# **ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**



#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Policy of the Year Nominee

SUBSIDIZING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ON CHICAGO'S URBAN FARMS

### **10 IDEAS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2014**

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# WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# <mark>Wнат</mark> You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

# How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director

# Congratulations to ZAC BROWN AND LAYLA HOOD

*authors of* Subsidizing Youth Employment on Chicago Farms

> Nominee for Policy Of The Year

A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

8 SUBSIDIZING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ON CHICAGO FARMS Zac Brown and Layla Hood

CROWDSOURCING FOR CIVIC DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY INVEST MENT FOR D.C. IMPROVEMENT
 Jacob Burman and John Noland

- 14 A NOBLE SOLUTION: PRESERVING HELIUM FOR GENERATIONS TO COME Jacob Davis
- 17 CAPITAL-INTENSIVE PUNISHMENT: MAKING INCARCERATION COST-EFFECTIVE Alexandra Edquist
- 20 REMOVING RISK AND STIMULATING INNOVATION: INSURING SMALL START-UPS IN THE SILICON VALLEY Hilary Gelfond
- 23 **REDEFINING ACCESS IN DETROIT: THE CASE FOR BUS RAPID TRANSIT** Mario Goetz
- <sup>26</sup> ENDOWING SUCCESS: USING SOCIAL IMPACT BONDS TO PROMOTE
   STEM IN DETROIT
   Julius Goldberg-Lewis
- 29 USING COMMUTER TAXES TO REDUCE CHICAGO'S BUDGET GAP Brittney Harrington and Rebecca Youngdahl
- <sup>31</sup> INCENTIVIZE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY INVESTMENT THROUGH FEDERAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS Zach Komes and Josh Serchen
- 35 **ESTABLISHING AN ARKANSAN STATE BANK** Chirag Lala

# SUBSIDIZING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ON CHICAGO FARMS

Zac Brown, Loyola University Chicago and Layla Hood, Cornell University

Subsidized employment in Chicago's burgeoning urban agriculture infrastructure serves to empower underserved youth, promote healthy eating habits, teach marketable skills, and engage youth in their communities.

Despite exporting the second highest amount of farm produce of any US state, one in ten Illinois residents are food insecure and 600.000 Chicagoans live in food deserts, areas that lack access to adequate healthy food options.<sup>1</sup> In less than 40 years, it is not only expected that the population in urban areas will double, but that poverty in these areas will increase as well, exacerbating Chicago's food shortages.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Chicago has become an influential model for the urban agriculture movement. On the policy level, Chicago minimized zoning barriers and converted empty lots.<sup>1</sup> This has encouraged the creation of grassroots groups such as Advocates for Urban Agriculture and the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council, that were established in the early 2000s.

Since 2011, the Emanuel administration has invested \$750,000 annually in urban agriculture employment programs and the creation of many acres of new farmland.<sup>3</sup> However, these programs have failed to address Chicago's disengaged youth. Only 61 percent of Chicago Public School students graduate in 5 years.<sup>4</sup> These rates combined with low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and family disruption contribute to crime and delinquency.<sup>5</sup> Subsidizing youth employment on urban farms will continue the investment in Chicago's urban agriculture while simultaneously mitigating the barriers youth face.

### **KEY FACTS**

• Approximately 600,000 Chicagoans live in food deserts and lack access to healthy food options, such as fresh produce.<sup>1</sup>

• Only 61 percent of Chicago Public School students graduate high school, even after being enrolled for 5 years.<sup>4</sup>

• In 2010, it was reported that 58 percent of high school dropouts were reliant on food stamps."

### ANALYSIS

Youth who are involved in their communities are more likely to have the soft skills that lead to achievement. Researchers have found that the exposure of internship experiences promotes self-confidence, socialskills, heightened ambition, and independent thinking.<sup>6</sup> Youth who are not involved with out-of-school activities are much more likely to drop out and estimates reveal that the costs of dropping out of high school amounted to more than \$388,000.<sup>7</sup> In the latest job reports, high school dropouts experience much higher rates of unemployment and earn \$10,386 less than someone with a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup>

Urban agriculture is a way for food insecure households to attain nutritious foods.<sup>9</sup> Urban agriculture crops often include more vegetables and fruits-necessary components of healthy diets-than food insecure households normally have access.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, urban agriculture can be productive and self-sustaining. Globally this has been seen in Accra, the capital of Ghana, where almost 90 percent of fresh vegetables are the product of urban farms.<sup>9</sup> Research suggests health status improves with increased access to nutritious food.<sup>9</sup> Urban agriculture simplifies distribution and provides increased access to nutritional food choices at costs similar to unhealthy alternatives, which are prevalent in low-income populations.<sup>9</sup>

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

It is crucial to understand the needs and interests of Chicago's youth and farmers, as these subsidies are for them. Growing Power, Chicago's largest urban farming presence and a partner of the new "Farmers for Chicago" urban farmers network, is an important stakeholder because of its five farms and the jobs it could offer. Funding stakeholders may include the Department of Family and Support Serves, which runs all city funded summer employment, along

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Working outside in the natural environment positively impacts health.<sup>12</sup>

• Youth who participate in internship-like experiences are equipped with marketable job training and transferable skill sets.

• Subsidized youth employment would provide low cost labor to urban farms that contribute to their local communities. with Urban Alliance, a non-profit that gives internships to youth. Advocates for Urban Agriculture are another key stakeholder due to their influence in local farm policy.

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### **NEXT STEPS**

First, one would have to engage the stakeholders who could offer jobs and organizations such as Advocates for Urban Agriculture because they would help garner support and execute the policy. In order for this program to be implemented, funding must be allocated from either the city's youth jobs programs or through other local and federal funding sources. In 2009 and 2010 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds were used for summer youth employment. These funds could also be accessed for this program due to the dire situations in Chicago's neighborhoods.<sup>10</sup> Employers would contribute part of the wages and the subsidy would cover the rest, similar to federal work study. These subsidies would give needed labor to urban farmers at a reduced cost, while giving jobs to youth who need them. Youth could also receive a portion of the produce they create as a healthy bonus to their paychecks.

Employment for youth in urban agriculture is a logical and socially responsible alternative for solving Chicago's current food desert, urban agriculture, and youth engagement and dropout issues. The next major step would be advancing this message to representatives and aldermen in order to make the subsidy available through a structured program before recruiting youth.

### CROWDSOURCING FOR CIVIC DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FOR D.C. IMPROVEMENT

Jacob Burman and John Noland, George Washington University

By building a crowdsourcing website, the D.C. government can create a forum for residents to both pledge support for and fund local parks and recreational projects. The local government will selectively match funds based on demand, affected populations, and levels of need. Should the project prove successful, this process for civic development could be expanded to other city departments.

Crowdsourcing for community development by itself is nothing new. Early examples of crowdsourcing range from Alexander Pope's successful solicitation of donations from wealthy individuals to fund his efforts to translate The Iliad from Greek to English to Joseph Pulitzer's effort to fund the building of the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty in 1885.1 Kickstarter was one of the first websites to employ crowdsourced funding for personal projects. Based on Kickstarter, Spacehive launched a website in England to crowdfund capital projects introduced by communities. These projects are established and developed by community members, approved by Spacehive, and funded by the Internet community.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it has been used to bolster funds for projects by local English governments that had been lacking necessary capital to complete. Spacehive has led to the democratization of civic projects, allowing community interests to take an active role in decision-making. Spacehive is also taking steps to become more integrated in its workings with different levels of government in England.

### **KEY FACTS**

• Kickstarter, one of the most successful and popular crowdfunding websites currently online, has had \$898 million pledged and 57,597 successfully funded projects since 2009<sup>6</sup>, showing that crowdsourcing is a viable and established means of fundraising for a number of projects.

• Spacehive currently features 236 projects<sup>7</sup>, and has had more than £1 million (\$1.63 million US) pledged since the site launched.<sup>8</sup>

### ANALYSIS

The majority of the funding involved in implementation of community crowdsourcing will come from privately pledged money. People are free to propose and fund approved projects on the website, so the process will be largely selfsustaining. Government funding will be required to support website design, hosting and logistics, and we propose additional funding to support select projects. In order to stimulate development across D.C.'s wide range of living areas, this policy proposes to create a sliding scale, so that the three lowest-income city wards (currently 5, 7, and 8), will receive 50 percent of allotted funds, the three next lowest (6, 4, 1) will be guaranteed 30 percent, and the top two wards  $(2, 3)^3$  will be allocated 20 percent. Other expenses involved would include miscellaneous administrative costs. In the 2014 Mayor's Budget, the Park Policy and Programs Division is allotted \$294,000 for Small Parks Programs and the Community Gardens Programs.<sup>4</sup> To boost residents' say in civic development, an additional 25 percent of each program's budget (as currently allotted) will be available for spending on crowdsourcing, while the current levels of funding would allow the city to complete projects that are already in place. This will increase the total funding for Small Parks Programs and the Community Gardens Program by \$88,500, for a total of \$382,500. The funds will be appropriated as follows, with estimated costs for website management:

### **KEY FACTS**

• Of the 13 community gardens in Washington, D.C., only one is located in the three lowest-income wards, with Wards 5 and 8 completely unrepresented,<sup>9</sup> running counter to the ostensibly egalitarian and ameliorative motives behind the program in the first place.

• A study by the Community Food Security Coalition's North American Initiative on Urban Agriculture demonstrated that urban agriculture can provide a hefty boon to society in the form of better nutrition, food security and decreased food prices,<sup>10</sup> which is critical in a city where the poverty rate. when accounting for cost of living expenses, stands at "almost 23 percent."11

LINE ITEM	AMOUNT (in dollars)	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Website Implementa- tion/Administration	15,000 <sup>5</sup>	16.94
Lowest-Income Wards	36,750	41.53 (50 percent of development funds)
Middle-Income Wards	22,050	24.92 (30 percent of development funds)
Highest-Income Wards	14,700	16.61 (20 percent of development funds)
Total	88,500	100

Furthermore, projects funded through crowdsourcing will provide many positive externalities to their surrounding communities. Whether through gardens providing produce or developing a stronger sense of community and ownership of the surrounding areas, crowdsourcing will democratize urban development (with the above-mentioned support from the D.C. government). One of the largest benefits that crowdfunding offers is in additional funding to implement new, popular projects without an increase in city spending. Spacehive, for example, has raised over \$1.63 million for a variety of projects across the United Kingdom.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

While this idea could be used within a number of different areas of government, this proposal focuses on specific departments within municipal government. We are using the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation as a case study for this policy, which could be expanded to a number of other departments depending on its success. The department and those within D.C. who utilize Parks and Recreation resources will benefit from this project as it would allow constituents to propose and fund projects to their liking and would ease the burden of funding from the department itself. Likewise, this process will help provide feedback to the district for its initiatives. These projects can also include supporting existing programs that the department offers, such as programs for children, teens, elderly, and the disabled.

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5. This is an estimated amount to reflect the costs of implementing, hosting,

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Crowdsourcing is an ever-growing, widelypopular means of raising money for any number of causes.

 Spacehive, a British crowdsourcing website for community development, provides a means for residents to support civic projects that they believe in.

• Such a website could be built in D.C. for parks programs, infrastructural development, and other civic projects.

• Harnessing community funding and support will increase public say in government spending and establish an officiallysanctioned means of building support for civic development and neighborhood improvement.

• While funding for small public parks and community gardens has increased recently,<sup>4</sup> it is important to likewise increase community involvement and ownership in public works. and managing the website.

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# **Next Steps**

To efficiently implement this policy, the Department of Parks and Recreation will have to establish the website, determine the floor for city funding, develop a system to approve projects as they are proposed, and advertise this program to the community. Spacehive can be used as a reference for all of these steps.

The administrators of the Small Parks and Community Gardens Programs are already trained in the analysis of potential sites. Therefore, they would be well suited to the verification process for the projects proposed on the website.

It will be especially important to determine the point at which the department would begin providing funds to support larger, more ambitious projects. For instance, the threshold could be set so that projects with over \$15,000 in pledged support would become eligible for supplementary government funds, within the budgetary parameters for each ward type.

### A NOBLE SOLUTION: PRESERVING HELIUM FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Jacob Davis, Georgetown University

Congress should expand its sale of helium at market equilibrium to preserve the supply for military, industrial and civilian needs. Known for its presence in birthday balloons and ability to induce high-pitched voices when consumed, helium is more than just a party accessory. In fact, the noble gas's low boiling point and high thermal conductivity make it a crucial component in scientific research and development as well as technological innovation. Its eclectic range of uses include applications in the aerospace industry, computer chip and optical fiber manufacturing, M.R.I. magnet cooling, air-to-air missile defense systems and rocket engines.<sup>1</sup>

To preserve and manage this finite natural resource, the United States Helium Reserve in Amarillo, Texas, was established in the early 1920s. At first, it purchased helium to be used in WWI-era airships and later was "indispensable to the US space exploration program."<sup>2</sup> However, in 1996, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the government agency that operates the reserve in Amarillo, was \$1.6 billion in debt, and Congress voted to cut its losses by passing the Helium Privatization Act, effectively triggering a fire sale of helium to private industry. When the act was set to expire and force the US out of the helium business on October 7th, the Reserve found itself supplying 42 percent of the nation's helium and netting the treasury \$430,000 a day.<sup>3</sup> While the Responsible Helium Administration and Stewardship Act of 2013 passed nearly unanimously to keep the reserve open, a bigger problem looms: the world is running out of helium.<sup>4</sup> Estimates project that if consumption continues to increase at current rates, we have a only 40 years of helium left.<sup>5</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Congress should amend the 2013 Helium Stewardship Act because it artificially lowers helium prices and poses a threat to the world's supply. According to the National Research Council in 2010, under the 1996 Helium Privatization Act, the reserve's formula to set the price of helium

### **KEY FACTS**

• The reserve supplies 42 percent of the nation's helium<sup>14</sup> and one third of the world's demand.<sup>15</sup>

- At current prices, the reserve nets the US Treasury \$430,000/ day from crude helium sales, royalties and other related operations.<sup>16</sup>
- Alternatives to current helium production would lead to the average party balloon costing \$100.<sup>17</sup>

was so flawed that the reserve was selling helium at a price point about half of what it could get on an unregulated market.<sup>6</sup> The passage of the 2013 Helium Stewardship act attempted to remedy this issue with promises to adjust prices to bring a fair return for taxpayers. However, the reality is that little has changed. The BLM's new pricing scheme for 2014 pegs helium at \$95 per thousand cubic feet (Mcf),<sup>7</sup> up \$11 from 2013 but still a distance from private Grade-A helium prices that sit at over \$160 per Mcf.<sup>8</sup> Because the US is such a large global supplier, changes in the reserve's price are mirrored by the rest of the market.<sup>9</sup> Thus, allowing the price of helium to rise to market equilibrium would not only be economically beneficial to the Treasury, but have positive impacts for the helium supply. As it stands, prices are so low that there is no incentive to conserve or recycle the helium. Recapturing helium from the atmosphere is an expensive proposition, one that Cornell scientist Robert Richardson estimates would make helium 10,000 times more expensive.<sup>10</sup> Lifting the artificially low price of helium would encourage responsible helium use and incentivize the development of localized helium recapture, something already being seen in academia."

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Helium, critical and versatile, is used for M.R.I. machines, scientific research, cryogenics, and aerospace technology.

- "The federally owned helium now sells for about half of what it would on the open market." <sup>18</sup>
- Selling helium at market equilibrium raises revenue, corrects the inefficiencies in use that lead to waste and promotes the research and development of ways to conserve and recapture this dwindling resource.

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### NEXT STEPS

Congress should abandon the faulty model it uses to sell helium and move to allow helium prices to further rise to preserve the global helium supply. While the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013 should be applauded for moving the US in the right direction and giving the BLM more leeway when it comes to selling helium,<sup>12</sup> the act still underprices helium, mandates the selling off of most of the reserve and ultimately restricts the sale to Federal users, limiting opportunities for both revenue and innovation.<sup>13</sup> Congress should amend the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013 to expand the sale at market prices past the eventual federal only restriction.

### CAPITAL-INTENSIVE PUNISHMENT: MAKING INCARCERATION COST-EFFECTIVE

Alexandra Edquist, University of Georgia

The federal prison system should establish in-house rehabilitation programs for drug offenders to reduce crime by keeping ex-convicts from re-offending.

In 1984, the United States passed legislation to fight drug use and violent crime by increasing and expanding mandatory minimum penalties for drug offenses, which resulted in the mass incarceration of drug offenders. Within 20 years, the federal drug offender inmate population grew fifteen-fold.<sup>1</sup> Today, the federal prison system spends \$3.7 billion a year to hold more than 125,000 drug offenders.<sup>2.3</sup> However, the country receives only about \$600 million in social benefits from the reduced drug use, health costs, and crime that has resulted from the increased incarceration of drug offenders.<sup>4</sup> Worse, there are so many drug offenders with mandatory minimum sentences clogging federal prisons that, on average, every two new drug offenders incarcerated forces the system to release a violent or property offender early to make room for the drug offenders<sup>5</sup> –an effect that actually increases crime.<sup>6</sup>

Many states had similar policies but recently reformed their prison systems to reduce costs and recidivism rates. Increasing the use of probation, parole supervision, and treatment allowed Texas to avert \$2 billion in costs for building new prisons and decreased parole failures by 39 percent, effectively reducing its future inmate population.<sup>7</sup> Georgia passed legislation last summer to provide alternatives to incarceration, such as treatment, for low-level, non-violent drug and property offenders, which is projected to save \$264 million over five years.<sup>8</sup> However, the federal government has not followed the examples of these states.

#### ANALYSIS

Preventing crime is the most potent way for prison systems to become cost-effective. Incarceration already does this to an extent by temporarily incapacitating would-be criminals. However, when ex-convicts are released, roughly half of them will be re-incarcerated. Many rehabilitation programs, such as vocational training and drug treatment, greatly reduce recidivism and, as a result, future crime. The benefits from prevented crime far outweigh the costs of these programs. While there are many options, the most cost-effective program is vo-

### **KEY FACTS**

• The federal government spends \$3.1 billion more than it receives in benefits from incarcerating drug offenders.<sup>11,12</sup>

• Roughly half of federal drug offenders will be re-incarcerated within 3 years of release. <sup>13,14</sup>

• At current rates, the incarceration of drug offenders increases rather than decreases crime because two drug offenders crowd out one property or violent offender.<sup>15,16</sup> cational education, which reduces recidivism by 9 percent and has a net benefit of \$13,738 per participating inmate. The least expensive program is cognitive-behavioral therapy, which reduces recidivism by 6.3 percent and has a net benefit of \$10,299, while costing only \$105 per inmate.<sup>9</sup>

Implementation costs and benefits would vary widely depending on which program is chosen. If applied to the 125,000 drug offenders in federal prisons, the cost of vocational education would be \$148 million (4 percent increase to the current cost of \$3.7 billion), and the net benefits would be \$1.7 billion. Currently, incarcerating drug offenders costs \$3.1 billion more than the benefits it provides. Implementing vocational education would close that gap to \$1.4 billion. The cost of cognitive-behavioral therapy for the 125,000 drug offenders would be \$13 million (0.3 percent increase), and the net benefits would be \$1.3 billion. Cognitive-behavioral therapy would close the cost-benefit gap to \$1.8 billion.

Drug offenders and their families benefit because rehabilitation programs improve their economic and social outcomes upon release. Taxpayers benefit because of reduced crime.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Strict drug laws with long mandatory minimum penalties are expensive and increase crime through crowding-out.

• The federal government is not addressing high recidivism rates, and decreasing recidivism is a 'low-hanging fruit' for increasing cost-effectiveness and preventing crime.

• Half of federal drug offenders could be provided vocational education for the cost of new prisons in the 2013 budget alone, and all federal prisoners could be provided cognitive-behavioral therapy many times over.<sup>10</sup> 9 Aos, Steve, Marna Miller, and Elizabeth Drake. "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates." *Washington State Institute for Public Policy.* 2006. www.wsipp. wa.gov/rptfiles/06-10-1201.pdf.

