

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 application period is now closed.

Location, Compensation, and Time on Project

The 2022 intern program will be conducted remotely, or via a hybrid setup if circumstances allow. Compensation is \$22 per hour. This full-time internship will last up to eleven weeks, ideally beginning June 13, 2022.

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 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: Understanding Drought Impacts and Developing Improved Cross-Sector Drought Indicators for California

Project Directors

Alvar Escriva-Bou and Ellen Hanak

Project Summary

This internship will contribute to multiple ongoing projects focused on analyzing and understanding the impact of drought on four different sectors in California: cities, agriculture, small communities, and the environment. The intern will support work on improving drought indicators by accounting for water storage and conveyance infrastructure (the “water grid”), and linking these indicators with impacts across sectors. The intern will also work with PPIC staff and research partners to explore the development of drought impacts on agriculture during the ongoing drought, and the compilation of data for the development of a drought impact assessment dashboard for various scenarios. These projects aim 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 (particularly on the agricultural sector), 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 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, agricultural economics, 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
- Basic knowledge of California’s agricultural sector and agricultural datasets
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Preference for strong computer and analytical skills, including ArcGIS
- Preference for data management experience, including Excel, Python and/or R
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Project 2: Groundwater Sustainability and Farmland Transitions in the San Joaquin Valley: Implications for Farm and Local Finance

Project Directors

Andrew Ayres and Ellen Hanak

Project Summary

This internship will provide foundational support to the Water Policy Center's ongoing projects related to the projected land use transitions coming to the San Joaquin Valley as a consequence of California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The intern will focus on understanding the fiscal implications of farmland retirement and repurposing, including changes to property tax revenues and agricultural lending and insurance practices, as well as surveying relevant policies that influence these outcomes. They will also support WPC's groundwater management and farmland transitions work more generally, for example by examining the impacts of and potential mitigation actions for fugitive dust and other air pollutants generated from land use transitions and the scope and challenges for expansion of solar energy developments on former irrigated farmland. This work may involve summarizing quantitative and qualitative information and gathering and analyzing data on farm and municipal finance, air pollutant generation and transport, and other topics related to the impacts of groundwater sustainability measures on farms, communities, and the environment in the valley.

Responsibilities

The intern will work with research teams to track policy and management developments, perform background research, and undertake novel data collection and analysis. The ability to understand and summarize the economics of agricultural land use change and particularly farmland retirement/repurposing (with guidance from PPIC experts) will be an important asset. Basic familiarity with manipulating financial/economic data is an important asset, and some experience with spatial analytical work is desirable, but not required. This project may also include participation in interviews and workshops with relevant stakeholders and decision makers. The intern will 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, environmental science, finance, agriculture, 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 ag and local finance issues
- (Preferred) Strong computing and analytical skills, including ArcGIS or a similar spatial analysis program
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Project 3: Improving CalFresh Policy to Support Employment and Stabilize Incomes

Project Directors

Caroline Danielson and Tess Thorman

Project Summary

Since fall 2019 several members of the Safety Net group at PPIC have been engaged in analyzing longitudinal administrative data on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants. This program is called CalFresh in California. Most recently, we have been examining CalFresh adults' connections to employment. CalFresh is designed to prevent short-term deprivation, with the idea that many working-age adult participants will transition into jobs that pay more than enough to meet their basic needs. Yet we lack detailed information about participants' employment and income stability that can inform policy aimed at improving the connection between safety net participation and economic opportunity. The intern will provide support to further investigate the policy implications of this research, the first two publications of which are scheduled to be released in late spring 2022.

The goal for the summer project is to identify key policy questions and expand our engagement with stakeholders. The intern will learn about key project findings by engaging with the project leaders and will review research literature and policy documents on the topic of economic opportunity and safety net program participants. The intern will work with project directors to develop an outreach strategy with 4-6 stakeholder/ stakeholder groups centered around deepening our understanding of the policy implications and remaining policy questions that derive from the research. For example, we may want to further investigate the intersection of specific Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or SNAP Employment and Training programs with the typical experiences of CalFresh adult participants.

Responsibilities

The intern will work with project leaders to:

- Review relevant academic literature and research reports
- Review state and local policy
- Write policy memo(s) and a literature review
- Identify key stakeholder groups
- Craft effective outreach materials and summaries of outreach activities
- Conduct outreach to key stakeholder groups

The intern may also contribute to a related blog post. The intern will be a member of the Safety Net policy group.

Qualifications

The intern for this project should possess:

- Training in economics, political science, public health, public policy, sociology, or urban planning
- Strong research and communication skills
- Ability to work independently, handle feedback well, and change direction when necessary
- Interviewing or qualitative research experience a plus

Project 4: Implementing California's Broadband Investments

Project Directors

Niu Gao and Joseph Hayes

Project Summary

Senate Bill 156 is the largest public broadband investment in the nation (\$6 billion). It includes \$3.25 billion for a statewide open-access middle-mile network, and \$2 billion for last-mile infrastructure. This investment, along with the additional financing sources from the federal infrastructure bill, is pivotal in closing the digital equity gaps in education and establishing California as a leader in digital access. Many details about the implementation plan are still being resolved; at the same time, communities across the state are gearing up to leverage the investment to expand broadband infrastructure and increase broadband adoption. Some communities plan to take advantage of existing infrastructure while others plan to build out new broadband networks. The research team is interested in documenting the variety of approaches, strategies, and, eventually, outcomes related to the implementation. Because the roll-out takes several years, this summer we will focus on implementation and document how communities across the state are using these resources to expand broadband access. Specifically we aim to address the following research questions:

- How do communities—schools, colleges, government entities, etc.—across the state plan to leverage these historic levels of investment to expand broadband infrastructure and increase broadband adoption?
- What community factors—such as geographic location, share of unserved and/or underserved households, poverty rate—explain the variation in communities' plans?
- Are there any models for partnerships that can be replicated statewide?

