undergraduate or graduate training in a field related to economics, public health (w/focus on air quality), public policy, or a related field.

The intern for this project should have:

- Data management experience, including Excel, STATA, R
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- (Preferred) Familiarity with California's agricultural systems and water politics, as well as a basic understanding of air pollution issues
- (Preferred) Strong computer and analytical skills, including ArcGIS
- (Preferred) Familiarity with the social science of pollutant exposure
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Project 5: Developing Sector-Specific Drought Indicators That Consider the Water Grid

Project Directors: Alvar Escriva-Bou and Ellen Hanak

Project Summary

This internship will contribute to a project focused on improving drought indicators in California by accounting for water storage and conveyance infrastructure (the “water grid”), and linking these indicators with impacts in agriculture, cities, rural communities, and the environment. The intern will work with PPIC staff and research partners to explore the development of drought impact risk profiles that reflect the capacity of different sectors to respond and adapt to drought conditions. The project aims to improve drought early warning systems to reduce socio-economic and environmental risks during droughts.

Responsibilities

The intern will work with a research team to track policy and management developments, perform background research, and undertake data collection and analysis. The ability to understand and summarize the hydrologic, economic, and policy details of various water systems will be an important asset. Furthermore, this work requires basic familiarity with manipulating large datasets in Python or R, and GIS shapefiles and raster data. This project may include the participation in interviews and workshops with relevant stakeholders and decision makers.

Qualifications

The ideal applicant will bring undergraduate or graduate training in a field related to water resources management, environmental science, data science, public policy, or a related field.

The intern for this project should have:

- Familiarity with California water management, as well as a basic understanding of integrated water systems management
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Preference for strong computer and analytical skills, including ArcGIS
- Preference for data management experience, including Excel, Python, R
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Project 6: Racial Disparity in Law Enforcement Stops

Project Directors: Magnus Lofstrom and Brandon Martin

Project Summary

Striking racial disparity, especially between African Americans and whites, is one of the most troubling and pressing issues in the U.S. criminal justice system. Disparities in criminal justice outcomes are also evident in California. For example, the arrest rate of African Americans is slightly more than three times that of whites in California, and while African Americans make up about 6% of the state's overall population, more than 25% of California's jail, prison and probation populations are African American. It is likely that these inequities arise differently throughout the criminal justice process. This project will build on research efforts at PPIC examining racial disparity in arrests by examining existing research on racial disparity at the initial contact with law enforcement and examining law enforcement stop data.

Responsibilities

The summer intern on this project will review existing research literature on racial disparity in law enforcement interactions and perform descriptive analyses of Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) stop data for the 15 largest law enforcement agencies in California. The intern will create periodic summaries of the work for the supervisors and will prepare a presentation summarizing this work for presentation to PPIC staff at the end of the summer.

Qualifications

The intern for this project should have:

- Undergraduate or graduate training in economics, sociology, criminology, political science, public policy or related field
- Excellent written and verbal communication
- Strong quantitative skills, experience working with large datasets
- Statistical programming experience (Excel, R, SAS, and/or Stata)
- Ability to work independently as well as seek feedback and direction when appropriate