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### NEXT STEPS

Policy teams from the Bureau of Prisons will choose a program and a federal prison for a trial program to see if the chosen program is cost effective. They will then train personnel to run these programs. Researchers will run evaluations on the re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration of exconvicts (those who participated in the programs and those who are a control group) at six months, 1 year, and 3 years after their release to test the efficacy of the program. If the program is successful, the Bureau of Prisons will expand it over 5 or 10 years to apply to all drug offenders, and perhaps all inmates.

# Removing Risk and Stimulating Innovation: Insuring Small Start-ups in the Silicon Valley

Hilary Gelfond, Cornell University

Creating a local small business bank to insure start-ups against risk will encourage entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, California, to take more chances in technological innovation.

Since an explosion of venture capital in the late 1990s, the Silicon Valley has been home to the largest concentration of startup businesses in the United States.<sup>1</sup> However, the typical firm only has an 18.<sup>1</sup> percent chance of survival over 9 years, which is less than the national average of 34 percent over 10 years or more.<sup>2,3</sup> As businesses fail and become bankrupt, they leave behind millions of dollars in liabilities that could have been **20** 

more efficiently allocated.<sup>4</sup> Instead of allowing these potentially breakthrough firms to collapse, a system should be put in place to protect small business owners from the risk of failure.

Such an institution could be a jointly funded by local public-private Small Business Assurance Bank (SBAB), in which pre-approved businesses pay a small premium to be insured against the risk of failure. While risk pooling against business failure has not been proposed in any other locality, the bank will support the technology industry, which is becoming the driving force in the advancement of society. The SBAB will be similar in structure to the National Infrastructure Bank, proposed by President Obama and a selection of Congressional Democrats, as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) in the European Union, which has been in effect for over 50 years and has played a major role in the economic development of the EU.<sup>5,6</sup> An adaption of this banking system into the Silicon Valley could have a similar stimulating effect on local businesses.

### ANALYSIS

An SBAB can most effectively control for the financial risk of a startup company, allowing its owners to maintain focus on technological development. Structured as a public-private partnership, a designated group of business people and innovators will serve as a board of directors to analyze the probability of success of prospective companies. A rating system of factors considered to be the best predictors of a firm's success will be used as a guide.7 After an initial investment by the local government, each qualifying company would contract with the bank and pay a minimal premium for the first 4 years in exchange for insurance. Afterwards, the premium would increase to an amount that correlates with the monetary risk of the company's failure. If a qualifying firm begins to fail, the bank would provide the firm with capital upon reevaluation of its progress towards its stated

### **KEY FACTS**

• Since the dot-com bust in 2004, employment growth in the high-tech sector has outpaced growth in the non-tech sector 3 to 1.<sup>1</sup>

- The number of businesses leaving the Silicon Valley has exceeded the number moving into the region every year from 1995 to 2010.<sup>3</sup>
- California's business failure rate is 69 percent higher than the national average.<sup>8</sup>

goals, to be paid back after the initial payment period ends. To prevent an extreme level of moral hazard, the funds will be paid back at a later time, though with minimal interest. With a large enough risk pool, there is a lower risk of the SBAB going bankrupt. Through the balancing of insulation from risk and extreme behavior from moral hazard, the SBAB will successfully allow startups in the Silicon Valley to experiment with new technologies.

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### TALKING POINTS

• The Santa Clara County government should create a publicprivate partnership with local investors to form a Small Business Assurance Bank that insulates tech startups from risk.

• Entrance into the bank should be dependent on a set of stringent guidelines.

• With the decrease in risk, small businesses will be granted the opportunity to experiment with innovative products.

### NEXT STEPS

The Santa Clara County government should contract with private investors to allocate the initial funding for the SBAB. Next, an advisory board of credentialed business and technology experts should be appointed and parameters for program participation should be determined. Small businesses should contract with the SBAB to be insulated from risk for the first 4 years and then repay the initial monetary risk over a predetermined number of years.

# REDEFINING ACCESS IN DETROIT: THE CASE FOR BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Mario Goetz, University of Michigan

The Detroit metropolitan area suffers from spatial mismatch between jobs and urban residents, exacerbated by Detroit's inept public transportation system. The region should implement a Bus Rapid Transit system with dedicated bus lanes to reconnect employers and employees with maximum efficiency and accessibility.

Historically, Detroit's regional governments and private interests promoted private modes of transportation, while neglecting the public transportation options that low-income urban residents depended on for mobility.<sup>1</sup> Mid-20th century Detroit boasted comprehensive public transit, including buses, streetcars, and commuter rail. Since then, suburban political opposition,<sup>2</sup> anti-mass transit policy and crippling budget cuts killed any attempts to integrate and extend regional transit service. Today, dysfunction, delays, breakdowns, and overcrowding make taking the bus to work, school, or anywhere else a difficult and dangerous prospect in Detroit, depriving residents of access to resources and employment.<sup>3</sup> Detroit's poverty and unemployment rates both approach 30 percent, translating to about 250,000 people either out of work or living in poverty.<sup>4</sup> With four out of five jobs located more than 10 miles from the central business district,<sup>5</sup> and a severely underfunded transit system, close to 80 percent of working Detroiters must commute by car only.<sup>6,7</sup> As gas prices and gridlock proliferate, fewer and fewer Detroiters can afford cars, stranding them in greater isolation and poverty.<sup>8</sup>

A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is the best way to solve Detroit's transit problem. BRT has proven efficient, adaptable, and cost-effective in many US cities, such as Los Angeles and Cleveland, which face similar geographic and financial barriers to transit. <sup>9,10,11</sup> Less expensive and more flexible than light rail, BRT can access Detroit's disparate population and employment centers while remaining financially viable.<sup>12</sup> Detroit's massive and underused throughways are ideal for accommodating dedicated bus lanes,<sup>13</sup> or busways, which will isolate buses from surrounding traffic, improve rider safety, slash commute times, and help alleviate gridlock, making BRT even more effective.<sup>14</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Studies show that investing in public transit stimulates businesses, creates jobs, and saves workers money, especially in areas such as Detroit where job sprawl disconnects employers from employees.<sup>15</sup> Better transit means saving millions of dollars for the metropolitan region, and by reducing the need for cars, transit riders can save almost \$8,000 annually.<sup>16</sup> After the recent passage of a Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the Federal government promised \$140 million intended to revamp transit infrastructure, and fund the RTA and new transit projects. This sum does not quite cover the estimated \$500 million cost of 110 miles of a new BRT system,<sup>17</sup> but it indicates serious commitment to supporting public transit. Improving regional transit is gaining support, corresponding with demand for service to regional hubs such as the Detroit Metro Airport. Private funding also supports the M1Woodward Avenue light rail project along Detroit's main thoroughfare 18,19

However, light rail must be nothing more than a supplement to a regional BRT system, which can be built for under \$25 million per mile compared to the about \$70 million per mile that light rail usually costs. Able to carry 10,000 passengers per hour quickly and efficiently over large distances, BRT allows an economically depressed city like Detroit to spend within its means, while providing necessary transit service. <sup>20</sup>

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### **KEY FACTS**

• Four out of five jobs in Metro Detroit are located more than 10 miles from the Central Business District.<sup>22</sup>

• The Detroit

Department of Transportation's budget has been cut in half in recent years, leading to severely reduced access, overcrowding, long delays, and noshows.<sup>23,24</sup>

• Bus Rapid Transit can provide the same service as Light Rail at one-third of the cost.<sup>25</sup> Los Angeles. 2000.

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### **TALKING POINTS**

• The Detroit region has seriously neglected its public transportation system, stranding lowincome residents without access to employment and services.

• Bus Rapid Transit is a cost-effective option that is ideal for long urbansuburban commutes, and it will improve safety.

• Support is growing, but suburban residents need to recognize the benefits of regional transit to help pay for increased service.

### NEXT STEPS

Financial support, and political will, especially from the suburbs, will prove Legislating funding sources through a dedicated transit tax and giving the

### **ENDOWING SUCCESS: USING SOCIAL** IMPACT BONDS TO PROMOTE STEM IN DETROIT

Julius Goldberg-Lewis, University of Michigan

The University of Michigan should use its endowment to create a social impact bond with the schools of the city of Detroit. The social impact bond will help finance STEM and entrepreneurship classes in public schools.

Social impact bonds are a public/private partnership that allows private institutions to contribute capital for a program or policy (often implemented through an intermediary), which produces a demonstrable and quantifiable public good. They are being used in New York City to reduce recidivism rates among the previously incarcerated, and in London to pay for universal Pre-K.<sup>1</sup> After a predetermined maturation period, the principal of the bond is repaid with interest proportional to the amount of public funds saved (such as lower prison costs through lower recidivism). Return on the initial investment is predicated on success of the program: because of this there is a serious incentive to invest in successful programs. The specific return on the bond will be evaluated by an independent organization that will be able to compare initial projected government costs with the post-bond reduction in cost.

Over the past several decades, Detroit has seen a rapid decline in its tax base, social services, general quality of life, and most recently, has entered bankruptcy. Numerous attempts and proposals have been made to rejuvenate the city, but projects from urban farming to massive relocation have been met with limited success and acceptance from the people of Detroit. While attempts have been made to create a startup culture as well as import

### **KEY FACTS**

• The University of Michigan has access to a \$7.5 Billion endowment.

 Wayne County has an "opportunity score" almost 25 percent lower than the national average.

• The computer science field has a 95 percent employment rate.<sup>6</sup>

 Minority students who study a STEM field earn about 25 percent more than those who study the humanities.7

talent to improve the tax base and increase the population, any sustainable solution to Detroit's problems must come from within. The city is only a 45-minute drive away from one of the premier public universities in the country, the University of Michigan, which boast a \$7.5 billion endowment. The university should use that massive economic power to invest in generating local talent in Detroit, as opposed to hoping that its graduates might find the city attractive.

#### ANALYSIS

The bond shall provide funding for computer science programs and entrepreneurship classes and additional STEM funding in each of Detroit's 21 high schools.<sup>2</sup> Detroit has invested heavily in crafting its image to appeal to Millennials, startups and technology companies<sup>3</sup>, but in order for this plan to succeed the talent must come from within. STEM and computer science are some of the fastest growing fields and require young, driven employees. By placing the bond's emphasis on these fields, the citizens of Detroit can gain the skills to take advantage of the unique culture that the city hopes to develop.

Apart from the altruistic incentives available to the University of Michigan, as an investment, a Social Impact Bond can almost guarantee a return on investment by focusing on proven methods of increasing opportunity such as education. Detroit's poverty rate is approximately three times the national average<sup>4</sup> and a non-profit that studies inequality and mobility, Opportunity Nation, gives Wayne County an 'opportunity score' almost 25 percent lower than the national average.<sup>5</sup> By increasing training for the kinds of jobs that Detroit hopes to attract, the state expenditure on everything from social services to health care to crime will decrease. These programs will not only train Detroit students in the skills they need to be attractive to employers and universities, it will incentivize that talent to stay in the city.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The University of Michigan should use its significant endowment to leverage social good.

• Social Impact Bonds have been implemented successfully in England to pay for Pre-K education in London, and to reduce recidivism in New York City.

• STEM education has shown to have huge benefits and fit the profile of the talent that Detroit is trying to attract. Education and increases in opportunity are some of the most proven ways to increase the socioeconomic outcomes of individuals. By providing the capital necessary to implement these plans, the university will save the state large sums of money in the long term. If the initial bond is successful, the money can be reinvested in similar programs in Detroit or across Michigan.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

The primary stakeholders are the residents of Detroit, the University of Michigan, and the State of Michigan. The citizens of Detroit will benefit by having access to skills and education that will lead to lasting social benefit and positive economic outcomes. The University of Michigan will benefit by creating a safe investment and being able to use its sizeable endowment in creative and progressive ways. The state government will benefit by spending less on social programs, health care, and criminal justice.

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# **NEXT STEPS**

An intermediary organization will be created to design and track the bond. After persuading the regents of the University of Michigan to undertake the project, representatives from that group (which will facilitate the implementation of the bond) will set up the bond with the state and schools. After all groups agree on an initial investment, the principal from the bond will provide for the classes to be held in the public schools or hosted by the intermediary. After the initial implementation, the intermediary will continue to provide estimates of the bond's impact to the university and the state. The administration of the classes will be ongoing until the maturation date, with the funds provided from the principal of the bond. If successful, the bond could be renewed for future years under a similar framework.

## Using Commuter Taxes to Reduce Chicago's Budget Gap

Brittney Harrington and Rebecca Youngdahl, The College of William and Mary

The City of Chicago should levy a commuter tax to lower the deficit and fund employment programs to ensure that beneficiaries of City resources are fairly contributing.

A commuter tax is a tax on income earned within a city by nonresident commuters.<sup>1</sup> Commuter taxes draw upon the same rationale as user fees, taking into consideration the net costs that nonresident workers and shoppers incur on a city by using resources that are paid for by city resident taxes. Under former Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, the Head Tax, which taxed businesses with 50 or more employees, brought in 23 million dollars in revenue in 2009 and 2010. When Daley left office, the Head Tax, the city's only revenue source from commuters. was cut without any viable alternative being put in its place. With four out of ten new downtown jobs going to nonresidents<sup>3</sup>, a commuter tax would make up for the lost Head Tax revenue, provide deficit relief, and fund employment programs for residents.

### ANALYSIS

Thirty billion dollars in non-taxed commuter income exit Chicago city limits annually. Levying a commuter tax of 1 percent on incomes of nonresidential workers would bring in approximately \$300 million in tax revenue annually. Chicago's projected budget gap for 2014 is \$339 million.<sup>4</sup> Instituting this commuter tax would bring in enough revenue to nearly close the budget gap. In 2012 the Chicago city government announced \$82 million in cuts to public safety funding, including reductions in the number of police

### **KEY FACTS**

 According to the census bureau,
 620,000 nonresidents worked in Chicago in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

• 41.4 percent of Chicago residents and 52.1 percent of nonresidents earn more than \$3,333 per month, making nonresidents more likely to be able to afford the 1 percent tax.<sup>2</sup>

• Between 2002 and 2011, Chicagoans holding downtown jobs decreased by 2.38 percent.<sup>2</sup> stations and police districts in the city, and consolidating fire and police headquarters.<sup>5</sup> These public services are vital to city residents and commuters alike, therefore commuters should also contribute to the cost of these services. In addition, allocating 5 percent of the revenues toward workforce services in Chicago would increase the budget for employment programs from about 7.3 million to over 22 million dollars.<sup>4</sup> A workforce services program with three times its current funding and a major decrease in the budget deficit could immensely benefit the city.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Getting approval for a commuter tax in Chicago would rely heavily on community organizing. Mayor Rahm Emanuel has said that he will not raise taxes to reduce the deficit<sup>6</sup>, therefore heavy emphasis would need to be put on working with aldermen who support the tax, lobbying those who don't, and organizing in wards most affected by the loss of jobs to commuters. Educating Chicagoans and business-owners about the revenue lost to commuters whose incomes aren't taxed is vital to the implementation of the commuter tax.

Organizations such as the Grassroots Collaborative and member organizations of the Chicago Area Project collaborative have expressed interest in the implementation of such taxes. Opponents of the tax may be concerned that businesses may move elsewhere to avoid the tax, however, if part of the tax revenue "is used to provide some valuable public service, the city could become more attractive to current and future employers."<sup>2</sup>

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### **TALKING POINTS**

• Every year, \$30 billion in commuter income exit Chicago untaxed by the city.

• Since commuters possess the majority of jobs in downtown Chicago, a commuter tax of 1 percent should be implemented to benefit the city.

• This tax can be used to close the city's budget gap, as well as increase workforce services in Chicago for city residents. 2013. http://www.thegrassrootscollaborative.org/sites/default/files/DowntownProsperityNeighborhoodNeglect.pdf 4. City of Chicago. "2014 Budget Overview." Mayor Rahm Emanuel. 5. City of Chicago. "Mayor Rahm Emanuel Outlines 2012 Budget Proposal to Secure Chicago's Future." Mayor's Office

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### NEXT STEPS

In order to move forward, the General Assembly must approve this tax. This should be tackled by primarily working with stakeholders to build a strong Chicagoan support base to take to the Assembly. This tax should be implemented in the "collar counties" surrounding Chicago, as they have benefitted from nearly 40 percent of downtown job growth over the past 10 years.<sup>4</sup> The Assembly's legislation must include a clear definition of "commuter" that explains which areas surrounding Chicago constitute commuter towns. Per the Constitution of the State of Illinois, the commuter tax would be a flat tax.<sup>7</sup> Writing the commuter tax as a progressive tax is a long-term goal that could be achieved after a constitutional amendment.

### INCENTIVIZE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY INVESTMENT THROUGH FEDERAL UNI-VERSITY RANKINGS

Zach Komes and Josh Serchen, George Washington University

The Department of Education's proposed college rating system should include a Community Investment Index that measures universities' role in spurring local economic development.

Colleges and universities are critical to the communities in which they reside. Universities purchase just over \$400 billion in goods and services annually, or about 3 percent of GDP.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, these anchor institutions hold \$406 billion in endowments.<sup>2</sup> This spending power continues to be an untapped resource for community development in low-income areas. While the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has

worked on a small-scale to encourage greater university investment, no further major government action has been taken.

Several universities have started community investment programs of their own. The University of Pennsylvania committed 12 percent of its procurement for local and minority-owned businesses, which totaled about \$100 million in 2010.<sup>3</sup> Other universities use their endowments to help local homeowners and enterprises, such as the University of Cincinnati, which invested 15 percent of its endowment in a community loan fund.<sup>4</sup>

The federal government has not done enough to incentivize universities to broaden their impact on their surrounding neighborhoods. President Obama's recent proposal to link financial aid with a standardized rating system presents an opportunity to encourage investment. If the Department of Education (ED) included a Community Investment Index as a component of ranking, then colleges would finally be pressured to use their economic power to revitalize low-income communities.

### **ANALYSIS**

The Index would measure the university's social impact in three areas: endowment investment, procurement of local goods and services, and business incubation. This rating would include the percentage of the university's endowment invested in Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), community banks and capital funds that provide assets to low-income communities.<sup>5</sup> These innovative institutions also maximize their social impact by leveraging many sources of revenue; for every \$1 invested in a CDFI, \$7 flows to local community-led ventures.<sup>6</sup> However, reductions in federal funding, dampened charitable giving, and higher costs necessitate the need for new revenue for the continued sustainability of CDFIs.<sup>7</sup>

### **KEY FACTS**

• For every \$100 spent at local businesses, \$73 will remain in the local economy.<sup>10</sup>

 For every \$1 invested in a CDFI, \$7 flows to local community-led ventures."

• In 2012, universities held \$406.1 billion in endowment assets and spent \$400 billion on goods and services.<sup>12,13</sup> The Index should also measure the percentage of university procurement of goods and services from locally-owned enterprises. Local purchasing creates a "multiplier effect" that maximizes economic impact; some studies have found that for every \$100 spent at local businesses, \$73 remains in the immediate community.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the indicator would measure the extent to which the university supports community entrepreneur incubation via technical assistance and startup capital funding for new business ventures.

ED should work closely with HUD to facilitate information sharing and greater collaboration between colleges. The specific costs for the effort would include a limited expansion of HUD for this purpose, as well the costs of developing the precise mathematical calculation and collecting data from universities. The addition of this index would not dramatically increase the cost of President Obama's proposal.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

All Americans have a vested interest in this proposal. Universities will be motivated by self-interest to shift their current investment portfolios to more community investment in order to secure additional federal funding. The choice students have in selecting a college to attend will influence colleges to compete against each other to lead the rankings in order to attract more students, resulting in more attractive financial aid packages for students as universities invest more while competing and receive more favorable rates from the federal government. Local small businesses will have new access to capital from university-provided funding. Tying federal aid to new guidelines will require a change in federal law, so this proposal will have to endure a divided legislative process.

### **TALKING POINTS**

• Local universities have strong potential to spur economic development in their community through their procurement and endowment, though many lack a strong incentive to do so.

• Successful community investment initiatives by the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Cincinnati demonstrate the power of university engagement with communities.

• Tying a Community Investment Index to federal financial aid funding will motivate other universities to maximize their financial resources to support local entrepreneurs and communities.

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# NEXT STEPS

The likelihood of passage of President Obama's financial aid overhaul is minimal in the current political environment. However, ED will complete the ranking system by 2015, even if there is no congressional authorization that ties aid to this ranking.<sup>9</sup> Results will be featured on ED's College Scorecard website.