Responsibilities

The intern working on this project will actively engage in the data collection process. The intern will contribute to the project by conducting interviews of stakeholders under the guidance of more experienced PPIC researchers, transcribing, then analyzing those interviews. The intern will also critically read and analytically summarize key documents that are relevant to the project's progression. If feasible, they may also contribute to the development of a statewide survey to collect data on SB 156's implementation. The intern will also participate in frequent research team meetings to discuss project updates and get feedback on their work.

Qualifications

An intern working on this project should have:

- Strong close reading and critical thinking skills
- Excellent writing, verbal communication, and organization skills
- Ability to work independently and with a team
- Interest in California's education policies

The ideal candidate will also have:

- Mixed-methods research experience – especially interviewing, survey design, and producing summary statistics
- Foundational knowledge of educational systems, public policy, or a related field
- Experience reading and/or analyzing research, government, or policy documents
- Interest in digital equity, low-income communities, communities of color, and tribal communities

Project 5: Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Community College Student Outcomes and Equity

Project Directors

Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Hans Johnson and Olga Rodriguez

Project Summary

Landmark legislation known as Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705) has led California Community Colleges (CCC) to make remarkable progress towards eradicating long-standing disparities in access to gateway math and English courses that have long posed barriers for groups historically underrepresented among college graduates. This study will use mixed methods to examine how the pandemic affected the implementation of AB 705. First, using student-level data from 115 colleges in the CCC, it will examine how the pandemic affected racial equity in gateway course completion, credit accrual, degree completion and transfer. Second, to unpack how gateway course curriculum, policies, and supports can help reduce racial equity gaps, we will review documents and interview officials from the colleges with the highest and lowest levels of racial equity, as measured by how well Latino, Black, Pacific Islander, and Native American students are represented in successful gateway course completions. By examining the first four-years of AB 705, we will provide insights to policymakers, administrators, and practitioners that will inform ongoing efforts to improve racial equity in the CCC. This project will be led by research fellows Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Olga Rodriguez, and Hans Johnson, with research support from Cesar Perez.

The intern will provide research support for the project team, focusing on the qualitative aspects of the project.

Responsibilities

The intern will work with project leaders to:

- Review relevant academic literature and research reports
- Gather, examine, and document college efforts to reduce racial equity gaps
- Assemble information from college websites
- Identify key stakeholders
- Participate in interviews of college officials
- Present findings to PPIC staff at the end of the internship

The intern may also contribute to a related blog post. The intern will be a member of the PPIC Higher Education Center.

Qualifications

The intern for this project should possess:

- Training in economics, education, political science, public health, public policy, sociology, or demography
- Strong research and communication skills
- Ability to work independently, handle feedback well, and change direction when necessary
- Interviewing or qualitative research experience a plus

Project 6: COVID-19 Stimulus Funding's Impact on California Higher Education Finance

Project Directors

Kevin Cook, Jacob Jackson

Project Summary

The coronavirus pandemic and the economic recession that it precipitated led many higher education leaders and stakeholders to predict a dire near-term fiscal outlook for the state's colleges and universities. These predictions were particularly fueled by several major upheavals to stability in higher education systems: instruction shifted online, institutions' revenue streams dried up, and students faced financial adversity due to high rates of job losses and sudden economic uncertainty. Now, a little over a year later, California's public higher education systems have ample amounts of recovery funding available. Three separate federal stimulus bills from March 2020 to March 2021 directed \$14 billion to California's public higher education institutions, about half of which was earmarked to cover institutional costs with the other half passed on directly to students. However, much of this funding was intended for one-time use and institutions face statutory deadlines to spend down these funds. Specifically, we aim to address the following research questions:

- How did the state's higher education institutions allocate these COVID-19 stimulus and recovery funds?
- How have the stimulus funds affected the cost pressures faced by higher education institutions?
- How have institutions used the funding to address growing costs for infrastructure needs and employee benefits, while also supporting enrollment growth and student success?
- How have these institutions' priorities changed throughout the course of the pandemic?

Responsibilities

The intern working on this project will actively engage in the data collection process. The intern will contribute to the project by synthesizing available federal, state, and institutional higher education expenditure data from multiple sources. The intern will also assist in conducting interviews of stakeholders under the guidance of more experienced PPIC researchers, note-taking, then analyzing those interviews. The intern will also critically read and analytically summarize key documents that are relevant to the project's progression. The intern will also participate in frequent research team meetings to discuss project updates and get feedback on their work. At the end of the internship program, the intern will give a presentation about their research endeavors throughout the summer..

Qualifications

An intern working on this project should have:

- Strong close reading and critical thinking skills
- Excellent writing, verbal communication, and organization skills
- Ability to work independently and with a team
- Interest in California's education policies

The ideal candidate will also have:

- Mixed-methods research experience – especially interviewing, survey design, and producing summary statistics
- Foundational knowledge of educational systems, public policy, or a related field
- Experience reading and/or analyzing research, government, or policy documents
- Interest in higher education finance, higher education policy, and/or improving equity in higher education outcomes