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 2023 intern program will be conducted remotely, or via a hybrid setup if circumstances allow. Compensation is $23 per hour. This full-time internship will last up to eleven weeks, ideally beginning June 12, 2023.

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 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 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: Water Policy and Management in California

Project Directors

Caity Peterson and Andrew Ayres, with Ellen Hanak

Project Summary

This internship will provide foundational research support to the Water Policy Center's ongoing efforts to connect nonpartisan, objective research to real world water management debates, with the goal of putting California water policy on a sustainable and constructive path. Potential areas of focus may include:

- Sustainable groundwater management and drought: implications for crop and animal agriculture, communities, and ecosystems
- Water markets and the environment: funding and market design opportunities

Responsibilities

The intern(s) will work with a research team to gather and organize data and information on various topics (such as water use and its economic returns, water market design and marketing activities, and ecosystem management priorities and outcomes). This project may include reviewing documents, manipulating large datasets, developing graphics, designing and implementing surveys, and participating in interviews and workshops with relevant stakeholders and decision makers. The intern(s) will also present a summary of this work to PPIC staff at the end of the summer.

Qualifications

The ideal applicant(s) will bring undergraduate or graduate training in a field related to economics, ecology or environmental policy, agriculture, public policy, or a related field.

The intern(s) for this project should have:

- Data management experience, for example in Excel, STATA, Python, or R
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- (Preferred) Familiarity with California's water policies and agricultural systems, as well as basic understanding of farm economics and/or the state's ecosystems
- (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 2: Universal FAFSA Completion in California High Schools

Project Directors

Kevin Cook and Jake Jackson

Project Summary

Completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) allows low-income students to access federal Pell grants, federal work-study programs, federally subsidized student loans, and state Cal Grant aid. Despite its importance in college access and affordability, only 50% of California's high school seniors completed the FAFSA in the 2021-22 school year.

Beginning in the 2022-23 academic year, California's state budget requires California high schools to have all graduating seniors complete the FAFSA or California Dream Act Application if they do not opt out. Our research investigates the plans, implementation, and outcomes of this mandate by asking:

- Which school districts and students could benefit most from universal FAFSA?
- Which demographics of students became more likely to apply to college with the policy change?
- How did districts' application behavior change with the policy shift?
- How did the schools and districts implement the policy? And for whom did the policy work?

Responsibilities

The intern contributing to this project will work alongside more experienced researchers to help our team interview practitioners involved in implementing California's new universal FAFSA completion mandate. If this project stage aligns with the summer, the intern will also engage in coding the interview transcripts and will be taught how to do so if necessary. We also expect the intern will have an opportunity to produce key statistics and/or figures from the California Student Aid Commission's data as well as publicly available data sources like the California Department of Education. The intern will participate in frequent research team meetings during which we will share project updates and receive feedback that will strengthen the intern's knowledge of research design and development. Furthermore, PPIC interns across multiple research teams will have opportunities to connect with one another and network with PPIC staff in varying research disciplines. All interns give a short presentation on their research at the end of the summer and participate in intern events.

Qualifications

An intern joining this project must have:

- Interest in conducting mixed-methods research on education policy in California
- Excellent communications skills – verbally and especially in writing
- Ability to switch between teamwork and minimally supervised independent work
- Foundational knowledge of California's education systems, public policy, or a related field

Ideal, but not required, skills include:

- Qualitative research experience: interview & qualitative coding – Dedoose experience is a bonus
- Quantitative research experience: producing summary statistics in Stata or a similar software
- Interest in and/or experience with California's landscape of college affordability

Project 3: Improving Pandemic Recovery in Education

Project Directors

Niu Gao, Darriya Starr

Project Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the urgent need to implement long overdue changes to improve the condition of schools and accelerate student learning. In order to address the impact of lost instructional time, California created the $4.6 billion Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant (ELO-G) in 2021. The grant allocations are proportional to funding allocated to districts under the state's funding formula—which grants extra funding for low-income, English Learner, and foster youth students—with the goal of prioritizing students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The state released general guidelines, but it is up to districts to implement learning recovery plans that meet local needs. This decentralized approach means that we lack crucial information on ELO-G recovery activities - and their impact. We need to understand how the funding is being distributed across districts, the types of recovery activities that have been funded, and the association between these activities and student outcomes.

The intern will join a multidisciplinary team of state policy leaders and scholars (including economists, educational researchers, demographers, sociologists and policymakers from the Public Policy Institute of California, the University of California, San Diego, the University of California, Berkeley and the California Department of Education) to improve education recovery in California. We will document ELO-G recovery programs, bright-spot innovative and effective strategies, provide policy recommendations, and engage with policymakers, researchers, community based organizations and the broader education community.