ED is primarily focused on the financial return on investment for students, and currently there is no public discussion about including a calculation of local economic returns in the ranking. To bring awareness to the Community Investment Index, a lobbying campaign will need to unite a large coalition of actors, including students, community organizations, and universities. Fiscal conservatives may be persuaded by the ranking system's use of competition to maximize the effectiveness of federal spending. Government officials should appreciate the increased capital flows into their constituencies. Such an advocacy campaign should contend that it's in universities' best interests to financially empower their communities—investment in CDFIs will generate interest payments that provide new revenue streams, create positive publicity for the institution, and boost demand for the education they provide through an increase in local incomes.

# Establishing an Arkansan State Bank

Chirag Lala, Hendrix College

Arkansas should establish a public state bank, modeled on the Bank of North Dakota, to sustainably finance small businesses, local banks, and critical development projects.

The model for state banks is the Bank of North Dakota (BND). Founded in 1919, the BND lends primarily to community banks to increase their lending capacity and partially absorb risk from their investments.<sup>1</sup> As a result, North Dakota has a local lending per capita rate four times the national average,<sup>2</sup> and the BND maintains a return on equity of 25 to 26 percent.<sup>3</sup> By expanding lending to small businesses and local development projects, the BND returned \$300 million to the state general fund in the past decade.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, North Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 2.6 percent.<sup>5</sup> Based on this model, sixteen states have proposed bills to study or create banks.<sup>6</sup>

The National Highway System Designation Act (NHS Act) of 1995 established a pilot program of State Infrastructure Banks (SIBs).<sup>7</sup> Utilizing Federal capitalization grants, the SIBs use various lending measures—including revolving funds—to fund infrastructure in a more targeted manner than traditional Federal reimbursement grants.<sup>8</sup> Arkansas established a joint-SIB with Tennessee in 1997 but Arkansas' loan agreement only totaled \$31,000.<sup>9</sup>

### ANALYSIS

The primary advantage of a state bank is offering recyclable and profitable investments to local businesses and projects without the need for immediate profit maximization, thereby reducing interest rates and the need for repeated state expenditures. The state's

### **KEY FACTS**

• Arkansas schools require an estimated \$4.5 billion in infrastructure funds while the annual outlay for schools was only \$1.5 billion between 2005 and 2008.<sup>15</sup>

- Arkansas needs an additional \$5.3 billion to improve drinking water infrastructure in the next 20 years<sup>16</sup>
- In Arkansas, 2,929 bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.<sup>17</sup>

economy would benefit from increased lending by community banks with access to cheap loans and clearing services from a state bank.<sup>10</sup> During a recession, the bank's lending could counteract the decrease in private lending and provide much needed stimulus to the state's economy while reducing pressure on state aid.<sup>11</sup>

The bank would hold public funds and offer low-interest loans, so borrowing costs for municipalities would decrease, while interest income could go directly to the state or to future investment.<sup>12</sup> Federal funds and public-private partnerships would lessen the chances of profit loss and the state could withdraw funding if necessary.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Commercial banks with main offices in Arkansas, collectively holding over \$50 billion in assets, represent prime sources of capital to be tapped and would benefit immensely from the services a state bank could provide.<sup>13</sup> Small businesses, contractors, and developers in Arkansas would directly benefit from any renewed or expanded lending from invigorated local banks. The BND demonstrates that public banks do not compete with local banks; since less than 2 percent of BND deposits come from consumers. Instead, local businesses and banks give the BND strong political support.<sup>14</sup>

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Long term projects that are not immediately profitable such as school repair, water works, or infrastructure investment would finally receive adequate funds.

• An Arkansan state bank would provide community banks and local businesses with a cheaper source of credit and investment than Wall Street firms.

• By holding public funds and providing low cost loans, the bank would reduce state and local borrowing costs and provide the state with profits and interest income for reinvestment into new projects.

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## NEXT STEPS

The State Bank of Arkansas (SBA) should be chartered directly via legislation and regulated by the existing State Bank Department. Along with an initial capitalization of \$250 million to \$750 million from state revenue or bond issues, all state funds should be deposited in the SBA. The same option should be offered to local banks and municipalities. The SBA should also incentivize individuals and businesses to deposit their money in local banks. Arkansas should guarantee all deposits.

In addition, the state should subsequently direct smaller portions of its tax revenues, profit from the bank, and Federal aid back into the bank to increase its funds further each fiscal year. These funds should be loaned to projects on a meritocratic basis with interest rates based on potential risk and contingency measures prepared for delays or failure.

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# **ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**



Policy of the Year Nominee

PROMOTING ACTIVE LEARNING: THE BENEFITS OF FLIPPED CLASSROOMS



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# WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# <mark>Wнат</mark> You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

# How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# **WELCOME**

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director

# Congratulations to

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*author of* Promoting Active Learning: The Benefits of Flipped Classrooms

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A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 PROMOTING ACCESS TO MUSIC EDUCATION IN PENNSYLVANIA Michael Donnay
- CURBING LOCAL HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING THROUGH SEX EDUCATION Sarah M. Estrela
- 15 CREATING UNIVERSAL COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNTS FOR HUMBOLDT COUNTY KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS Raúl Gardea
- 17 SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Alliances Combating STEM Apathy Cayley Heller
- 21 PROMOTING ACTIVE LEARNING: THE BENEFITS OF FLIPPED CLASSROOMS Eric Henshall
- 23 WHY SUMMER MATTERS IN KEEPING KIDS SMART Shaun Kleber

#### One State, One Rate:

- <sup>26</sup> IN-STATE TUITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS Dory MacMillan
- 29 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IN PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS Emily Cerciello and Muad Hrezi

### ESTABLISHING EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL

- 32 OPPORTUNITIES IN WAKE COUNTY Hassan Nasif, Jason Guo, Joe Swanson, Sinthu Ramalingam, Kelsey Mullin, Samantha Geary, and Katie Draper
- 34 FOSTERING LIFELONG WELLNESS THROUGH NUTRITION EDUCATION Merelis Ortiz

# PROMOTING ACCESS TO MUSIC EDUCATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

Michael Donnay, Georgetown University

To expand access to quality music education, Pennsylvania should group its public school districts into clusters to share resources for music education.

Despite overwhelming evidence that music education improves both standardized test scores and mastery in subjects such as mathematics, historically arts education and, more specifically, music programs are among the first to be cut during a budget crisis.<sup>1,2</sup> Due to the recent recession, many states have provided less support for public education, and consequently funding for music in public schools has decreased as well.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the School District of Philadelphia recently cut music programs for all 131,362 of its students.<sup>4</sup>

A promising mechanism for providing music education at a low cost has been developed in Haverford Township School District, in Haverford, Pa., where the district pays for two full-time instructors who rotate throughout the district during the week. This solution cuts down on the number of staff members required without compromising music education.<sup>5</sup> Under such a system, once a week all of the instrumental students are bused to the high school where they rehearse as a group with their instructors. These systems at the elementary level help foster award-winning high school music ensembles, as well as SAT scores that are 100 points higher than the state average.<sup>67,8</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Pennsylvania can build off of Haverford's model for music education by organizing school districts into clusters and establishing a framework

### **KEY FACTS**

 It costs a school district \$65,000 a year to employ a music teacher, an average of \$5,000 more than a standard classroom teacher.<sup>9</sup>

• Given that a quality music program employs an average of one music teacher per 375 students, a district of 5,000 students could save \$455,000 a year by partnering with another district.<sup>9,10</sup>

• Over 75 percent of school districts in Pennsylvania cut music funding for the 2013-14 school year." for inter-district collaboration around music education. These clusters would pool resources across districts, thereby allowing districts to feasibly split costs. By clustering districts, resources can be drawn from multiple revenue streams, easing the burden on individual school districts while simultaneously increasing access to music education. Clusters would share music teachers-whose salaries in Pennsylvania run about \$65,000-and instruments, which often cost hundreds of dollars each.<sup>9</sup> In a cluster of only two districts sharing 14 teachers each district would save \$455,000 a year in salary alone.<sup>5</sup> Haverford's model is based on student enrollment, not the number of schools in the district; consequently, it can scale to fit any size of cluster. Within these inter-district clusters teachers would rotate among districts during the week, with instruments being distributed based on need. As long as districts properly coordinate, there should be no issue with sharing larger instruments or undue stress on instructors. This model would allow school districts to reap the benefits of music education at reduced cost

This program will benefit the thousands of Pennsylvania public school students currently facing cuts to their musical education.' By lowering the overall cost of music programs, districts will be able to expand their music offerings without increasing spending. District superintendents, school principals, and current music teachers will be the primary implementers of this program. Due to the inter-district nature of this policy, it cannot succeed without a framework provided by the state Department of Education. It is crucial that the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) collaborate closely with government officials to develop such a framework.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Students who receive a quality music education score higher in math and reading comprehension.<sup>2</sup>

• By allowing districts to share the cost of their music programs, more Pennsylvania students will be exposed to a quality music education at a lower cost to individual districts. teacher.aspx?id=8363>.

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## NEXT STEPS

Once the Department of Education has laid out a framework for cooperation, school districts themselves will have to work out logistics. Working with the PMEA and districts that have quality music programs, participating districts will need to map out the details of collaboration. Questions to be considered include: What kind of schedule will be required? How will districts communicate about workloads and responsibilities? How will the teachers be paid? How will instruments be stored and shared among students? The Department of Education will facilitate conversations among districts as they work out these issues, allowing districts to share best practices. These ongoing conversations will guide the program as it moves forward.

# CURBING LOCAL HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING THROUGH SEX EDUCATION

Sarah M. Estrela, Wheaton College (MA)

To help eradicate human sex trafficking in the United States, pre-existing school-based sex education programs should be expanded to include information on the warning signs and dangers of sex trafficking.

Human sex trafficking, known as modern-day slavery, is a much larger issue in the US than most Americans realize. Unfortunately, 83 percent of sex trafficking victims identified in the US are US citizens-not foreigners, as widely believed-who have been forced into a form of slavery.<sup>1</sup> Though its definition is not universally agreed upon, US federal law defines sex trafficking as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age."<sup>2</sup> Further, this crime does not discriminate in any way; victims can be of any age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or religious belief.<sup>3</sup>

Sex trafficking predominantly affects the most vulnerable members of society: women and children.<sup>4</sup> Traffickers approach children in a variety of settings, but one of their prime targets is after school.<sup>5</sup> The US Department of Homeland Security estimates that as many as 100,000 to 300,000 American children are at risk of being trafficked for commercial sex.<sup>6</sup> Most targeted children become victims around the start of puberty.<sup>7</sup>

Public schools have pre-existing mechanisms for sex education, so one way to combat sex

### **KEY FACTS**

• The average age a child is trafficked into the commercial sex trade is 11 to 14 years old.<sup>19</sup>

• As many as 100,000 to 300,000 children are estimated to be at risk of being trafficked in the US each year.<sup>20</sup> trafficking across the US is the inclusion of information about sex trafficking within these curricula. There are currently two main types of sex education offered to public school children: comprehensive and abstinence-only. Comprehensive sex education teaches children about pregnancy, contraception, STI prevention techniques, domestic violence, and sexual assault.<sup>8</sup> Abstinence-only sex education stresses the importance of waiting to engage in sexual activity until marriage.<sup>9</sup> The type of education students receive is dependent upon the legislation of the state in which they reside. Twenty-two states, as well as the District of Columbia, require that public schools teach their students about sex education.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, sex trafficking is currently excluded from both these curricula.

Non-profit organizations such as the Polaris Project and government initiatives like the Blue Campaign already actively educate school administrators and teachers to raise awareness, but extending this information to students and their families could make a significant difference in reducing sex trafficking."

### ANALYSIS

According to the US Department of Education, human trafficking is "one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, with traffickers generating billions of dollars in profits each year."12 However, inexpensive resources, effective education, and the collaborative efforts of the community can help cripple it. Over \$75 million in federal funds have already been allocated toward comprehensive sex education under the Obama administration, and an additional \$24.5 million have been allocated to domestic anti-trafficking agencies under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008.<sup>13</sup> In 2012, the Polaris Project operated on a budget of almost \$7.3 million, with almost \$2.9 million to spare.<sup>14</sup> The available budget and the expenses of current sex traf-

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Incorporating sex trafficking into all sex education curricula will empower our children with the necessary knowledge to protect themselves should they become endangered in this way.<sup>21</sup>

• In December 2013, President Obama proclaimed January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month for the fifth consecutive year, and called upon "every nation, every community, and every individual to fight human trafficking wherever it exists."<sup>22</sup> ficking prevention programs demonstrate that this policy is both feasible and highly affordable. Since this is a relatively low-cost initiative, enough funding and resources can be secured through federal grants, fundraising, and careful budgeting. The sex trafficking industry relies heavily on its victims and is pervasive due to its overwhelming \$32 billion annual worth. Thus, reducing the number of potential victims is crucial to crippling local sex trafficking circuits.<sup>15</sup> Educating children, families, and members of the community will make this business unsustainable and easier to eradicate.

This policy can be feasibly executed because of the work of existing organizations committed to eradicating human trafficking. By incorporating the exhaustive research and detailed information these organizations possess into the proposed sex education curricula, children will be equipped with the most effective ways to prevent themselves from becoming victims. Non-profit organizations that oppose human trafficking have already developed workshops and seminars geared toward educating those who know little about the issue but want to be informed.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security's initiative, the Blue Campaign, also works alongside school administrators and local authorities to provide comprehensive information on how to protect children from sex traffickers.<sup>17</sup>

### STAKEHOLDERS/AUDIENCE:

While this policy primarily benefits the children who will be educated, a positive impact will inevitably be made on communities nationwide. Families whose children are equipped with this knowledge will be preserved, communities will become significantly safer, and current victims may even be provided the help they need. While this policy would have to be passed on a state level, its implementation would also require the cooperation and collective efforts of local governments, local school administrations, representatives from NGOs that specialize in the opposition of human trafficking, and researchers committed to this cause.

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# **Next Steps**

The first step in implementing this policy is to develop a sex trafficking curriculum suitable for all levels of public school education. To accomplish this, the cooperation of existing non-profit organizations and government agencies is necessary. Their research, resources, and staff will help shape effective curricula that address specific sex trafficking issues in their local communities. Once a curriculum is developed, states will need to seek funding for the execution of such programs. The US Department of Justice, as well as many other agencies, issue annual grants to programs working to eradicate sex trafficking.<sup>18</sup>

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of this program, its progress should be measured and recorded. Tracking the number of children participating in these programs in relation to the number of those trafficked in a given community will help all parties involved target potential problems and generate new ideas. This curriculum should be revised annually to ensure that curricula include the most updated information.

# CREATING UNIVERSAL COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNTS FOR HUMBOLDT COUNTY KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Raúl Gardea, Humboldt State University

To encourage parents to start saving early for their children's higher education, Humboldt County should automatically open savings accounts for all incoming kindergarten students.

A college education remains a near-universal aspiration for most families. Among parents of children ages 17 or younger,

Among parents of children ages 1/ or younger, 94 percent say they expect their children to attend college.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as tuition costs continue to rise, parents will have to shoulder the increasing expense of higher education. This is exacerbated in California by the recent increase in childhood poverty.<sup>2</sup> In Humboldt County alone, the number of children living below the poverty line is 21.4 percent.<sup>3</sup>

Research shows that children with savings are seven times more likely to attend college than those without.<sup>4</sup> In 2010, the city of San Francisco introduced the Kindergarten to College (K2C) program, which opened savings accounts for 1,000 incoming kindergarten students. The city provided initial seed money and then devised incentives such as matching contributions to promote steady saving habits. These incentives were made possible through public-private partnerships and contributions from community organizations, businesses, financial institutions, and individuals.

As Humboldt County transitions from a natural resources-based economy to a service-based economy, it is imperative that families start planning for the future. Although specific details need to be identified at the local level for successful implementation in a rural community

### **KEY FACTS**

• San Francisco's Kindergarten to College program provides a case study about implementing such an account structure.<sup>7</sup>

• Automatic enrollment in social programs helps increase their adoption, a key difference between this local initiative and more common college savings accounts.<sup>8</sup> such as Humboldt County, K2C provides a framework to incentivize higher education saving in underprivileged communities.

#### ANALYSIS

This savings account structure should guarantee eligibility for any kindergarten student enrolled in a public school. It would be universal and automatically opened upon enrollment. Parents have the ability to opt-out. Research shows that the adoption of social programs is increased by default or automatic enrollment.<sup>5</sup> Students eligible for subsidized lunches—a common metric for identifying low-income households—should receive a larger initial deposit. First-generation and lower-income families may lack documentation or sufficient financial literacy thus creating new barriers that might complicate applying for loans and scholarships. Therefore, any prospective administrative barriers must be minimized.

Establishing a sound and sustainable endowment for this program is crucial for its long-term solvency. A potential strategy might be the development of a Pay for Success Bond. These bonds are public-private partnerships where investors provide capital for public programs and are repaid upon achieving a mutually agreedon social outcome.<sup>6</sup> This would place the brunt of risk on private investors and ease taxpayer concerns over the funding of new initiatives with scant public funds.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Among parents of children ages 17 or younger, 94 percent say they expect their child (or children) to attend college but only 53 percent of these parents say they are already saving.<sup>9</sup>

• The increase of childhood poverty coupled with a rapidly transitioning economy means it is imperative that students are well prepared with the skills to compete in the future Humboldt workforce. 7. Bevans, Jade Shipman. "Children's Education Savings Accounts:A Case Study of San Francisco's Kindergarten to College Program." EARN Institute. 2013. http://www.earn.org/static/uploads/files/K2C\_Practitioners\_Report\_.pdf . Curie. "The Take-Up of Social Benefits." 9.

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# NEXT STEPS

While this program must be adapted to the needs of Humboldt County, models like San Francisco's K2C are an invaluable reference. There are several components already in place that could be revamped to accommodate this program. Savings accounts like Umpqua Bank's Learn 2 Earn can be expanded to offer universal access. The Decade of Difference community development initiative could seamlessly integrate this program as a classroom tool for teaching financial literacy—one of its stated goals. Local education and economic development non-profit organizations could help define the scope of such an initiative. The California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University could assist in identifying target schools and conducting scientific surveys with parent focus groups. Local banks and credit unions could help design the incentives to promote steady saving.

Obtaining support from teachers, administrators, community leaders in the public and private sector, and parents will be crucial in designing and implementing a program to meet the specific needs of a rural economy.

## SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Alliances Combating STEM Apathy

Cayley Heller, Cornell University

To keep students engaged in STEM fields and to better prepare them for STEM-based careers, school districts should partner with community organizations to create project-based learning and internship opportunities.

It has been more than 30 years since the publication of A Nation at Risk sparked a push to move past "mediocrity" in our education system, particularly in STEM. Yet, even after a series of reforms, STEM education still has much to be improved. According to the National Science Foundation, students in the US are decreasingly choosing STEM majors, while the demand for them in the labor market is ever-increasing.<sup>1</sup> Even with choice aside, a mere 30 percent of high school graduates are ready to tackle science at the college level.<sup>2</sup>

Those examining disengagement with STEM fields, particularly among women, cite two main factors underlying the decision to pursue a STEM major: a) personal capabilities and preparedness and b) an interest in the discipline. Jan Cuny, Program Director for the National Science Foundation's Computing Education for the 21st Century, asserts this lack of engagement among girls comes from popular misconceptions about STEM fields. That they are "too hard," "geeky," "require a single-minded 24/7 focus," or that the fields "provide little benefit to society."<sup>3</sup>

There have been numerous recommendations aimed at improving STEM education, including producing more and better STEM teachers and increasing the rigor of the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> However, many of the suggestions address only one facet of the problem. City governments should invest in fostering school-community partnerships for project-based learning and internship opportunities, which would work best to address all sides of the problem. Providing real life problems and resources would create a more rigorous environment. Moreover, increasing the level of interactivity, practicality, and applicability will also increase engagement and retain students in the field, particularly those traditionally underrepresented such as females and minorities.

### ANALYSIS

Surveys suggest that opportunities for practical learning experiences are correlated with higher school retention rates and higher paying wages for students when they eventually graduate.<sup>5</sup> A Brandeis University study suggests that students

### **KEY FACTS**

• Five percent of American graduates majored in engineering, as compared to 12 percent of European graduates and 20 percent of Asian students."

