



RICHARD & RHODA GOLDMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

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To: Prospective Clients
From: Jane Mauldon, Associate Professor of Public Policy
Date: September 2012
Subject: Client-Based Projects with Goldman School of Public Policy Graduate Teams

OVERVIEW

Could you, or your organization, make use of **free policy analysis services** from a team of UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP) graduate students? Free policy consulting services are offered and supervised as part of the annual GSPP graduate workshop class, Introduction to Policy Analysis (IPA). This memo is an invitation to you to submit a proposal.

The IPA workshop course has GSPP first-year graduate students working in small teams, with close faculty supervision, to apply the tools of policy analysis to policy problems and opportunities confronting public and nonprofit agencies. Workshop clients have included city, county and state government departments, regulatory agencies, public service non-profits, consortia of service providers, policy analysis organizations, and, occasionally, private-sector businesses. Projects arise from problems, innovations or opportunities that have significant impacts for the public or the public sector, for which the client has (partial) responsibility, and where the path forward is not yet clear. The student teams identify and weigh policy options, generate analysis and recommendations that they present to the client orally and in written reports.

The next IPA workshop course will be offered in the 2013 spring semester, the projects will run from early February through early May. We will be gathering proposals this fall with the goal of finalizing a list of projects in December. Projects take some time to develop, so we encourage you to start thinking about this now, and spreading the word to other organizations that might value our students' assistance. Might you, or someone else in your organization or another organization, benefit from having a team of bright and dedicated graduate students analyze and develop recommendations regarding a policy decision, a programmatic choice, or an implementation problem?



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WHAT OUR STUDENTS CAN DO

Admission to the Master of Public Policy program is highly competitive. Our graduate students have strong undergraduate academic records and years of relevant work experience under their belts. Before taking IPA, they will have completed core GSPP courses in microeconomics, statistics, political analysis, legal analysis, and management, and will have received training in a systematic analytical approach to problem-solving for the public interest. The main objective of the IPA workshop is to give students the chance to apply this approach to real-world policy problems and opportunities.

The IPA course is one of four that students take in the spring semester. A typical project will involve roughly 400 to 500 hours of student work, by a team of three or four (occasionally five) people. IPA team members are expected to act professionally, to keep confidences, and to be respectful of people's busy schedules. They are closely supervised by the IPA instructors: Jesse Rothstein (rothstein@berkeley.edu), Mia Bird (miabird@berkeley.edu), and me (Jane Mauldon, jmauldon@berkeley.edu).

IDEAL PROJECTS

An ideal IPA project will include two or three key features:

- It is **relatively narrow, though complex**. We generally find that targeted projects that present interesting problems satisfy both clients and teams do better than projects that are broad and analytically simple.
- The conclusion of the analysis will be that students offer **a recommendation from among a set of options** that they have identified for the client. In reaching their recommendations, students will encounter the thought-provoking conflicts and tradeoffs that are at the heart of policy design and implementation. Having to make a choice imposes intellectual discipline on the student team and motivates creativity in trying to find the most acceptable alternatives.
- Excellent projects often call for a careful analysis of **uncertainty about the data used to describe the extent of, or causes of, or projected effects** of, a policy choice. Students come to realize that they certainly cannot predict the future and often cannot even confidently describe the present. To recommend a course of action they must assess competing factual claims that differ in ways that may be quite consequential.



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Circumscribed complexity, tradeoffs among policy or programmatic choices, and uncertainty about the effects of choices; these are the hallmarks of interesting policy problems that our students can help your organization understand and resolve.

HOW THE PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED

The workshop class is one of four classes that students take in the spring semester, and each student is expected to allocate 10-15 hours a week to the IPA project between February and mid-May. Instructors meet with each team on a regular schedule of about once every ten days, or more often as needed.

The final products are two: a rigorous and well-written project analysis, and an oral presentation of findings given at GSPP during class time in late April. Clients are invited to attend these presentations and offer comments. In addition, clients often invite student teams to present their results to their organizations, an opportunity that students generally welcome. The deadline for the final report to clients is the middle of May.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A CLIENT

We rely on our IPA clients to reciprocate for the benefits of the pro-bono policy analysis by actively engaging with student teams. We ask clients to meet with their student team early on in the semester -- in late January or very early February -- and every two weeks (more or less) thereafter. At the first meeting, the client will explain the problem, suggest sources of information, and facilitate access to others that students should talk to (interviewing within organizations and efficiently using information in problem analysis are two skills addressed in IPA). Finally, we expect that clients will read the final report and provide feedback to the students and the faculty advisor, as well as complete a brief evaluation of the overall IPA experience.

To prevent misunderstanding down the road, let us mention two hazards to effective relations between clients and project groups that we have observed in the past.



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- One occurs when the client wants the group merely to gather information (i.e. act as a glorified research assistant) rather than synthesize information and make recommendations. We avoid projects that involve little more than collecting survey data, program descriptions, or information about possible funding sources. To put it another way, it is best to think of members of the project team as “consultants” with a fair degree of professional and analytical autonomy.
- Second, it sometimes happens that a client has a preferred solution to some problem and urges it upon students, either explicitly or implicitly. It is vitally important that clients, like the IPA student team members, are willing to bring an open mind to the project and take seriously the fresh perspectives that students – with the guidance of their faculty mentor - may offer.

NEXT STEPS

At the first meeting of the IPA course in mid-January we will present students with a menu of about 30 projects from which students select and rank their preferred five. As far as possible, we honor these preferences in constructing project teams, which are announced at the beginning of February. With a class size of 90 students, we expect about 25 projects to be undertaken. Unfortunately, this means that not every project on the menu will be selected.

To get a project on the menu, we will need to work with you to create a project description. You provide the first draft, consisting simply of several paragraphs about the project to be undertaken. Beyond describing the project, its significance, and the analytic questions students will investigate, it is helpful if you briefly explain how you or your organization would make use of the final product and what kind of support (such as data, documents, personal contacts) students could expect to receive. Typical descriptions are one page in length. You can download descriptions of last year's projects at http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/emp_projects.html. Examples of completed projects from earlier years are also available; please ask us.



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The project list is created largely on a first-come first-served basis, with most project descriptions finalized only after some email back-and-forth review and editing between IPA staff and project clients. The earlier we receive projects, the better the chance the project will be included on the project menu and ultimately selected by our students.

We will start to review project submissions in September, and we will need to receive your final project proposal by mid-November at the very latest, as we will be putting finishing touches on the project menu in late December so that it is ready for students when they return to school in January.

If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact the IPA Course Assistant, Sarah Tahamont (tahamont@berkeley.edu, (856) 261-3033). Alternatively you can reach me at jmauldou@berkeley.edu, (510) 847-1619, Mia Bird at miabird@berkeley.edu or Jesse Rothstein at rothstein@berkeley.edu, (510) 643-8561.

Finally, if the design of the IPA workshop course does not meet your needs, you might consider submitting an Advanced Policy Analysis project request for a single, advanced student to focus more time (again, during Spring 2013) as a consultant to your organization (see http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/emp_projects_apa.html). You could also consider offering a summer internship for a GSPP graduate student (http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/employers.html).

Thank you for considering our policy analysis services. We wish you much success in the good work you do.