Responsibilities

The intern working on this project will actively engage in data collection and management. This includes collecting and coding district recovery plans, conducting literature reviews, and possibly assisting in report writing. The intern will participate in frequent research team meetings to discuss project updates and get feedback on their work. The intern will present a summary of this work to PPIC staff at the end of the summer and will participate in intern program events.

This position is supported with funding from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences through grant #R305X220028. The project is part of a national network on education recovery, and the intern may receive training and mentoring opportunities through the network.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring undergraduate or graduate training in a field related to education, economics, sociology, public policy, or a related field.

An intern working on this project should have:

- Data management experience using Excel, STATA, or R
- 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 analyzing qualitative data 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 education equity, and supporting students from historically marginalized groups

Project 4: Improving Pandemic Recovery in Education

Project Directors

Niu Gao, Darriya Starr

Project Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the urgent need to implement long overdue changes to improve the condition of schools and accelerate student learning. In order to address the impact of lost instructional time, California created the $4.6 billion Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant

(ELO-G) in 2021. The grant allocations are proportional to funding allocated to districts under the state's funding formula—which grants extra funding for low-income, English Learner, and foster youth students—with the goal of prioritizing students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The state released general guidelines, but it is up to districts to implement learning recovery plans that meet local needs. This decentralized approach means that we lack crucial information on ELO-G recovery activities - and their impact. We need to understand how the funding is being distributed across districts, the types of recovery activities that have been funded, and the association between these activities and student outcomes.

The intern will join a multidisciplinary team of state policy leaders and scholars (including economists, educational researchers, demographers, sociologists and policymakers from the Public Policy Institute of California, the University of California, San Diego, the University of California, Berkeley and the California Department of Education) to improve education recovery in California. We will document ELO recovery programs, bright-spot innovative and effective strategies, provide policy recommendations, and engage with policymakers, researchers, community based organizations and the broader education community.

Responsibilities

The intern will bring strong analytical skills and contribute to data analysis. This includes performing descriptive and regression analysis using the school district survey data that the research team collected in Spring 2023. Experience managing large-scale datasets and conducting statistical/econometrical analysis is an important asset, and some experience with mixed-method research is preferred. The intern will participate in frequent research team meetings to discuss project updates and get feedback on their work. The intern will present a summary of this work to PPIC staff at the end of the summer and will participate in intern program events.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring graduate training in a field related to education, economics, sociology, public policy, or a related field.

An intern working on this project should have:

- Strong analytical skills using STATA, R, or Python
- Experience cleaning and managing large scale datasets
- 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
- Foundational knowledge of educational systems, public policy, or a related field
- Experience reading and/or analyzing research, government, or policy documents
- Interest in education equity, and supporting students from historically marginalized groups

Project 5: Digital Storytelling

Project Directors

Vicki Hsieh

Project Summary

The digital storytelling intern will collaborate with PPIC's communications team and multidisciplinary research staff to develop and publish compelling stories that use charts, maps, animations, and/or other visual elements to highlight insights revealed by our latest research. Specific topics might include health equity, the care workforce, gig work, wealth inequality, population trends, housing costs, educational opportunity, or others.

Responsibilities

The intern will be a vital part of PPIC's efforts to broaden engagement across our audiences through visual storytelling. The intern will work collaboratively with research, editorial, production, and digital staff to expand our data visualization efforts, drawing attention to our research in compelling, accessible formats and highlighting notable differences across regions and demographic groups, such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status.

A central goal of this project is to ensure that our work contributes to better public policy that substantially improves well-being across all regions and communities in California, and to use data journalism and visual storytelling to share timely information that expands the diversity of our audiences across age, race, ethnicity, and region.

Key Qualifications and Attributes

The ideal candidate is creative and curious, with a collaborative and solutions-oriented mindset. This person should have:

- Ability to find the story in complex research and data sets
- Excellent visualization skills, which may include static graphics, interactive graphics, charts, maps, animations, and/or other kinds of visuals
- Familiarity managing and working with data; at a minimum, must be familiar with using basic formulas and chart-making in Excel; knowledge of programming languages (R, Stata, Python) may be relevant but is not required
- Strong writing and analytical skills
- Interest in public policy and a commitment to presenting facts and information in a nonideological, nonpartisan manner
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

The ideal candidate will have working proficiency in two or more of the following:

- Online data visualization tools (e.g., Datawrapper, Infogram, and/or Tableau)
- Standard design software (e.g., Illustrator or Photoshop)
- Front-end web development using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript (including D3, Node, Canvas, WebGL, or other rendering/animation libraries)
- Mapbox, QGIS, or other mapping tools