• Women in the US earn, on average, 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. Getting more women in STEM careers has been shown to help reduce inequality of pay.<sup>12</sup>

• There will be a predicted 1.2 million US job openings in STEM fields by 2018, with a lack of qualified candidates<sup>13</sup> who participate in hands-on STEM learning experiences are nearly twice as likely to major in a science or engineering field.<sup>6</sup>

One of the core arguments against the movement towards project-based learning is that it makes it more difficult to comply with state standards and evaluate student progress and learning. Existing programs, such as MC2 (Metropolitan Cleveland Consortium) STEM High School, have created new programming that complies with state standards and found that businesses have suggestions for curriculum relevant to both careers and state standards. It is also important to note that current standards and means of evaluation are not necessarily all-encompassing, and the movement towards more project-based learning might open up alternative forms of evaluation.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• High school students are graduating unprepared and uninterested in pursuing STEM fields.

• The need for STEM is growing, with women and minorities continuously underrepresented.

• Community partnerships for internships and project-based learning will engage more students, particularly groups that are underrepresented, in the field.

# NEXT STEPS

In order to cultivate stronger, more engaging STEM education, there are a number of measures that must be taken. It is vital that relationships are cultivated between schools and local higher education institutions, museums, research centers, nonprofits, and businesses. The partnership between the Westbury Union Free School District and AAR Aircraft Component Services is a prime example, with the relationship benefiting disadvantaged students through exposure to STEM fields and benefiting AAR with possible future employees.<sup>7</sup> Another example is P-TECH in Brooklyn, which, through an alliance between New York Public Schools and IBM, allows students to pursue an Associate's degree in a STEM field and graduate with direct connections to IBM jobs. The opening of P-TECHinspired schools in Chicago has proven the model to be replicable.<sup>8</sup>

MC2 serves as another excellent model. MC2 provides access to internships and project-based learning opportunities, allowing students the chance to see what STEM careers are like and to gain experience that might help them choose a future path. The hands-on experience gets students out of the textbook rut, engaging them more in their studies. This can help students understand the relevance of what they are learning and see the link between their education and future, all while complying with Ohio Academic Content Standards.<sup>9</sup>

City governments and local educational agencies can encourage organizations to participate for goodwill and can also subsidize internships and programs that are created as part of co-operative education partnerships with local districts. Organizations like PENCIL should be used to facilitate school-business partnerships and student fellowships in STEM fields.<sup>10</sup> The partnerships should begin with high school programming, where the benefits are most directly visible to the partners. Once the partnerships are grounded, programs can be expanded to include elementary and middle schools.

Using existing models for programs and partnerships, city governments should incentivize connections between businesses and public education institutions. A model should be built to share curriculums and tested programs, to assist teachers and faculty, and to facilitate the transition in the classroom.

# PROMOTING ACTIVE LEARNING: THE BENEFITS OF FLIPPED CLASSROOMS

Eric Henshall, Georgetown University

Public high schools in Washington, D.C., should promote flipped classrooms, in which students view online lectures as homework and devote class time to guided problem solving and group work.

Despite its prevalence in high schools and universities across the country, the lecture is an ineffective method of instruction. Students are only able to focus actively for 15 to 20 minutes, so a large portion of the lecture is not a productive use of students' time.<sup>1</sup>

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is often seen as the epitome of failing schools in America, a view that is supported by many criteria for academic success.<sup>2</sup> With a graduation rate of 58 percent and less than half of its students scoring proficient or higher on standardized tests, DCPS high schools are excellent candidates to switch to flipped learning, a program that has been shown to increase test scores and graduation rates.<sup>3</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Flipped classrooms can be effective when they promote active learning, which is more effective than passive learning.<sup>4</sup> In a flipped classroom, the teacher facilitates group work and problem solving, allowing students to work at their own pace and review lectures at home. This teaching style avoids a "one-size-fits-all" approach to education, allowing teachers to adapt their instructional styles to meet the needs of their students.<sup>5</sup> Clintondale High School demonstrates that flipped classrooms can also lead to more students staying in school and attending

### **KEY FACTS**

• Sixty-six percent of teachers using flipped classrooms reported increases in standardized test scores.<sup>10</sup>

• After implementing flipped learning, Clintondale High School's math failure rate dropped from 44 percent to 13 percent, while disciplinary incidents fell 74 percent in two years." college. Clintondale's college attendance and graduation rates rose to 80 percent and more than 90 percent, respectively, after flipping all its classes.<sup>6</sup>

Flipped classrooms improve student performance at little cost because they do not require any additional resources beyond a laptop, which DCPS already supplies to teachers, and a computer lab for students.<sup>7</sup> DCPS should provide workshops and information for instructors to assist them in transitioning from the traditional teaching model. The expenses would be negligible because organizations such as the Flipped Learning Network already offer webinars and other resources at no cost.<sup>8</sup>

Despite promising results, flipped classrooms may be unfeasible in places where many students do not have regular access to the internet, especially in rural communities. Schools should ensure that they provide computer labs and time in the day for students who do not have access to the internet at home to view online lectures: however, such a system could be costly and less effective if most students need to use school computers daily. Despite their initial costs, computer labs have few recurring costs and thus flipped classrooms remain relatively cost-effective. While flipped learning is not a panacea for failing schools, it is a simple and efficient way to improve student performance that all schools should consider.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Research demonstrates that active learning is more effective than passive learning.<sup>4</sup>

• Teachers in flipped classrooms report improvement in test scores.<sup>10</sup>

• Flipped learning addresses failing schools and dropouts with little additional cost. October 9, 2013. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/turning-education-upside-down/.

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# NEXT STEPS

Teachers can immediately switch to flipped learning by using resources such as Khan Academy, a non-profit organization that provides free educational videos online, or recording their own lectures to customize their curriculum. DCPS should initiate a pilot program in select high schools by implementing flipped classrooms in math, science, and history classes. Flipping these particular subjects has clear benefits in each class: math classes will have more time to solve problems, science classes can allow for additional laboratory experiments, and history classes will be able to devote additional time to class discussions. Teachers and administrators can monitor the progress of students in these flipped classes, and if successful, DCPS should offer students the option of attending flipped classes in all core subjects at every public high school. Additionally, due to the lack of rigorous scientific studies on flipped classrooms, DCPS should commission a study on their effectiveness to provide further details on the program's benefits.<sup>9</sup>

# WHY SUMMER MATTERS IN KEEPING Kids Smart

Shaun Kleber - University of Georgia

The Clarke County School District in Athens, Georgia, should provide monthly bus transportation during the summer for low-income students to local libraries, enabling them to access books they would otherwise lack. Summer learning loss is the phenomenon of children losing knowledge during the summer vacation. Low-income students suffer most, specifically in reading achievement, due to their lack of access to enrichment opportunities and resources. The problem is especially severe in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, because of the high poverty rate.<sup>1</sup> Summer learning loss also creates an ever-expanding achievement gap between low- and higher-income students<sup>2</sup> that presents myriad problems as students progress through school, including higher dropout rates for low-income students.<sup>3</sup>

A nonprofit organization called Books for Keeps provides 12 books to each student at the seven elementary schools in the Clarke County School District (CCSD) with the highest poverty rates, but that still leaves 3,723 elementary school students–2,541 of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunches–without books through this program.<sup>4</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Providing effective summer enrichment programs can cost more than \$2,000 per child,<sup>5</sup> and the proposed policy would cost far less while being equally or more effective. The deputy superintendent of CCSD said the district would be willing to provide buses for this program, but would be unable to absorb the cost. The base price to use a bus is \$225, and the price goes up for each stop. If all students at the target schools were to participate in this program, it would cost more than \$11,700 each day, depending on how many stops were necessary.

However, a more reasonable estimate is that fewer students would participate, and the base cost would be significantly lower than that.<sup>6</sup> For this relatively modest price, the proposed policy could solve—or at least significantly reduce—the problem of summer learning loss

### **KEY FACTS**

• The average American middle-income child has access to 12 books over the summer, compared to about one book for every 355 low-income children.<sup>10</sup>

- The childhood poverty rate for children in Athens-Clarke County is 25.2 percent, compared to the Georgia average of 16.7 percent. It is the fifth poorest county in the country."
- Reading 12 books during the summer has been shown to be as effective as summer school in raising reading scores, and the effect is large enough to offset summer learning loss.<sup>12</sup>

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Summer learning loss creates an achievement gap that can leave lowincome students years behind their peers.<sup>13</sup>

• Summer learning loss is most severe among low-income students because they lack equal access to enrichment resources and opportunities.

• Providing low-income students transportation to libraries is a costeffective way to ensure equal access to books.

### NEXT STEPS

CCSD should seek outside funding for bus transportation. Dollar General,<sup>7</sup> Target,<sup>8</sup> and other companies, as well as the US Department of Education<sup>9</sup> offer grants for programs aimed at helping struggling readers develop literacy skills. The primary option for sustainable funding should come from the school district, but their tight budget has made them unable to put any funds toward this program currently. If it proves to be effective, however, it is possible the district would allocate funds in the future. The total amount needed would depend on the number of students participating. The district should survey parents and students to gauge potential participation and then determine where each participant lives to design the bus routes in such a way as to minimize costs.

# ONE STATE, ONE RATE: IN-STATE TUITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Dory MacMillan, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Undocumented students<sup>1</sup> who graduate from North Carolina high schools should be eligible for in-state tuition at North Carolina's public colleges.

Each year, 1,500 undocumented students graduate from high schools in North Carolina with the dream of attending college.<sup>2</sup> *Plyler v. Doe* guarantees these students the right to attend public K-12 schools<sup>3</sup>; undocumented students, however, are not guaranteed the right to attend a public college and they face many financial obstacles to make their college dreams a reality.

North Carolina's public colleges admit undocumented students, but these students do not receive the substantial financial benefits that come with attending a public college. Federal law prohibits them from obtaining federal financial aid<sup>4</sup> and North Carolina's policies prohibit them from obtaining state financial aid.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, North Carolina's policies require them to pay the higher out-of-state tuition rate.<sup>6</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Requiring undocumented students to pay outof-state tuition is unfair. First, North Carolina's in-state tuition rate, which averages \$7,694 per year, is much less than North Carolina's out-ofstate tuition rate, which averages \$28,446 per year.<sup>7</sup> This higher out-of-state tuition rate makes it financially difficult for undocumented students to afford higher education. Second, undocumented students should not suffer because their parents illegally brought them to the US.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Eighteen states allow undocumented students to pay the in-state tuition rate for public colleges.<sup>13</sup>

• "One State, One Rate" makes undocumented students in North Carolina eligible for in-state tuition rates if they have (1) graduated from a North Carolina high school; (2) attended school in the United States for at least 6 years; and (3) signed an affidavit that they are seeking legal resident status. Third, undocumented students who have been raised in the US have been legally educated in this country. Lastly, undocumented students are more likely to drop out of high school and become dependent on government support if their college opportunities are limited.

Board of Governors Policy 700.1.4 states that undocumented students are to be considered out-of-State students for the purpose of "calculating the 18 percent cap" on freshman from outside of North Carolina. Receiving acceptance from the university system colleges out of state is more difficult because a smaller percentage is accepted; thus, undocumented students, despite growing up in North Carolina, are faced with greater obstacles in gaining admittance. Similarly, the State board of Community Colleges Code 1D SBCCC 400.2 (b) mandates that undocumented students are considered out-of-state students (even if they were raised in North Carolina) for tuition purposes.

It is much more expensive to pay out-of-state tuition rates, which is another deterrent for undocumented students seeking to advance their education.<sup>8</sup>

### **STAKEHOLDERS:**

The most important stakeholders are undocumented students in North Carolina. "One State, One Rate" benefits undocumented students by allowing them to pay North Carolina's lower in-state tuition rate. This policy does not, however, alter their legal status or make them eligible for federal financial aid.

North Carolina citizens are also stakeholders. Various studies indicate that "households headed by a person with a bachelor's degree earn approximately \$1.6 billion more in a 60 year period than families headed by an individual with only a high school diploma."9

### **KEY FACTS**

 Approximately 1,500 undocumented students graduate from North Carolina high schools each year.<sup>n</sup>

• Current North Carolina policies require undocumented students to pay the higher outof-state tuition rate at public colleges.

• High school dropouts cost states \$316 billion in lost wages.<sup>12</sup> By allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, fewer undocumented students will drop out of high school. Policy makers in the North Carolina state legislature, the Board of Governors, and the State Board of Community Colleges are the stakeholders who will institute the changes required by this policy.

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### NEXT STEPS

Board of Governors Policy 700.1.4 and the State Board of Community Colleges Code 1D SBCCC 400.2(b) need to be repealed and replaced with "One State, One Rate."

First, organizers need support from politicians and grassroots advocacy organizations. Organizers could team up with local DREAM Act advocacy organizations, such as Action NC, and NC DREAM Team. Second, organizers should consider how other states passed their in-state tuition policies for undocumented students, learn from those states' mistakes, and build on the advocacy strategies and policies that worked.

With the proper planning, advocacy, and grassroots support, "One State, One Rate" can become a reality for undocumented students in North Carolina. Under this policy, undocumented students would be eligible for the in-state tuition rate at North Carolina's public colleges if they have: (1) graduated from an accredited North Carolina high school; (2) attended primary or secondary school in the US for at least six years before applying to college; and (3) signed an affidavit that they have either applied for legal resident status or will do so.<sup>10</sup>

# Mental Health First Aid in Pennsylvania Public Schools

Emily Cerciello & Muad Hrezi - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Public school teachers in Pennsylvania should receive Continuing Professional Education credit for completing the Mental Health First Aid program to promote early detection and treatment of mental illness.

Every day, children and adolescents living with mental illness struggle to access basic treatment resources. Currently, one in five youth meets criteria for a mental disorder<sup>1</sup> but only half of affected children received treatment in the last year.<sup>2</sup> Common mental disorders, including anxiety, mood, behavioral, and substance use disorders, often emerge in childhood and adolescence.<sup>3</sup> There exists an average 8 to 10 year gap between onset of symptoms and treatment interventions,<sup>4</sup> which is costly for both taxpayers and the health care system.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an interactive 8-hour training program that aims to help the public identify, understand, and react to signs of mental illness, or reduce the harm that an individual may cause to themselves or others when having a mental health crisis.<sup>5</sup> MHFA strives to increase knowledge and confidence, reduce stigma, and improve the effectiveness of a community in connecting individuals with unmet mental health needs to treatment resources.<sup>6</sup>

MHFA shows great promise for educators. At a Canadian University, educator training in *Mental Health First Aid* resulted in a knowledge increase of between 18 and 32 percentage points in every category of mental illness, and a 30 percent increase in confidence to react to a mental health crisis.<sup>7</sup> A course for high school teachers

### **KEY FACTS**

• In Pennsylvania, 118,000 educators serve 1.8 million public school students daily.<sup>17,18</sup>

- One in five youth currently meets criteria for a mental disorder.<sup>19</sup>
- Half of mental illnesses in children remain untreated each year.<sup>20</sup>
- The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion annually.<sup>21</sup>

in Australia increased teachers' knowledge, reduced stigma, and increased confidence in providing help to students.<sup>8</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Public school teachers in Pennsylvania should receive Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit for completing the *Mental Health First Aid* program. Act 48 of 1999 requires all Pennsylvania educators with public school certification to complete 180 hours of CPE every five years to remain certified.<sup>9</sup> Educators can meet these hours by pursuing collegiate study, completing approved CPE courses, or attending relevant trainings and conferences.<sup>10</sup> Included are courses or noncredit activities in the areas of student health and safe and supportive schools,<sup>11</sup> under which MHFA would qualify.

If MHFA training reaches just 5 percent of Pennsylvania educators, the program will affect 90,000 students.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 360,000 Pennsylvania students experience some form of mental illness, with an estimated half of these cases remaining untreated.<sup>13</sup> Currently, MHFA training is provided free of charge by several community organizations in southeastern Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup> MHFA is a practical and economical solution for Pennsylvania youth, as every \$1 invested in mental health treatment saves \$3 to \$8 in reduced criminal activity and hospitalizations.<sup>15</sup> Amid a \$55 million cut to Pennsylvania's mental health programs in 2012<sup>16</sup> and continued cost pressures in 2013, investing in early identification and treatment can save money for the state while improving outcomes for vulnerable public school students.

### **ENDNOTES**

#### TALKING POINTS

• The U.S. Surgeon General considers schools to be a major setting for the potential recognition of mental disorders in children and adolescents.<sup>22</sup>

• Mental Health First Aid increases teachers' ability to recognize signs of mental illness and provides strategies to connect students to treatment resources.<sup>23</sup>

• Incentivizing teachers to complete MHFA by receiving CPE credit is a cost-effective solution for Pennsylvania's struggling mental health system.

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## NEXT STEPS

First, the Pennsylvania Department of Education must recognize MHFA as an approved CPE course to incentivize educator attendance. Second, the number of MHFA trainings and enrollment capacities for trainings must increase. To lay the foundation for sustainable success, implementation must begin at the grassroots level, with mental health advocates and educators contacting legislators and the Department of Education to recognize the *Mental Health First Aid* program as an approved CPE option.

## ESTABLISHING EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN WAKE COUNTY

Hassan Nasif, Jason Guo, Joe Swanson, Sinthu Ramalingam, Kelsey Mullin, Samantha Geary, and Katie Draper, Wake Forest University

To afford equal access to education for high school students in Wake County, the Wake County Public School System should establish a career center accessible to all high school students that provides access to both upper level and career-technical courses.

In 2000, the Wake County Board approved a school assignment plan that aimed to create greater socio-economic diversity. However, by 2010, the Wake County Board of Education voted to end this plan reverting back to neighborhood school assignment plans.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, these new enrollment programs have concentrated students of low socioeconomic backgrounds at particular schools, which lead to a lack of resources at these schools as well as a reduction of classes offered.<sup>2</sup> For example, Green Hope High School is relatively affluent, with only 5.8 percent of students qualified for free and reduced meals. Knightdale High School is less affluent, with 53.6 percent of students qualified for free and reduced meals. During the 2011/2012 school year, 12 percent of students at Green Hope High School were in Advanced College Prep Courses, but only 4 percent of students were in these classes at Knightdale High School. 3,4,5

The most effective solution to this problem is installing a conveniently located center that provides Advanced Placement (AP) and Career-Technical classes to students regardless of their assigned high schools. This allows students to take courses that are otherwise not acces-

### **KEY FACTS**

• With more than 1,000 students taking AP courses, about 750 enrolled in CTE courses, and 150 students in specialty courses, the Forsyth County Career Center has not catered to a single profile or specific educational track.<sup>9</sup>

• In the 2012 round of AP examinations, students at the Forsyth County Career Center exceeded both state and national averages in the percentage of students achieving a score of 3 or more in 29 of the 31 exams offered.<sup>10</sup> sible to them at their assigned school. Having access to these courses enables students to experience college-level material or classes that provide students the technical skills needed to enter the work force.

Forsyth County in North Carolina has used this system very successfully for more than 30 years. Forsyth County shares Wake County's challenge of providing equal opportunity to a community highly segregated by race and income level. Though Forsyth County only boasts a student population of 53,367 students compared to Wake County's 144,173 student, Forsyth County still had to overcome the difficulty of equally serving a wide range of socio-economic demographics.<sup>6,7</sup> The Career Center in Forsyth County serves as a model for the center to be established in Wake County.

### ANALYSIS

Under the Forsyth County Career Center model, students who choose to take a course at the center become part of two high school communities, attending class both at their assigned school and at the Career Center.

The biggest obstacles for a career center in Wake County would be funding for transportation, construction, and establishing a relationship between public schools and the Career Center. In Forsyth County, buses are available from every high school to and from the Career Center, which is fully funded by the county.<sup>8</sup> Wake County should also cover transportation costs. The school board would also need to clarify the nature of the connection between the Career Center and the schools.

The Career Center would benefit most, if not every, student attending Wake County Public Schools since students would have a larger selection of courses that would help prepare them for various futures. The Career Center would

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• If Wake County were to establish an initial career center, it would be a long-term investment for its school system, which would result in higher student achievement and countywide improvements in the quality of education for students from lower income areas.

 A career center would bring students from different communities together, creating a diverse environment based on students' goals rather than their home addresses. bestow a larger benefit upon lower income students since their assigned schools had fewer opportunities.

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# NEXT STEPS

to its resources. This may involve building multiple centers, or choosing to have one center built in an area demonstrating the most need. A possible can access the center. This location would allow for a racially and socioeconomically diverse student population." An existing building should be

# **FOSTERING LIFELONG WELLNESS** THROUGH NUTRITION EDUCATION

Merelis Ortiz, City College of New York

To improve children's health outcomes, such as reducing obesity rates, K-12 schools should implement nutrition education programs that bring awareness to students on how to live a healthier lifestyle.
Over the past few decades, children and adolescents have increased their consumption of fast foods that are high in trans-fat and are nutritionally deficient. Schools inevitably influence a child's eating habits with the meals they serve and the information they provide.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was signed into law with the following intentions: to improve nutrition standards in schools, reduce food insecurity, and establish standards for wellness policies. The law did not directly address the role of nutrition awareness and the necessity of its presence in schools when trying to improve health outcomes for kids.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, the National Farm to School Network was launched. which introduced the food justice movement to schools by offering agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Although the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has given a variety of grants to help initiate programs, there are still many schools that do not embrace programs such as Farm to School.

#### ANALYSIS

Nutrition education programs should be essential in schools as preventive care to encourage students to make healthy food choices early on in life. This would help them avoid future health complications and, in the long run, costly medical expenses. As demonstrated in California, for every dollar spent on this type of education, between \$3.67 and \$8.34 is saved in health care expenses.<sup>4</sup> A study done by the Partnership for America's Economic Success revealed that overweight and obese children accounted for \$25,688 in excess spending per year for every 1,000 kids ages 5 to 18.5 If people begin to establish healthy habits at an early age, then there will be fewer people that develop health complications. Thus, the government would not have to spend \$7.3 billion on health expenditures for illnesses that can be prevented.<sup>6</sup>

#### **KEY FACTS**

• According to the USDA, one in three adolescents and children are overweight or obese,<sup>9</sup>

• The US government's goal is to reduce the childhood obesity rate to 5 percent by 2030.<sup>10</sup>

• Schools shape a large part of a child's nutrition environment by the food they provide and what knowledge they teach, directly affecting a child's eating habits and food choices.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Investing in nutrition education programs helps combat rising health costs, as children become more conscious of their eating habits and food choices, opting for more nutritious foods.

• The USDA provides grants of up to \$5 million and states provide grants schools can apply for, which can be utilized to fund nutrition education teams, responsible for initiating nutrition education programs."

## NEXT STEPS

Schools can use Farm to School as a model for their preventive care and services. This program connects schools (grades K-12) to agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities by serving local and healthy foods, building school gardens, developing composting programs, and offering farm tours to students.<sup>7</sup> These opportunities would inform students about where their food comes from. Yet, many school food service directors that may be interested in Farm to School currently lack the time and resources necessary to adopt new options and strategies.

The USDA, state departments of agriculture, and non-profit organizations should collaborate with schools to support training for parents, faculty and staff interested in implementing nutrition education programs. The trained faculty would help implement food-related curricula, make sure that their students are going on farm field trips, build school gardens, take cooking lessons, and eat locally grown products in their meals.

Training would include learning about nutrition, the responsibilities of trained faculty such as helping streamline school expenditures where possible, and ways to communicate with community stakeholders who want to get involved. Meetings would be organized involving teachers, parents, school administrators, community members, and food justice organizations that would aim to strategize and discuss what is best for the community, and how they can collectively move forward. Nutrition education leaders would build a team that assists with organizing events, researching, and writing proposals for state and federal grants, such as the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program.<sup>8</sup> These grants could cover startup costs, equipment, and the resources necessary to make the initiative more feasible. Students at local colleges and universities could also play a role by helping conduct research, analyzing and assisting developing programs, and overseeing the progress made towards lowering the percentage of obesity in the community.

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### **ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**



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# WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# <mark>Wнат</mark> You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

# How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director



# Congratulations to

# ERIN SIELAFF

*author of* Sexual Exploitation and United Nations Peacekeeping: A Culture of Impunity

Nominee for Policy Of The Year

A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 AMERICAN CHILDREN IN DANGER ABROAD: GRANTING THEM A SAFE RETURN HOME Reem Aliessa
- 10 AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK: REDUCING THE NUCLEAR POWDER KEG Eric Bias
- 14 DOMESTICALLY GROWN THINK TANKS: A POLICY TO CONSOLIDATE DEMOCRACY THROUGH CAPACITY-BUILDING IN TUNISIA Daniel Cohanpour
- <sup>17</sup> INSURING AFRICA: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO ENSURE
  AFRICAN CLIMATE READINESS
  Daniel Cohanpour
- 20 DISCOVERING A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO HEALTH EDUCATION IN RURAL PANAMA Suprita Datta
- 24 **RETHINKING USAID: TOWARDS FLEXIBLE, NUTRITION-BASED** FOOD AID Svati Pazhyanur
- A New Approach to Transatlantic Intelligence Community
  Cooperation
  Tara Raizada and Anna Vosbigian
- 29 UN REGULATION OF EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES Abigail Gary and Rachel Riemenschneider
- <sup>32</sup> PARTICIPATORY CITY PLANNING IN POST-CONFLICT STATES Nehemiah Rolle, Brian Hart, Greg Sanda, Erich Denk, Ben Smith, Jackson Soule, Matt Jeanneret and Hayden Abene
- 35 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING: A CULTURE OF IMPUNITY Erin Sielaff

### American Children in Danger Abroad: Granting Them a Safe Return Home

Reem Aliessa, City College of New York

American children in war zones should be allowed to return home through the State Department easing visa regulations for their foreign parents or legal guardians.

In May 2013, the US Department of State estimated that 7.6 million registered American civilians resided abroad.<sup>1</sup> Many of these Americans reside in conflict areas or war-torn nations that are on the State Department Travel Warning List, such as Syria.

The State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs has issued several travel warnings stressing that every part of Syria is threatened by violence.<sup>2</sup> The sustained, heightened warfare– leading to the killing and abduction of many Syrians–has resulted in massive refugee populations in bordering nations such as Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Among these refugees are US-born children, American citizens, whose Syrian parents were never granted permanent residence and eventually returned to Syria.

The United Nations has referred to the crisis in Syria as the world's largest humanitarian crisis.<sup>3</sup> In August of 2013, the State Department stated it would make an effort to admit 2,000 Syrian refugees.<sup>4</sup> However, there is no prioritization for admitting the parents or guardians of American children; thus furthering the necessity to ease visa regulations for parents of American children abroad.

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The State Department estimated that 7.6 million American civilians reside abroad. Some currently reside in war-torn nations.<sup>7</sup>

- In 2013, the United States stated that it would make an effort to admit 2,000 Syrian refugees.<sup>8</sup>
- The PRM's 2013 budget request to aid victims of conflict with resettlement in America was \$1,625,400.°

#### ANALYSIS

American children in conflict areas are denied

their right to return to the United States because of their parents' immigration status. Immigration policy is purportedly designed to protect the interests of American citizens, but in this case it leaves citizens born to foreign parents in perilous living conditions abroad, or as secondclass residents of their host nation.

American children in Syria are unable to register as Syrian refugees in neighboring countries because of their American citizenship. The denial of refugee status and US visas for their parents has established many social, educational, and economical barriers for these young Americans. If their parents are never granted visas, they may return to America upon reaching legal age and will perhaps be trapped in a cycle of poverty and require social welfare provisions. Conversely, if they return to America as minors, they will be able to reintegrate into civil society, obtain an education, enter the job market, and help boost the economy.

The concern with funding or an influx of migrants or refugees should not be alarming because the State Department has already made an effort to admit 2,000 Syrian refugees. In addition, the Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) budget request for the fiscal year of 2013 was \$1,625,400 and these funds are used to assist refugees, stateless people, and victims of conflict with resettlement in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Parents or guardians of American children residing abroad in war-torn countries should be granted permission to accompany their children on a safe return to the United States.

• The lives of American children residing in Syria are under major threat because they are unable to return to the United States due to their parents' immigration status.

• Family reunification for American children and their parents is vital to human rights and American values. Questions." Swiss Info. September 16, 2013. http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/New\_visa\_rules\_raise\_hopes\_and\_questions.html?cid=36894522

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### NEXT STEPS

Implementing new immigration laws is difficult; therefore, the State Department should ease visa regulations for parents or guardians of American children residing in war-torn nations. The Swiss government eased visa regulations to reunite their citizens with their Syrian family members; however, the Swiss government did not limit visa admissions to exclusively reunite the nuclear family, their policy reunified extended relatives as well.<sup>6</sup>

Family reunification, although an immigration concern, is essentially a humanitarian effort to protect the livelihoods of Americans in danger. Subsequent to easing visa regulations, families who are unable to afford the cost of returning to America, may receive funding or emergency loans from the PRM.

Having American children safely return home with their nuclear family will continue to uphold humanitarian practices in the United States, in addition to helping these children to reintegrate into civil society.

### AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK: REDUCING THE NUCLEAR POWDER KEG

Eric Bias - Hunter College

To reduce the potentially catastrophic risk of maintaining a deteriorating stockpile of nuclear weapons, the US president should mandate the streamlining of the total arsenal to a fraction of its current size. This will make the US safer while reducing the military budget and also set a moral example for the international community. In 2010, President Obama declared an American commitment to "a world without nuclear weapons."<sup>1</sup> Shortly after, he signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia that pledged to reduce by half both nations' strategic nuclear arsenals—weapons meant not for battlefield use, but for destroying cities.<sup>2</sup> Yet the treaty ignores thousands of weapons that are "non-strategic," are held in reserve, or are waiting to be dismantled. In total, the Center for Arms Control and Proliferation (CACP) has estimated that 5,750 warheads are ignored by the treaty.<sup>3</sup>

An episode recounted in Eric Schlosser's Command and Control illustrates how close we can come to nuclear disaster.<sup>4</sup> A technician conducting routine maintenance dropped a socket from a socket wrench into a missile silo. The socket punctured the skin of a nine megaton Titan II missile, causing a fuel leak that eventually ignited, resulting in an explosion. If the warhead had detonated, the explosion would have been three times the size of both weapons dropped on Japan during World War II. In another incident, a live hydrogen bomb was dropped over Goldsboro, North Carolina-the only mechanism preventing a detonation was one low-voltage switch.<sup>5</sup> Mistakes like this-along with international misunderstandings, "broken arrow" incidents in which a nuclear weapon is lost, and simple mechanical failures-seem isolated, but with weapons of such magnitude in abundance, the risk is significant and must be reduced.

#### ANALYSIS

A chief reason why the United States maintains a large arsenal is for deterrence. Other nations are dissuaded from attacking the US for fear of retaliatory attack, and in a nuclear context, mutually assured destruction. This nuclear umbrella is for our security as well as other countries with whom we are allied. Development and

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The US possesses more nuclear weapons than any of the seven nuclear powers, barring Russia, combined.<sup>12</sup>

• The total US nuclear defense budget is estimated to be as high as \$661 billion.<sup>13</sup>

• Since 1950, there have been 32 "broken arrow" incidents, resulting in the accidental launch, theft, firing, or detonation of a nuclear weapon.<sup>14</sup> testing of new, modernized nuclear weapons is illegal due to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>6</sup> Nuclear weapons are extremely complex devices; they deteriorate and become unstable. The chances of a warhead successfully detonating after launch becomes less reliable, therefore more weapons equal greater reliability by sheer numbers. That also means that as weapons become older, the costs of maintaining their readiness increases, reaching to about \$500 billion over the next 20 years by current estimates.<sup>7</sup>

The Cold War ended, however, and the likelihood of a nuclear confrontation is low. Russia and China are our chief trading partners, and rogue states such as North Korea and Iran possess few, if any, deployable weapons, and are not applicable to deterrence theory.<sup>8</sup> The average nuclear weapon in the US stockpile is more than 300 kilotons,<sup>9</sup> so only 100 of these weapons would be enough to dramatically alter the planet as a whole.<sup>10</sup> Effective deterrence does not require such vast numbers.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Effective nuclear deterrence can be achieved with far fewer warheads than we currently maintain.

• In 1958, a midair collision off the coast of Georgia resulted in the loss of a nuclear bomb in the ocean. That bomb was never found. <sup>15</sup>

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# **Next Steps**

The US president, as commander-in-chief, can unilaterally dismantle the majority of the current nuclear stockpile, reducing our arsenal of deployed, strategic weapons to 311 total, a number recommended in 2010 by a group of senior Air Force leaders.<sup>11</sup> This is large enough to provide effective minimum deterrence and to respond to any unforeseen changes in the global security landscape. The military budget would be reduced over the next ten years because dismantling the estimated 6,900 remaining weapons is cheaper than maintaining them.

Opponents of reduction will argue that unilateral reduction will weaken America's image abroad. However, the reduction would achieve the opposite, and serve as one of the greatest gestures toward nuclear nonproliferation in recent history. In anticipation of pushback, various means of public outreach, such as think pieces on influential web outlets, or online petitions will build momentum for policy reform.

Streamlining our nuclear arsenal would reduce the costs and the risks involved in maintaining a diffuse security apparatus. In a time when economic austerity is a constant talking point, meaningful change is also cost effective.

### Domestically Grown Think Tanks: A Policy to Consolidate Democracy Through Capacity-Building in Tunisia

Daniel Cohanpour, Cornell University

The first region to experience upheaval during the Arab Spring, Tunisia's democratic transition is a bellwether for the region. The fall of the Ben-Ali dictatorship has opened civil society, and the United States must support the growth of domestic, non-partisan, and politically independent think tanks in Tunisia in order to improve the prospects for democracy.

Civil society in Tunisia, especially after the Arab Spring, has been dependent on continued US funding. The ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 led to the first free election in Tunisia and the gradual developments of an infant democracy. Under Ben Ali. most of the few civil society organizations (CSOs) that existed were completely dependent on the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) ruling party. The few independent organizations that existed were either labor unions controlled by one party or Islamist dominated associations.<sup>1</sup> Although jihadist violence and unrest is gradually increasing, there has been an upward growth in independent CSOs in Tunisia. However, Tunisia needs an independent, non-US partnered think tank that influences policy and unites intellectuals. The lack of "domestically grown and independent think tanks" (DGTs) is a problem for Tunisia's nascent democracy and represents a wider Arab shortage of DGTs as well as domestically grown civil society organizations, especially after the Arab Spring.

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 resulted in the first free elections in Tunisia.

- Under Ben Ali, most of the few civil society organizations (CSOs) that existed were completely dependent on the Constitutional Democratic Rally (*RCD*) ruling party.
- After the Jasmine Revolution of 2011, the US pledged to support "Tunisian transition" with more than \$55 million in non-security assistance.

The recently released *Global Go To Think Tanks* report showed that more than 60 percent of global think tanks are in North America and Europe.<sup>2</sup> With a total of about 500 think tanks, the Middle East and North Africa region has few domestically run think tanks, although several American institutes exist in the region. New frameworks in the Tunisian government after the removal of the Ben-Ali regime in 2011 necessitate a more advanced civil society in the nation.

The US Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a federal program that continues to be part of American efforts to empower the Tunisian citizens, is an example of US democratization support of civil society. Since the toppling of the regime, MEPI has supported more than 30 civil society projects in Tunisia.<sup>3</sup> However, none of these civil society projects are policy research centers or think tanks. It is important, especially at this pivotal moment in Tunisian history, for the US to continue to support the transition to more Arab civil society initiatives.

#### ANALYSIS

After the Jasmine revolution of 2011, the US pledged to support the "Tunisian transition" with more than \$55 million in non-security assistance. A portion of \$43.3 million went towards democracy-building efforts, civil society, and "promoting freedom of expression."4 There are about a dozen notable universities in Tunisia. each of them public except for Tunisian Private University (UML).<sup>5</sup> MEPI and the USAID's Middle East Bureau have worked together to establish various initiatives in MENA states. For 2014, \$30 million was pledged from USAID for Tunisia, and in 2011 and 2012, as explained in USAID's 2014 budget request, the agency has "reallocated over \$1.5 billion in existing funds from ongoing bilateral programs and from other sources to transitions. in the Middle East and North Africa."6 There is a Middle East Incentive Fund of \$7,50,000, which earmarked for more long-term change and is not

#### TALKING POINTS

• A change in US policy to support DGTs in Tunisia will help consolidate the nation's infant democracy by uniting intellectuals and policy advisers while allowing for a vehicle for policy discussion and guidance.

• The base loan would ensure that the project is not continually funded, as most current MENA policies are, thus allowing for more of a domestically-grown, Tunisian initiative. allocated to any specific country in MENA.<sup>7</sup> There is a gap in policy in regards to think tanks and think tank support in MENA by the US, especially in regards to lessening foreign dependence and promoting Arab intellectual unity and policy discussion.

In the past, American initiatives to support Middle Eastern civil society have been vague. Two questions that continue to come to the forefront of the democracy building conversation are: a) what form will support take and b) how long will the support last. A change in US policy towards Tunisia would consolidate Tunisia's infant democracy in the wake of Ben-Ali's jettison, while simultaneously working to counteract the Salafist initiatives that have led to unrest especially in mid-late 2013.<sup>8</sup>

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# NEXT STEPS

A dual-pronged policy to initiate USAID training programs for Tunisian university scholars, students, and policy experts while opening up a partnership between notable public universities in the US as well as public or private Tunisian universities is pivotal, especially at this fragile time in Tunisian politics. The initiative will receive a base fund or microloan, rather than continual funding such as the current US governmental initiatives in Tunisia and the Arab world, in order to allow the think tank to truly grow in a grassroots manner. A university partnership is important for encouraging an intellectual and scholar class in Tunisia that can influence policy, but it is important for the US government to ensure in the long-term that the fund goes towards academic institutions with limited extremist ties and to the ability to balance both secular and Islamist interests. The establishment of the fund can be similar to the MENA Incentive Fund that was created by the US Government in the sense that it is sectioned off for a particular purpose.

### Insuring Africa: A Strategic Partnership to Ensure African Climate Readiness

Daniel Cohanpour, Cornell University

Invest in African climate risk insurance while strengthening the United States' strategic partnership with the African Union and its member nations.

On November 18, 2013, Ambassador Jean-Baptiste Natama, Chief of Staff of the Bureau of the Chairperson at the African Union Commission, stressed that Africa is calling not for aid but for "investment in the continent." African nations are looking to evolve the assistance they receive from constant and often unreliable injections of aid to capital for self-driven strategies for addressing the continent's most pressing challenges.<sup>1</sup>

Climate-related disasters have taken staggering human and financial tolls in Africa. During the past 40 years, over 95 percent of disasterrelated deaths occurred in developing nations. In sub-Saharan Africa, 36 percent of all World Food Programme efforts from 2002 to 2009 were related to drought and there have been approximately 130 recorded droughts since 1990.<sup>2</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) claims that financial losses from climate-related disasters have also begun increasing in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

A new African Union (AU) program known as "African Risk Capacity" provides immediate funds to AU nations hit by severe drought or other climate-related disasters.<sup>4</sup> After the preparatory process, which takes approximately 12 months, African nations are quickly placed into a pan-African risk pool that aims to protect agricultural investments through risk management and financial planning.

#### **KEY FACTS**

• There have been approximately 130 recorded droughts in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1990.

• USAID has spent a substantial yet comparatively small, percentage of its capital on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). For the 2014 fiscal year, USAID has allocated \$917 million to the "Feed the Future" initiative (FTF), which focuses on chronic hunger and local farmers. From the fund, \$317 million will be allocated to global climate change initiatives (GCC) distributed among three pillar areas: climate change adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes. Financial Year 2014 also includes an International Disaster Assistance (IDA) request of \$2,045 million primarily for post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> This amount also includes \$1,416 million for emergency food assistance.<sup>6</sup> While USAID has dedicated a sizeable, yet comparatively small, percentage of its appropriations on Disaster Risk Reduction, many of these programs focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation in ∆sia 7

In July 2012, delegates from 41 African countries initiated the African Risk Capacity Establishment Agreement. Since then, the AU, in conjunction with organizations such as the World Food Program, has worked to create a weather insurance scheme to decrease African reliance on external aid, a development that is especially important in the face of worsening droughts in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Late last year, nations turned in their contingency plans. To lessen the burden placed on national governments, African Risk Capacity serves as a mutual insurance company that aims to respond to the current humanitarian assistance system not being as "timely" or "equitable" as it could be. The program shifts away from a system of simply treating devastation "after a crisis occurs" to improving African risk management through an "index-based insurance mechanism for infrequent, severe droughts" and an insurance pool complete with the usual payouts and premiums.

#### TALKING POINTS

• The African Risk Capacity works in a similar vein as CCRIF and aims to make climate readiness more dependable and accessible via insurance-based propositions with participation from member states.

• To make African climate readiness and disaster relief more sustainable and less stagnant, the US must support this African Risk Capacity program at its start.

#### **ANALYSIS**

African Risk Capacity was largely modeled on a successful Caribbean initiative called the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF). which was created after Hurricane Ivan in 2004, a disaster that caused billions of dollars of losses in the region. In Grenada and the Cayman Islands, for example, financial losses were close to 200 percent of the national annual gross domestic product. The political heads of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held an emergency meeting where they discussed the importance of including provisions for "catastrophe risk insurance," and CCRIF was created.<sup>9</sup> CARICOM approached the World Bank for assistance and also received an initial financial grant from the Japanese government.<sup>10</sup> The Japanese grants, administered by the World Bank, totaled \$1.8 million. The Japanese partnership led to great strides in human capital resources for this program under the Policy and Human Resource Development program (PHRD) and other capacity building initiatives 11

The African Risk Capacity program works in a similar vein as CCRIF in that they are both insurance-based programs. The US can benefit African nations greatly, while also strengthening its partnership with the AU and African Risk Capacity by developing a partnership with the AU similar to the Japan-CARICOM agreement, with minor adjustments.

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# NEXT STEPS

To make African climate readiness and disaster relief more sustainable and less stagnant, the US must support this African Risk Capacity program at its start through a financial investment of \$3 million, allocated equally from USAID, FTF, GCC, and IDA funds in order to ensure maximum agency collaboration. This will be an initial annual grant, but in the next three years, USAID should offer the African Union a \$2 million line of credit on an as-you-need-it basis in order to ensure maximum support. This investment will begin a new US-AU partnership, especially in the areas of sustainable development and disaster relief, at a time when the global community is looking toward new initiatives as a means of making development more sustainable. The United Nations' Post-2015 Development agenda, with its focus on innovation and longevity of assistance, is a clear example of this.

Such financing will go towards human capital resources for the initiative, administrative resources for the AU, and capacity-building efforts as well as monitoring and evaluation on a nation-by-nation basis, based on when each nation begins its risk insurance policy. The latter will be the largest allocation.

## DISCOVERING A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO HEALTH EDUCATION IN RURAL PANAMA

Suprita Datta, Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Panama should take a bottom-up approach to establish collaborative community health education programs in indigenous communities to alleviate poverty, address the lack of healthcare services, and foster goodwill between Panamanian governments and native leaders.

Indigenous communities in Panama are denied their basic right to a healthy life because of a lack of access to healthcare that is exacerbated by poverty. A history of discrimination and cultural difference has cultivated distrust between indigenous communities and local and federal governments.

Health outposts that serve Latino communities welcome indigenous populations, but are inaccessible to them. Villagers often have to walk hours and pay fees that they cannot afford.<sup>1</sup> Based on models that have been implemented in rural India, Senegal, and Mississippi in the United States, a volunteer-based community healthcare educational approach would enable improvement of basic healthcare awareness and help provide preventive measures for lifestyle-related diseases.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the 1970s, a community health program was established in the Ngawbere territory of rural Panama where health care workers worked collaboratively with indigenous leaders and community healers to deliver care.<sup>3</sup> In 1991, the International Labour Organization put into effect Convention No. 169, a legally binding international convention that calls for the consultation and participation of indigenous communities on issues that affect them <sup>4</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

To address the lack of information available to indigenous communities, health education should be approached at a grassroots level with attention to organization and proper administration. Peer education amongst youth, respecting traditional medicinal practices, and training local women will create a door-to-door approach to healthcare that is sustainable and empowering for these communities.<sup>5</sup> A single health educator can serve up to 100 households.<sup>6</sup> In Senegal, a community-based nutrition awareness program helped eradicate severe malnutrition within 18 months of its implementation.<sup>7</sup>

Poor health also has economic consequences. A loss in productivity due to poor health results in a 10 percent loss in earnings for an individual and a 2 to 3 percent loss of a nation's Gross Domestic Product. In India, the cost of treating malnutrition is 27 times more expensive than the amount required for its prevention.<sup>8</sup> Ac-

#### **KEY FACTS**

• A single health educator can serve up to 100 households.

• Indigenous communities in Panama make up 8 percent of the whole population, but represent 19 percent of the poor and 35 percent of the extremely poor.<sup>12</sup>

• Panama spends the most on healthcare out of any other country in the region (8.4 percent of GDP) but centralized administrative practices have marginalized indigenous communities.<sup>13</sup> cording to the World Health Organization, as of 2011, the Panamanian Ministry of Health does not spend resources on preventive health services.<sup>9</sup> However, it does provide UNICEF Panama \$300 thousand annually to conduct childhood education projects within indigenous communities along with government agencies.<sup>10</sup> By utilizing its local and logistical contacts within indigenous communities, UNICEF Panama can mediate the creation of these health education programs.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Indigenous communities are highly organized and have roles of leadership. Members of UNICEF Panama have already established a relationship with these leaders and should utilize their contacts to help raise health awareness within the community. Indigenous women, healers and older teenagers should work with health workers at the outposts within Latino communities to learn how to a) hold educational nutritional, hygiene, and sexual health workshops b) discuss symptoms of common diseases and c) conduct routine visits to households to check up on community members. Local health educators will also avoid barriers of language and cultural misunderstandings. Furthermore, by empowering women and youth through leadership roles, the community will benefit from a better-educated and healthier population.

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#### TALKING POINTS

• The prevention of lifestyle-related diseases such as hypertension, vitamin-deficiencies, sexually transmitted diseases, and respiratory hazards require health practitioners who can provide basic primary healthcare practices and knowledge.

 Indigenous communities are often hesitant to use government services because of cultural differences.

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## NEXT STEPS

UNICEF Panama, an organization that has worked extensively with the Panamanian government and indigenous populations and provided technical and logistical support for programs such as PROBISIDA (an HIV/ AIDS prevention and treatment program), should play a key role in the implementation of such a program." It already has friendly contacts and relations within indigenous communities in Panama and should act as a friendly liaison between government workers and community leaders. The Ministry of Health, which runs the health centers in Latino communities, should make sure that indigenous leaders and health workers establish contact and create a program for the health education workshops. Local health outpost center workers in Latino communities should train indigenous women and youth leaders to lead preventive care workshops. Health education relies on communicating accurate information. Creating a community health education program in indigenous communities could set a precedent for countries in the region. Furthermore, it can establish goodwill and improve relations between indigenous peoples and the Panamanian government.

## RETHINKING USAID: TOWARDS FLEXIBLE, NUTRITION-BASED FOOD AID

Svati Pazhyanur, Cornell University

Measuring the nutritional outcomes of food aid will allow US aid agencies to better cater their product to the specific needs of recipients, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs in addressing malnutrition and food insecurity.

For decades, the US has been the world's leading provider of food aid to vulnerable and malnourished people. US food aid has typically been in the form of farm bills authorizing the purchase of American crops, and sending them to local distributers (usually NGOs) in the recipient country. The US government began purchasing American crops to export as food aid with the 1954 Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act. In April, President Obama's budget proposed to modernize food aid programs by ending wasteful practices and eliminating programs that are saddled with outdated regulations. The changes would use the savings to boost programs like the Emergency Food Security program that have a proven track record of success. In the last decade, the US has provided more than \$2.9 billion annually of food assistance to 45 developing countries, providing approximately 2.8 million metric tons and reaching over 70 million people.<sup>1</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Currently, the composition of food aid is determined by the needs of entire areas with malnourished populations. However, one-sizefits-all approaches cannot meet the specific nutritional needs of all people and groups, which is especially problematic for vulnerable populations such as malnourished children. Aid

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The US currently spends \$20 billion on foreign assistance, \$5 billion of which goes directly to food aid.<sup>7</sup>

• Diets deficient in vitamin A, zinc, iron and iodine (all micronutrients found in MNPs) are responsible for 2.2 million deaths per year in children under age 5 and contribute to mortality from HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases.<sup>9</sup> designed with the entire population in mind, or "general distribution" food aid is usually a dry whole grain such as rice, corn, wheat or sorghum because large quantities are required. However, such grains are more difficult than blended food products to fortify with macronutrients-nutrients that provide calories or energy and are needed in large quantities-either in the field or at the production plant.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, food provided by general distribution aid falls short of addressing the nutritional needs of numerous groups, including pregnant and lactating women, children, and people with compromised health, especially with populations with high HIV/AIDS prevalence. This is exacerbated by chronic food shortage emergencies, during which food aid is the main source of nutrition for extended periods of time. Chronic situations are becoming increasingly common; now, more than half of the emergency food aid provided by the US is distributed in multi-year programs.<sup>3</sup>

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#### TALKING POINTS

• Current "General distribution" food aid, usually dry grains, provides few benefits to pregnant women, young children, and severely ill recipients.<sup>8</sup>

• Using a results-driven approach to customize nutritional support will increase the cost-effectiveness of aid and help some of the most vulnerable recipients.

# NEXT STEPS

To better address the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable populations. nutrition outcomes from current food aid programs must be studied, reported and shared. Currently, the end-of-year reporting required of implementing partners of USAID does not require empirical reporting on nutrition and local food consumption.<sup>4</sup> An emphasis on the nutritional outcomes of food interventions-such as measurements of child stunting and birth defects caused by malnutrition-rather than simply tons of food delivered will benefit the groups most desperately in need of assistance. Many agencies implementing programs using Title II (USAID) foods have been working in the same area for many years.<sup>5</sup> Encouraging and assisting these agencies to incorporate their knowledge of local food availability and food consumption into studying samples of the recipients of aid is entirely feasible, especially if the information is made available so that not every agency would need to repeat the same studies, which should be conducted yearly to account for demographic changes. In order to receive award funds from USAID, NGOs must enter into Cooperative Agreements or some other legally binding document that outlines requirements and penalties for not fulfilling them.<sup>6</sup> Annual studies on the nutrition of food aid should be included in these agreements to ensure compliance and accountability for the efficient use of funds.

### A New Approach to Transatlantic Intelligence Community Cooperation

Tara Raizada and Anna Vosbigian, Northwestern University

The extensive surveillance conducted by the US upon its ostensible allies in Europe necessitates an intelligencesharing and anti-espionage agreement between the US and the European Union. This agreement would cut costs, allow for more comprehensive and less redundant intelligence gathering, and improve diplomatic relations between the parties involved.

Classified documents released by former American intelligence analyst Edward Snowden have exposed the surveillance by the US and its National Security Agency (NSA) on allies such as France, Germany, and Spain, as well as on offices of the European Union (EU) in Washington, New York, and Brussels.<sup>1</sup> The alleged actions of the NSA have stalled diplomatic relations between the US and its allies, as well as with the entire EU.<sup>2</sup> The international community has taken offense at what it perceives to be a breach of trust by the NSA, since all the countries exposed by Snowden are allies of the US.<sup>3</sup> The results of Snowden's revelations confirm the necessity for more transparent intelligence sharing channels between the US and its allies in the EU.

There is precedent for intelligence gathering collaboration: the UKUSA Agreement, drafted in 1946 as an intelligence-sharing and antispying alliance between the two governments and their intelligence agencies.<sup>4</sup> This alliance grew to include the English-speaking countries of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, hence the moniker "Five Eyes."<sup>4</sup> This prohibits state-on-state espionage and fosters more comprehensive and relevant intelligence gathering.<sup>4</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

An intelligence-sharing agreement between the US and certain, established members of the European Union comparable to the existing UKUSA Agreement would reduce intelligence spending, create a global network founded on trust and help abolish state-on-state espionage in a world where the chief dangers to international security are not established states. The US' surveillance of leaders of allied countries, such as Angela Merkel, has provoked outrage in the international community because it is viewed as a breach of trust between allies and as a return to the state-on-state espionage

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Accusations against the US intelligence community, which include tapping German Chancellor Angela Merkel's personal cell phone,<sup>1</sup> eavesdropping on more than 60 million Spanish phone calls in one month alone,<sup>6</sup> and accessing 70 million phone records of French citizens,<sup>3</sup> have lead to a breakdown in diplomatic relations.

• The Five Eyes countries today collect information that is most applicable to their locations and agree to share such information with all member states in a balanced and reciprocal manner, while reducing costs.<sup>4</sup>

• The UKUSA agreement system leads to what officials call "total trust," including not tapping the phones of one another's leaders and officials.<sup>4</sup> characteristic of the Cold War,<sup>5</sup> while the main threats in the global War on Terror are stateless groups unconnected to such close allies. For example, in the wake of this discovery, the European Parliament voted to suspend its transatlantic Terrorist Finance Tracking Program, a joint EU-US effort.<sup>2</sup> The German Justice Minister claims this to be a signal that both his country and the EU in general are beyond outraged, to the point of changing their policy regarding America.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, UKUSA intelligence officials refer to the environment created by the "Five Eyes" agreement as one of complete trust, which extends to not tapping the phones of each others' leaders or embassies,<sup>4</sup> and not conducting intelligence operations within each others' borders without express permission.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the "Five Eyes" countries share intelligence collecting duties worldwide, with each nation focusing on their geographic location, proximity to suspicious activities, or intelligence specialties. This is especially beneficial to countries such as New Zealand that lack the worldwide satellite network the US boasts.<sup>4</sup> This extends to each country bearing the costs of its own efforts in the UKUSA mission,<sup>7</sup> which reduces overlapping expenses by the nations, and allows for more efficient and actionable connections between the data collected.<sup>6</sup>

The \$52.6 billion dollar budget allocated to the US intelligence community in the past fiscal year includes \$14.7 billion directed to the CIA, whose budget has grown by 50 percent since 2004, and \$10.8 billion to the NSA.<sup>8</sup> This budget also finances the surveillance of leaders of countries that America counts as friends, thus wasting funds to spy on allies rather than gathering intelligence truly pertinent to national security. An agreement between the US and established EU members would cut down on these costs as the

#### TALKING POINTS

 The extensive foreign surveillance conducted by the US has frayed its relationship with European allies.

• An intelligence-sharing agreement between the US and the EU modeled after the current UKUSA Agreement would eliminate redundant intelligence gathering and expenses, as well as establish an alliance grounded in trust and addressing the most salient threats to international security. UKUSA mission has done, thus allocating some of these vast resources to other areas of the government.

Stakeholders include the US intelligence community, including the CIA, NSA and 14 other agencies. They also include the EU, its governments, and its intelligence communities, such as France's Directorate-General for External Security (DGSE) and Germany's Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND).

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## NEXT STEPS

This policy would require an extensive deliberation process due to its sensitive nature. Congress and the US intelligence community would need to approve such an action, either as a new treaty or as an extension of the preexisting UKUSA Agreement. Once approved, the US government should propose the agreement to the EU. EU member states and the European Parliament would need to debate and accept the agreement.

### UN REGULATION OF EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES

Abigail Gary and Rachel Riemenschneider, Northwestern University

To reduce human rights violations committed against workers within Export Processing Zones, the United Nations should create a task force to implement strict labor laws with potential for penalties. Export Processing Zones (EPZs) date back to the 1940s, originating in Latin American and gaining popularity after their replication in East Asia.<sup>1,2</sup> EPZs typically offer foreign businesses financial incentives, including "duty-free imports of raw and intermediate inputs," as well as tax concessions and flexible labor laws.<sup>1</sup> Because Export Processing Zones can be tailored to fit the needs of the individual countries and foreign firms, there is no specific definition of what constitutes an EPZ. They can take many forms including "free trade zones, special economic zones, bounded warehouses, [and] free ports.<sup>71</sup> Developing countries create EPZs with the intention of attracting foreign investment to enhance domestic economies. Historically, EPZs foster labor abuses, human rights violations, and environmental degradation. These abuses continue today in the estimated 3,000 EPZs spanning 116 countries and affecting approximately 43 million workers.<sup>3</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Labor laws seldom apply to EPZs, and if they do, governments often do not monitor the area.<sup>4</sup> Poor working conditions are common in EPZs, including unsafe environments, long hours, "wage below subsistence" and abuse of reproductive rights, especially among vulnerable populations. <sup>4.5,6,7</sup> In addition, although the International Labor Organization (ILO) lists the ability to unionize as a core right, very few EPZs permit their workers to organize.<sup>4,3</sup>

While these human rights violations are obviously unacceptable, the benefits of EPZs are too great to consider eradicating them. They provide the host country with increased exports, more paying jobs, labor training to develop a skilled work force, and industrial infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> The ILO has been working for several decades to improve and preserve the workers' right to organize.<sup>3</sup> However, it seems that little is being done to address the other human rights abuses. To advance this, we propose a task force under the United Nations to create a plan for EPZ where human rights are being violated.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

This policy would have an effect on all groups involved in EPZs. The UN would penalize the countries containing the offending EPZs for the human rights violations they commit. The host governments would have to take initiative to protect their citizens working in the EPZs. As a result, the management in the EPZs and the multinational corporations would have to change their behaviors to comply with the UN's measures to eliminate human rights violations. We also hope that this policy will bring these issues to the attention of consumers, who will begin to advocate for change as well.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are increasingly important to the globalized economy.

 The UN should work to end human rights violations against workers in EPZs by creating a joint task force.

• The task force should create guidelines for working conditions and help host countries to follow them.

### NEXT STEPS

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, Export Processing Zones need to be a part of international discourse. The International Labor Organization and global collaborators should bring EPZs to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and request a formal study on human rights violations in Export Processing Zones. The General Assembly should then pass a resolution to create the UN Interagency Task Force on Export Processing Zones. This will include members from International Labor Organization, the UN Human Rights Council, UN Women (the majority of exploited workers are female) and other interested groups within the UN. This task force will create guidelines for Export Processing Zones and the treatment of their workers that reflect individual liberties outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core labor rights outlined by the ILO. The task force must also establish procedures for countries that continue to defy the task force's guidelines.

### PARTICIPATORY CITY PLANNING IN Post-Conflict States

Nehemiah Rolle, Brian Hart, Greg Sanda, Erich Denk, Ben Smith, Jackson Soule, Matt Jeanneret, and Hayden Abene, Wake Forest University

The Millennium Challenge Corporation and US Agency for International Development Aid's Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning (USAID-PPL) should facilitate participatory city planning between new regimes and civil society institutions in post-conflict states to increase the US' ability to manage post-conflict situations.

Post-conflict situations in the developing world are a common theme in the 21st century international system. The must develop a better handle on these situations, lest these places further dissolve into breeding grounds for extremism. Reducing the attraction of extremism and fostering good governance lies at the heart of successfully managing post-conflict situations. The US can accomplish these goals by facilitating participatory city planning that cultivates an emerging civil society, fosters accountability and political engagement, and provides sustainable economic development.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation and USAID are already engaged in similar initiatives. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is an independent US foreign aid agency created in 2004 to fight poverty and promote good governance in developing countries around the world, emphasizing citizen participation in the construction and implementation of its initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Citizen engagement is fostered through publicly available and comprehensive criteria, such as the degree of civil liberties protection, that evaluate these initiatives. Despite its robust work, the MCC is not designed for purposes besides economic growth, such as civil society support in post-conflict situations.

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The MCC was ranked the most transparent aid organization of 2013 by Publish What You Fund, and increased cooperation with USAID could increase its efficacy in other areas of foreign aid.

- The MCC has an immense budget, providing \$8.4 billion in aid to primarily African countries in sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure.
- The PPL coordinates USAID's vast organizational resources, including the invaluable field expertise that would increase the success of participatory city planning in post-conflict states.
The US Agency for International Development's new Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) can mitigate this shortcoming. Established in 2010, the PPL is the strategic nucleus of USAID, infusing evidence and analysis into USAID policies, promoting innovation, and coordinating its resources and relationships with other aid partners, such as the MCC.<sup>2</sup> These resources include USAID's field expertise in navigating varied political and economic environments. It has also previously partnered with MCC in MCC's threshold aid programs.<sup>3</sup> USAID was instrumental in the implementation of agriculture and infrastructure themed threshold programs.<sup>4</sup> However, these partnerships occurred in countries that have self-initiated the reform process, rather than vulnerable. post-conflict states. Despite these different experiences, the PPL and the MCC possess the capacities to bolster economic growth and political engagement, evaluated by transparent and robust metrics in post-conflict states.

#### ANALYSIS

This initiative benefits all stakeholders involved. utilizing their strengths and mitigating their weaknesses. Since its inception in 2004, MCC has consistently received praise for its evaluative criteria that effectively capture impact.<sup>5</sup> Collected results are likewise captured in their Open Data Catalog that illustrates quality, scope, and accessibility. Accessible data would be invaluable in mitigating the challenges of participatory development initiatives, such as scalability and adaptability. Its efficacy can be increased if the MCC finds the right amount of citizen participation, an issue it has yet to address. Its emphasis on "country ownership" predisposes the MCC to a hands-off approach that can affect the sustainability of its funded initiatives. Better coordination with USAID could resolve this issue.

USAID has developed a cadre of initiatives to foster accountability and transparent gov-

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Post-conflict states are breeding grounds for extremism, but they are also an opportunity for inclusive nation rebuilding that the US must facilitate to decrease the likelihood of extremism.

• Economic development and political engagement are vital to stabilization of postconflict states. The capacities of the MCC and USAID's PPL can foster these facets in an inclusive manner.

• Participatory city planning is the ideal environment to promote these forces, specifically the rebuilding of a state's capital that is often the crux of political, economic, and cultural life in the state. ernance, coordinated by the PPL. Its knowledge of local sociocultural contexts and emerging civil society groups is invaluable. This knowledge will cultivate the benefits of participatory city planning, such as strengthened capacity of local citizens and better-informed development strategies.

However, there have been calls for reforms, including increased local ownership of initiatives and greater transparency.<sup>6</sup> This weakness of the PPL is the strength of the MCC. As such, the PPL will also reap benefits, testing these reforms through a cooperative initiative.

Lastly, a state's citizens are engaged, rather than neglected, in the rebuilding of its political and economic spheres. Citizen engagement is paramount to the success of development programs, which have traditionally practiced a top-down approach, devoid of information about local power relations and needs that would hamper the progress of these development programs.<sup>7</sup>

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### NEXT STEPS

With the potential for this proposed initiative to marry organic civic engagement and sustainable development, USAID's PPL and the MCC should focus on a country's capital. A country's capital is the nexus of its political sphere and also home to influential cultural and economic forces that will redefine a state's post-conflict identity.

This opportunity for citizens to use their own agency to create and engage with the institutions that will shape the city's identity will attract traditionally marginalized citizens. Moreover, increased opportunities for economic development will incentivize engagement. USAID's PPL should use its existing expertise and resources to coordinate with civil society institutions that will shape political engagement with increased local sociocultural awareness. In addition to providing the necessary capital, the MCC should conduct evaluations every five years to monitor the efficacy and inclusivity of this proposed initiative. Further, they should publish these evaluations using their accessible open data catalog for best practice sharing to aid in further initiatives.

### SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING: A CULTURE OF IMPUNITY

Erin Sielaff, Georgetown University

To combat the sexual assault of civilians by peacekeepers, the United Nations should update the 1990 Model Status of Mission Agreements to include a clause allowing for United Nations investigation and prosecution of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

It is difficult to know exactly how many women, men, and children have experienced sexual assault at hands of the United Nations (UN) peacekeepers designated to protect them. In 2013 alone, 61 allegations of sexual exploitation were levied against peacekeepers.<sup>1</sup> However, widespread underreporting conceals the true extent of the problem. In Cambodia, scholars estimate that UN peacekeepers fathered 25,000 children, illustrating much higher rates of abuse than those reported.<sup>2</sup> Common offenses include sexual harassment, soliciting brothels, and propositioning children to exchange sex for food.<sup>3</sup>

Though the sexual abuse problem in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has been widespread for many years, the UN has only recently made an effort to address the issue. In 2003, the UN created a "zero tolerance policy" on sexual exploitation and abuse. Although this seems like a strong stance, due to the Status of Mission agreements signed by member states, the policy only is enforced if the member state's military decides to investigate the charges.<sup>4</sup> Few cases are tried, and peacekeepers often receive lenient sentences.

The DPKO has also implemented gender mainstreaming, which works to include women in peacekeeping missions, thereby changing the culture of peacekeeping, and hopefully reducing sexual violence.<sup>5</sup> This approach aims to undermine some of the cultural and social biases surrounding women, gender, and sexual violence that peacekeepers carry with them on their missions.<sup>6</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

The UN's zero tolerance policy is currently an empty threat; even if the UN has evidence of sexual abuse by a peacekeeper, it has little recourse. This lack of accountability has far-ranging impacts on the legitimacy and effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. First, reporting and accounting of sexual violence suffers as a result of the immunity clause, and little official data is collected.<sup>7</sup> In addition, sexual abuse destroys the legitimacy of peacekeeping missions. Peacekeepers are meant to protect civilians from violence, and in order to do so they must have both good standing in communities and the population's trust. Sexual exploitation undermines this relationship and hinders

#### **KEY FACTS**

• While statistics suffer from underreporting, more than 60 allegations of sexual violence have been brought against peacekeepers in 2013 alone.<sup>10</sup>

• Rates of sex trafficking and prostitution increase significantly with the arrival of peacekeepers. The number of prostitutes in Cambodia increased from 6,000 to 25,000 during the DPKO mission." the ability of peacekeepers to protect civilians. Finally, peacekeepers often turn a blind eye to sexual abuse perpetrated by citizens, further exacerbating the problem.<sup>8</sup>

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The UN's zero tolerance policy is currently ineffective: the most severe punishment that the UN can administer to a peacekeeper is repatriation.<sup>12</sup>

• The Status of Mission Agreement leaves punishment to member states, which in most cases do not investigate claims, and, if they do, they give lenient sentences. In 2011, five Pakistani peacekeepers were sentenced to just one year in jail after gang raping a 14year-old boy.<sup>13</sup>

### NEXT STEPS

Despite the UN's best efforts, lack of accountability persists in peacekeeping operations. Therefore, the UN should reform the 1990 Model for the Status of Mission Agreements to allow for UN prosecution of sexual violence by peacekeepers.<sup>9</sup> Next, the UN should negotiate new Status of Mission Agreements with nations currently deploying peacekeeping forces to incorporate these changes. In addition, the UN Security Council should, working with the DPKO and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, establish a court in the form of an International Criminal Tribunal to try accused peacekeepers. By including a clause allowing for UN prosecution of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations, both the zero-tolerance policy and the gender mainstreaming approach will be made more effective.



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### ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK



**ENERGY + ENVIRONMENT** 

Policy of the Year Nominee

ABANDONING ABANDONMENT: MODERNIZING WESTERN WATER RIGHTS



### **10 IDEAS FOR ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT 2014**

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# WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# **Wнат** You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

### How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director



# Congratulations to LIAM BERIGAN

*author of* Abandoning Abandonment: Modernizing Western Water Rights

> Nominee for Policy Of The Year

A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 ABANDONING ABANDONMENT: MODERNIZING WESTERN WATER RIGHTS Liam Berigan
- ERADICATING STYROFOAM FOOD TRAYS IN
  New York Public Schools
  Kelsey Clough
- 14 FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAMS: HEALTHIER KIDS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES Kinjo Kiema
- <sup>16</sup> INCENTIVIZING GREEN TRANSIT WITH PROGRESSIVE TOLL COLLECTION Brian Lamberta
- INNOVATING HIGHER ENERGY EFFICIENCY VIA ROTATING FEDERAL
  GRANT COMPETITIONS
  Connor Lock, Jeff Raines, Orion Kobayashi, and Jimmy Liang
- 22 **A New Strategy for Conserving Water in the Flint River** Giovanni Righi

#### TURNING BLIGHT INTO MIGHT: LOCAL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CHANGING VACANT LOT OWNERSHIP POLICY Lino Sanchez

- 28 SOLAR SUN-STAINABILITY: COST-EFFECTIVE CLEAN POWER FOR GEORGETOWN AND OTHER DISTRICT UNIVERSITIES Sharanya Sriram
- <sup>32</sup> REDUCING GARBAGE COLLECTION COSTS THROUGH GREEN INNOVATION Kudzai Tunduwani

35

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Hilary Yu, Cornell University

# Abandoning Abandonment: Modernizing Western Water Rights

Liam Berigan, Cornell University

By changing the concept of abandonment in Western water law, we can give farmers increased water security and make water conservation both simpler and more advantageous.

Water rights, which are the permissions required to withdraw water from aquifers and water bodies, have remained essentially the same in the Western United States since the 1940s. This region uses a system called prior appropriation water rights, which was originally used to distribute water rights to early Western settlers. Since the Western states have been fully settled (and the vast majority of these water rights have been claimed), these older methods of claiming water are largely irrelevant. Water redistribution methods, which would normally provide water rights to new users, are antiquated and ineffective, and act to actively discourage water conservation.

Abandonment is one of the major problems with Western water law. This concept mandates that if a landowner fails to use the entirety of his or her water rights for several years in a row, the state can reduce or completely eliminate those rights. This outdated practice punishes farmers for reducing their water usage and makes water conservation incentives difficult to implement.

In 2011, Kansas passed HB 2451, which eliminated abandonment in areas of the state where all water rights have been claimed.<sup>1</sup> This modification has been supported by natural resource districts and farmers' associations in the past, but Kansas was the first state to translate these

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The abandonment or reduction of water rights legally occurs after 3 to 5 years of reduced water use.

- The original water rights allocations for many farmers were determined over 100 years ago.
- Many farmers will refuse to take water conservation measures out of fear that they may lose their full water rights.

recommendations into law.<sup>2,3</sup> Other western states should do the same.

#### ANALYSIS

Abandonment, originally intended to transfer unused water rights to those who needed them, serves little purpose today. Many water basins are closed to new claims, so abandonment has very little role in modern water use regulations.<sup>4,5</sup> Instead, this law discourages farmers from reducing their water use, as they fear that their water rights might be considered abandoned should they engage in conservation practices. In extreme cases, these farmers may even intentionally waste excess water out of fear that they might lose their ancestral water rights.<sup>6,7</sup> Changing this law will provide agricultural water security to the western United States and remove penalties for farmers who choose to engage in water conservation.

The elimination of water rights abandonment is politically acceptable to both agricultural and conservation groups. The Kansas Farm Bureau and the Sierra Club are both excellent examples of organizations that support these reforms.<sup>8</sup> Conservation and agricultural news sites are also praising the local water conservation initiatives that have emerged since the law was instituted in Kansas.<sup>9,10,11</sup> In addition, the elimination of abandonment in Kansas successfully allowed legislation to be passed that incentivized water conservation.<sup>12</sup> Adopting this legislation nationwide could provide the same benefits to the entire Western United States.

The elimination of water rights abandonment would benefit both agricultural and conservation stakeholders. Agricultural stakeholders will no longer live with the threat of their water rights being revoked over changes in water use. Water conservationists will also be better able to institute water efficiency practices because of this law. Both of these groups acknowledged these

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Removing abandonment from western water legislation would be a simple way to encourage farmers to conserve water.

• The abolition of abandonment is backed by both farmers and conservation groups.

• Kansas's successful implementation of this law is an excellent example of the positive effect that this legislation can have on water conservation efforts. benefits and lobbied for this law when it was passed in Kansas, demonstrating a valuable instance of bilateral cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

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### NEXT STEPS

Kansas is the first of the Western states to pass legislation to abolish water rights abandonment. Other state legislatures should consider similar legislation to promote water conservation in their own states, the crux of which should be eliminating abandonment.

Agricultural and water conservation groups should begin by gathering support from farmers in Western states. Petitions and letters to representatives in the state legislature would be a great way to begin lobbying for individual states to embrace this legislation. The primary targets for this kind of change should be states that have water supply issues, or may have water supply issues in the near future. This includes the Ogallala aquifer states, which are also excellent targets because many of these states are promoting water conservation initiatives of their own. By promoting this legislation in as many states across the west as possible, groups can ensure that water conservation is appropriately incorporated into agricultural law.

# ERADICATING STYROFOAM FOOD TRAYS IN NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Kelsey Clough, Cornell University

A sustainability education initiative in New York public schools that facilitates the gradual elimination of Styrofoam trays will significantly reduce human exposure to chemical contaminants and ecosystem degradation.

Public schools frequently use expanded polystyrene (EPS), or Styrofoam, trays. EPS manufacturing, involving petroleum and natural gas by-products through reactions of toxic chemicals, causes tropospheric ozone depletion.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, environmental impact of this manufacturing process—based on energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and total environmental effect—ranks among the worst in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Recycling EPS is almost impossible due to high cost, low availability of recyclers, and difficulty recycling contaminated EPS.<sup>3</sup> For example, in California, 0.2 percent of EPS gets recycled.<sup>4</sup> EPS trays, which do not biodegrade, instead collect and remain in landfills.<sup>5</sup> Also, "throwing away" trays, teaches young people to accept unsustainable practices.

While plastics account for 90 percent of all landbased ocean debris, EPS, cited as the second most abundant form of beach debris, remains particularly obstructive.<sup>6,7</sup> EPS, easily transported by air and water, is ingested by marine and avian species, causing suffocation, dehydration, reduced body weight, starvation, and increased risk of disease and mortality.<sup>8,9</sup>

Ingestion of EPS chemicals—such as styrene, toluene, methyl chloride, benzene, and formaldehyde—amplifies risks of many forms of cancer,

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Public schools commonly use EPS food trays.

- EPS trays significantly contribute to marine debris and land litter.
- Humans and animals can ingest chemicals from EPS production, use, and disposal.
- The continuous disposal of EPS trays cultivates a culture of unnecessary waste among students.

as well as respiratory and neurological disorders.<sup>10, 11</sup> Both EPS leaching into food on trays and ingestion of EPS by fish increase risk of human absorption of toxic chemicals through the food chain.<sup>12</sup>

Nationally, cities and counties maintain ordinances banning EPS in commercial businesses.<sup>13</sup> While many schools advocate for the termination of EPS trays, no statute exists.

#### ANALYSIS

Implementation of sustainability education initiatives to guide the 5-year phasing out of EPS trays provides the possibility of reduced environmental and health degradation. First, New York students, educators and environmentalists should collaboratively develop criteria for environmental sustainability curriculums. These criteria may involve faculty training on classroom sustainability, syllabus amendments, conceptions of courses, or extra-curricular clubs. The purpose of this initiative, to cultivate sustainability and proper waste disposal knowledge, will guide EPS eradication because education fortifies maintainable change.<sup>14</sup> Next. over the 5-year period, schools should gradually purchase reusable trays and tray sanitizing apparatuses.

Opponents of this plan cite the high cost of switching to alternative trays.<sup>15</sup> These cost estimates, however, often use price comparisons with different disposable trays.<sup>16</sup> Also, the predicted 94 percent cost increase for tray conversion does not take into account gradual implementation for defraying the costs' overall magnitude.<sup>17</sup> Opposing cost benefit analysis fails to consider long-term savings of waste disposal fees, and continuous EPS tray replacement. An education initiative, moreover, would increase the probability of grants and donations to fund this proposal.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Eliminating EPS trays in New York public schools will increase the health of marine, avian and terrestrial ecosystems.

- Decreasing EPS use will diminish the probability of human exposure to chemical contaminants.
- A sustainability curriculum will guide young people toward a culture of environmentalism.

Reduction in EPS would fortify the economy. Overall EPS reduction decreases ocean debris and land litter, ensuring sustainable seafood sources, increased water quality, and enhanced tourism opportunities. Also, the likelihood of chemical contaminant exposure dramatically decreases.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Executing this proposal required the involvement of a variety of stakeholders. Students of the approximately 4,529 schools in New York will be subject to a discourse on environmental sustainability, an increasingly important topic in society.<sup>18</sup> With this initiative, the students and faculty will work to create a more sustainable community. Allocating funds for the implementation of this plan involves the New York State Education Department, district school committees, town councils and other associations responsible for school budgeting.

Public schools within New York, especially the New York City Department of Education, which serves the largest system of public schools in the country, paradigmatically lead the nation with progressive policies and initiatives. Therefore, the successful implementation of this proposal will likely guide other states to adopt similar policies. Furthermore, EPS bans in other state accommodations, such as correctional and medical care facilities, can be modeled after this proposal.

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# Next Steps

Several steps are required to achieve the overall goal of reducing EPS through the introduction of reusable trays. First, school districts must begin collaboration with environmental agencies, faculty, and students for the creation of a realistic and meaningful sustainability education initiative. With this conception, school districts and counties possess an effective advocacy platform for arguing the merits of reusable tray use. Increasing knowledge of the negative consequences of EPS trays motivates the creation of community ordinances by local politicians. Evidence of successful EPS eradication ordinances should then be documented to support statewide legislation.

# FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAMS: HEALTHIER KIDS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Kinjo Kiema, George Washington University

By linking Fairfax County Public School cafeterias with local farms to provide fresh produce, we can provide more nutritious food to public school children, while strengthening local and regional food systems.

In 1997, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) started connecting schools with local farms. Since then, the USDA has implemented several more related policies, and states and counties nationwide have created Farm-to-School programs. The extension of these policies includes the USDA awarding up to \$5 million in grants a year to districts for these programs. In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly created a "Farm-to-School Task Force" to research the issue, and in 2010, it designated the second week of November as "Farm-to-School Week."<sup>1,2</sup>

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is the program within Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) that is in charge of providing food to 14

#### **TALKING POINTS**

 Fairfax County Public Schools does not require contracted companies to purchase a certain percentage of fresh food from Virginia farms.

• Farm-to-School programs enable schools to invest in their local community, while providing students with fresh and nutritious options.

students. Neither FNS nor FCPS has policies that specify that contracted companies purchase from local farmers. The largest produce contractor in FCPS, Keany Produce, does purchase from neighboring states, but the region it purchases from extends all the way to New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

#### ANALYSIS

Only 2 percent of children in the United States get the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables per day, but adding more fresh food to meals provided by schools could be a remedy.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, connecting schools with local farms gives farmers a larger market and more economic opportunities. Findings from Farm-to-School programs in other states have demonstrated an average increase in income of 5 percent for individual farmers.<sup>4</sup> Overall, engaging schools with local farms creates opportunities for meaningful investments that will lead to healthier students and a more vibrant local economy.

A statewide Farm-to-School policy would have to take into account the varying budgets of many different communities, while a more local one would be more precise. FCPS is a prime candidate for a Farm-to-School program. It has 184,000 students and is the largest school division in the state, so it would have a large positive impact on the state as a whole. Over \$30.7 million dollars would be brought back into Virginia's economy if just \$0.25 a day per student were used to purchase produce grown in Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

Within the last two years, 29 percent of FCPS produce purchases have been considered "locally grown."<sup>6</sup> FCPS should establish a policy with guidelines for produce to be bought within Virginia, and should aim to purchase at least 50 percent of its fresh produce from within these boundaries in the next 5 years.

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Fairfax County Public Schools has 184,000 students and is the largest school division in the state.<sup>8</sup>

• Over \$30.7 million dollars would be brought back into Virginia's economy if just \$0.25 a day per student were used to purchase produce grown in Virginia.<sup>9</sup>

• Farm-to-School programs are proven to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables from 0.99 to 1.3 servings a day on average, which is important in combating obesity and overweight issues that currently affect one-third of America's youth.<sup>10</sup>

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### NEXT STEPS

The successful implementation of a Farm-to-School Program will require FCPS to determine what is considered "local." The School Board will need to conduct an assessment of Virginia farmer's capacity to provide 50 percent of fresh produce, and the change in marginal costs. Afterward, the definition of "local" should be readjusted if necessary, and then the division's contracts and policy need to be changed accordingly. FCPS can also apply for a USDA Farm-to-School grant, similar to the ones other programs in Virginia have received, to cover costs.<sup>7</sup> Goals for the amount and types of local produce that will be purchased need to be set. Community support needs to be built around the policy after it is proposed. A crucial part of this process will be building relationships with farmers to establish this program.

### INCENTIVIZING GREEN TRANSIT WITH PROGRESSIVE TOLL COLLECTION

Brian Lamberta, Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York

Incentivizing use of environmentally responsible transit by basing tolls on vehicle environmental cost and using the surplus to fund the development of mass transit.

Regional transit policy in the US has created an auto-dependent system that is destructive to the environment. According to the US Environmen-

tal Protection Agency (EPA), driving accounts for more than one-third of air pollution in the US-far higher than in any other country.<sup>1</sup> The problem can be traced to two sources: a lack of mass transit options and the preferences of wealthier Americans to drive less efficient vehicles.

Seventy-five percent of Americans drive to all functions of life, including school, work, and social functions.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, Federal and state cuts have forced 51 percent of regional transit agencies to cut service, raise fares, or both, which has discouraged transit usage.<sup>3</sup> Ideally, public policy should support a multi-modal system in which both auto use and mass transit are supported.

Wealthier Americans tend to drive vehicles with lower fuel efficiency, such as luxury cars and sport utility vehicles.<sup>4</sup> The US Department of Energy affirms that income correlates with less efficient car ownership. According to recent analysis, a family of four living below the poverty line consumes about half of the vehicle fuel as a family living at 150 percent of the poverty line largely due to fuel economy.<sup>5</sup>

Though often proposed, taxing all drivers to subsidize transit is regressive, hitting people with lower incomes the hardest. A better solution is to base tolls on the environmental cost of cars. Due to the relationship between driving habits and income, this would help the environment without burdening lower income families. London implemented a comparable plan, levying a \$50 toll on big cars, which slashed emissions by 15 percent.<sup>6</sup> In the US, a similar system would reduce emissions and strengthen our mass transit infrastructure without imposing a regressive tax.

#### ANALYSIS

The New York metropolitan region is an ideal location to test this policy, because it is least

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Forty-five percent of people have no access to mass transit, leaving the one-third of Americans who do not drive disconnected from the world.<sup>12</sup>

• According to the US Department of Energy, a family of four living below the poverty line consumes about half of the vehicle fuel as a family living at 150 percent of the poverty line. This is linked to fuel economy.<sup>13</sup>

• Due to cuts in federal and state subsidies in 2012, 51 percent of regional transit agencies cut service, raised fares, or both.<sup>14</sup>

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• A robust transit system protects the environment and ensures that all people can reach the functions of life.

• This method of toll collection is not regressive and will not burden the poor.

• All toll revenue is cycled back into transit infrastructure. likely to burden individuals with low incomes and because it is technically feasible due to the E-ZPass system.

Because of the region's existing mass transit infrastructure, most individuals with an annual income below \$15,000 do not drive to work. As with all US metropolitan regions, income correlates with likelihood to drive.<sup>7</sup>

A state-funded public benefit corporation called The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) manages tolls on the region's bridges and tunnels. The MTA collects most tolls via E-ZPass, which is an electronic toll collection service. When collecting a toll, E-ZPass connects data regarding the vehicle to an account and charges the owner. Drivers without E-ZPass have their license plate numbers associated with a vehicle model. This system leaves room for different models to easily be charged different amounts.<sup>8</sup> The MTA could order that tolls be based on the EPA rating of each vehicle.

The EPA ranks all vehicles on a one to ten scale based on emissions standards with ten being the most efficient. Following expert analysis, the MTA could set the toll increase so cars with lower ranks pay higher tolls.<sup>9</sup> The changes could raise over \$300 million-nearly 11 percent of the budget for commuter rail.<sup>10</sup> The funding would be used to develop new mass transit options in un-served and underserved neighborhoods as well as to increase service where it already exists.

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### NEXT STEPS

The MTA Board, a group of executives appointed by the governor, sets tolls in the region. Approval of the MTA Board is key. A coalition of interested partner organizations, such as NYPIRG and the Sierra Club, can unite and target sympathetic members of the board and state legislators with this proposal. Though less likely, the New York state legislature could mandate this policy change. Still, garnering endorsement from legislators may influence the board and raise public awareness.

As this plan is implemented, analysts must monitor its impact. Analysts should identify the toll revenue, change in mass transit ridership, influence on driving habits, and the reduction in environmental damage. The amount of each toll and the way revenue is spent should be adjusted accordingly.

Based on the plan's success in New York, it could easily be replicated in other regions that use electronic toll collection. This includes most states in New England, the Midwest, and the Mid-Atlantic." Others regions may set tolls differently (such as by legislative process or public referendum) and have different infrastructure, so strategies and implementation must be adapted to fit each region.

### INNOVATING HIGHER ENERGY EFFICIENCY VIA ROTATING FEDERAL GRANT COMPETITIONS

Connor Lock - Georgetown University, Jeff Raines - American University, Orion Kobayashi - University of Delaware, and Jimmy Liang - American University

The US Department of Energy (DOE) should combine the strengths of public funding with private ingenuity to create a specific grant competition that can advance energy efficiency to help tackle our current environmental problems.

As the debate over public versus private sector efficiency continues, there is a critical aspect of the American economy being left overlooked:

innovation. The government currently leaves the most innovative of the private sector—entrepreneurs and startups—without the resources to create new products and be competitive. The DOE should increase opportunities for entrepreneurs and startups to update archaic technologies by making improvements to its departmental grant program.

#### ANALYSIS

The federal grant process was established in 1952, but has never been a sufficiently high priority for government, receiving only 3.9 percent of the annual budget in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the DOE started a grant competition called "America's Next Top Innovator" that gave innovators access to US patented technology to turn their ideas into products.<sup>2</sup> America's Next Top Innovator failed to designate innovation for any specifically needed fields, however, and instead focused on streamlining the patent process for startups in general.

A notable targeted innovation challenge from the private sector is the 1996-2004 Ansari X Prize spacecraft competition. This competition, which only offered a \$10 million first-place prize, drew publicity and development that helped bring \$1.5 billion in investments to the private spaceflight industry by 2009.<sup>3</sup> This targeted investment helped grow a nascent industry into a competitive large-scale marketplace, showing the large area for improvement that exists in the federal government's current innovation programs.

The DOE currently only shows occasional support for public-private innovation—through projects such as its \$16.5 million grant to improve biofuels and algae biofuels by 2022—but lacks a permanent, dedicated vehicle for such endeavors.<sup>4</sup> This type of project can incentivize innovators to increase their efforts in improving public goods, while still marketing their solutions.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Federally-supported private entrepreneurship will help small companies and individuals overcome barriers of scale to turn prototypes into marketable products.

• In rotating the competition's topic every year, companies from a diverse array of fields will have a strong incentive to participate, as they can plan for their specific competitions years in advance.

• The grants will help ease start up costs, while the competition itself will draw publicity and investments toward targeted scientific fields.

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#### **KEY FACTS**

• The DOE received \$1.924 billion for grants out of the \$538.6 billion the US allocated for federal grants in the FY12 budget.

• Only 7 percent of DOE's entire budget is allocated for grants.

• Many energy-related startups need funding in the vicinity of \$10 million to create their product and take it to market. <sup>6,7,8</sup>

• Only 15 out of 2025 grants on grants.gov are available for entrepreneurs.

### NEXT STEPS

As part of its next budget proposal, the DOE should refocus a portion of available grant-allocation resources into one grant competition. This competition would continue to supply similar types of opportunities and resources as "America's Next Top Innovator," but would aim to solve a specific environmental challenge every year. By rotating topics annually, the DOE can continue to promote the work of innovators while creating leading-edge solutions to today's environmental problems.<sup>5</sup>

# A NEW STRATEGY FOR CONSERVING WATER IN THE FLINT RIVER

Giovanni Righi, University of Georgia

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division should develop a volumetric water pricing system to conserve water on the Flint River and dedicate it to a fund that reduces water usage during droughts.

Since the advent of center-pivot irrigation in the 1970s, the number of acres under irrigation in Georgia has nearly doubled.<sup>1</sup> This has been the largest contributor to low flows in the Flint River Basin, where streams have begun to run dry. Meanwhile, data suggest that Georgia will face more frequent droughts,<sup>2</sup> exacerbating the water limitation.

The Flint River Drought Protection Act (2000) directed the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to develop an auction process that would provide incentives for farmers to reduce water usage in the Flint River Basin (FRB) during years when the Director of the EPD declares drought conditions. However, the auctions were deemed ineffective at reducing drought, and there are no more funds available for auctions. As a result, the EPD lacked policy tools to cope with the drought of 2012.

Under Georgia statutes, any person who needs to withdraw more than 100,000 gallons per day of water must obtain ground water or surface water use permits from the EPD. Since July 30, 2012, there has been a moratorium on new withdrawal permits in the Lower FRB.<sup>3</sup> The agency is at an impasse unless it can pass the legislation necessary for the continuation of an aquifer water storage project, which is not certain to

#### **KEY FACTS**

• The health of the riparian ecosystem supports agriculture, municipalities, and the species living in the river, and the water available to this ecosystem has become more strained in the last 40 years.

- Droughts cost the agricultural community hundreds of millions of dollars,<sup>5</sup> so there needs to be a structure that allows for overall reduction in irrigation along with financing for drought irrigation reduction.
- Current efforts by the Appalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Stakeholders will help define appropriate target water levels.

succeed and does nothing to address the ununderlying problem of drought.

#### ANALYSIS

The root of the problem lies in the rules of the game by which farmers on the Flint River must make decisions regarding their livelihood. Water is very cheap; the only costs for farmers are the cost of pumping energy and payments on capital such as irrigation systems. Thus "the fact that water is scarce does not affect farmers' decisions about whether to irrigate and how much water to use."4 Crop prices for water intensive crops, on the other hand, are high enough that farmers are able to make substantial profits. Furthermore, there is currently no public goal for water levels. So while Flint River farmers may fear surpassing "reasonable use" or "sustainable yield," the prevailing economic conditions may force them to do so.

A user-fee water pricing scheme can make farmers account for the cost of water, which would change in response to crop prices and climate. To reduce risk, publishing pricing information at the beginning of a growing season would ensure that the price is taken into account even if costs are paid at the end of the growing season. This would both reduce water usage to a necessary base target rate and give the EPD sufficient authority to influence the outcome of droughts. Collected fees would a fund further water planning or irrigation reduction auctions.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Agriculture makes up the largest portion of consumptive water use on the lower Flint River Basin, so the majority of interaction will need to occur between these communities and the Environmental Protection Division.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The amount of water available to users on the Flint River is becoming increasingly precarious as surface waters in the basin are beginning to dry during droughts.

• Past strategies for managing the Flint River, including irrigation reduction auctions and a new water plan, have not taken effective steps to forestall the effects of droughts.

• A volumetric pricing or user-fee program implemented by the Georgia EPD would provide the flexibility and costs needed to reduce water usage to target levels, particularly in drought years. 2 Cook, Edward et al. "Drought reconstructions for the continental United States." Journal of Climate 12 1999: 1145-1162. 3 Turner, Judson. "Suspension of Consideration of Agricultural Withdrawal Permits in portion of the Lower Flint and Chattahoochee River Basins [Public Announcement]." Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 30 July 2012. http://www. gaepd.org/Files\_PDF/news/20120730113433.pdf.

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### NEXT STEPS

The Georgia General Assembly should authorize the EPD to collect and disburse funds. The cost of water will have to be identified with respect to variables such as farm revenues and crop prices. The EPD can then develop a model relating water cost with water projections. The EPD needs to set a water target for ground and surface water usage and develop a program to return the funds to the community in the event of drought. Local meetings on the Lower Flint River should be developed to encourage communication with stakeholders.

### **TURNING BLIGHT INTO MIGHT:** Local Empowerment through Changing Vacant Lot Ownership Policy

Lino Sanchez, Humboldt State University

In exchange for a tax-write off, delinquent property owners can open up vacant lots in low-income urban areas for public projects to reverse the adverse effects vacant lots inflict on the surrounding communities.

Vacant lots are spaces of abandoned, dilapidated, unused or underperforming residential and commercial properties.<sup>1</sup> These neglected sites are detrimental to the low-income neighborhoods they are often found in. Vacant lots negatively affect public health and cause community distress by fostering a lack of neighborhood pride and community engagement.<sup>2</sup> Vacant lots often contain such harmful substances as lead, cadmium, arsenic, and asbestos; they are also a fire hazard when abandoned buildings are present.<sup>3,4</sup> Efforts by municipalities to address these various detriments use an excessive amount of taxpayer dollars, which could be better spent on the community. These vacant lots also levy heavy costs for dealing with the crime that they attract, by creating a space for such illegal activity as drug dealing and gangrelated graffiti.<sup>5</sup>

Vacant lots are generally located in low-income areas and they exact a high social and economic cost on the surrounding communities. Property owners hold onto vacant lots hoping property values will rise, and fail to renovate because it is not profitable. They are typically not residents of the neighborhoods that house vacant lots, and therefore have little incentive to clean up these spaces. Lack of initiative and proper recourse remain prevalent factors of urban blight in low-income communities where there is little effort by local government to remediate vacant lots. Efforts to reclaim neglected spaces by local government through eminent domain do not sufficiently address the problem of revitalizing vacant lots, as they will still often remain vacant. Any efforts to utilize vacant and abandoned spaces by the public for revitalization projects, such as community gardens or education centers, are prevented by laws that protect a property owner's right to own vacant lots. In order to take back the land, local governments should revise or create a vacant lot policy that both penalizes neglectful property owners and creates opportunities for vacant lots to be used for public projects.

#### ANALYSIS

Local governments should make stronger efforts to reclaim vacant spaces for communities by citing property owners for problems caused by their vacant lots. Blighted cities, such as Detroit,

#### **KEY FACTS**

• There are more than 10 million vacant lots in the US."

• Vacant lots are a leading cause of fires in the US, resulting in more than 12,000 incidents per year, costing local governments \$73 million each year to compensate property damage.<sup>12</sup>

• Vacant lots create a loss in property tax revenue taken by local government, ranging from \$3 billion to \$6 billion annually.<sup>13</sup> sometimes have over 100,000 vacant lots within their borders.<sup>6</sup> Remediating these lots often results in large expenditures. For example, the city of Chicago spent \$875,000 on vacant lot maintenance in 2010 and Philadelphia spends a total of \$1,846,745 each year.<sup>7,8</sup> In addition to creating a space for unsafe practices, vacant lots also depress the property value for surrounding houses. Urban housing values nationally have dropped by an average of \$8,600 to \$17,000 as a result of nearby vacant lots.<sup>9</sup> Drops in property values translate to lower property tax revenue for local governments.

California's Urban Incentive Zones Act (AB551) addresses the issue of vacant lots by lowering property taxes for landowners if the land is used for urban agriculture, but more must be done nationally.<sup>10</sup> If property owners are reluctant to renovate their vacant lots, they should be required to open their properties up to the community for the development of public projects in exchange for a reduction in property taxes. The negative effects of vacant lots on the community need to be factored into vacant lot owners' property taxes to ensure that taxpayers are not being held accountable.

In addition, a detailed definition of what constitutes blight must be drafted by local ordinances to make sure it includes the resulting gloom and neighborhood pessimism that cannot be quantified through fiscal means. Property owners need to understand how their land is affecting the surrounding community and will be required to make the vacant lot safe. If property owners are unresponsive for an extended period of time, then local government should seize the vacant lot through eminent domain. If property owners can be contacted, then they will be given the option of opening the vacant lot up to the public for a reduction in property taxes, or begin renovating it themselves immediately. If the vacant lot is opened up to the public, projects such as

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Vacant lots negatively affect the health and safety of low-income communities. They also harm the economy and aesthetics of an area.

 Property owners neglect their legal obligations, thus leaving vacant lots abandoned to gather trash and serve as a hotspot for crime.

 Property owners should be held accountable, and thus given the option to either immediately renovate the vacant lot, or open it up for public use. community gardens and education centers will be proposed and voted upon by members of the community.

The primary stakeholders in this initiative will be members of the local community who have been plagued by the negative aspects vacant lots have brought to their neighborhood. In addition, vacant lot owners serve as stakeholders because they will make the ultimate decision as to what is to be done with their land. Community members will either benefit from public projects or the removal of urban blight, while property owners may receive a reduction in property taxes.

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### NEXT STEPS

First, local government must change its policies on vacant lots to prevent property owners from leaving them abandoned. Next, all potential spots for public projects must be mapped out in low-income urban environments where vacant lots exist. Owners of vacant lots must then be contacted to alert them of how their property is affecting the surrounding community. A rigorous assessment of the costs that vacant lots impose will be presented to property owners, holding them accountable and requiring them to make the land safe. Property owners will then be given the option of opening the vacant lot up to public use as a tax write off or immediately begin renovating it themselves. Lastly, communities will vote upon how to best use the vacant lot if the land is opened up to public use.

### Solar Sun-stainability: Cost-Effective Clean Power for Georgetown and

### **OTHER DISTRICT UNIVERSITIES**

Sharanya Sriram, Georgetown University

Georgetown University, modeling other local university plans, should transition to rooftop solar paneling instead of upgrading existing machinery to save money and decrease energy consumption. By introducing citywide cost-effective initiatives, Georgetown can encourage university campuses in D.C. to place more emphasis on clean energy projects.

Over the past eight years, Georgetown University has been working to reduce its carbon footprint, but the effects are not significant. Between FY 2006 and FY 2010, the university eliminated 19.8 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging conservative procedures and practices within its community. These include (but are not limited to) efficient heating and cooling systems, awareness initiatives at different resident halls, changing energy inputs from local companies to reflect "green" procedures and, most importantly, the university's first LEED-certified building.

However, with all these changes, the issue still remains that Georgetown is not using its resources to make a transition to clean power. Statistics from FY 2011 indicate that 68.1 percent of Georgetown's energy emissions came from electric energy while a further 30.4 percent stemmed from natural gas resources.<sup>1</sup> Georgetown's current plan for future reduction of its carbon footprint is to reduce cooling and heating needs by upgrading current machinery

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Georgetown has fallen behind local universities in using clean energy. Instead of changing each energy-consuming machine inside buildings, Georgetown can make use of its ample rooftop space to install solar panels.

• Solar panels will help meet the university's commitment to clean and renewable energy, a mission that is not yet impactful with the current energy use on campus. to increase "operational efficiency and building efficiency."

Unfortunately, Georgetown's current usage of solar energy is limited to one building, the Intercultural Center; only 6 percent of energy used in this building (0.18 percent at Georgetown overall) is attributed to these panels. While the university claims these panels serve as Georgetown's commitment to forward-looking energy sources, there has been no capitalization on this policy. As the oldest large-scale solar project in the country, established in 1984, the solar technology in the panels is quickly becoming obsolete, as scientists in recent years have developed more efficient photovoltaic cells.<sup>2</sup>

The panels, due to grime and age, reduced production from around 360,000 kWh/year to lows around 100,000 kWh/year. Repairs done in 2007 increased functionality to 200,000 kWh/year, which is still significantly less than its potential. In comparison, other universities in Washington, D.C., have clear, current commitments to solar energy. Both American University (AU) and George Washington University (GWU) have installed rooftop solar paneling.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, AU uses solar power to heat water supplies to certain residence halls and dining halls, while GWU is experimenting with solar walkway installations.<sup>4</sup> To promote green energy and stay on track with the commitment that University President John DeGioia made toward cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, Georgetown must model the solar energy plans of fellow institutions in a cost-effective manner.

#### ANALYSIS

If Georgetown aims to update its current utilities to reflect minimized heating and cooling needs, it has to revamp all facilities beginning with each residence hall and eventually extending to regular-use buildings as well. Furthermore, the university's sustainability campaign of advo-

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Georgetown's clean energy policy is outdated in comparison to its commitment to green initiatives.

• Revamping university facilities will not be cost-efficient in comparison to the installation of rooftop solar panels.

• Solar panel use will help to achieve Georgetown's president's pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by the year 2020.

 Net-metering and municipal bonds, if implemented, will provide Georgetown and other local institutions and companies an easy way to pursue solar power in a costeffective manner. cating a campus-wide reduction of personal energy use is not reliable in that the energy use of each individual student cannot be monitored and recorded. These projects, while disrupting regular university life and creating unnecessary and irrelevant costs because of the vast physical body of the university, will ultimately be outweighed by the benefits rising from implementing renewable energy initiatives such as rooftop solar panels.

Georgetown's main campus buildings have a large amount of unused rooftop space; residence halls such as Village A and New South have sufficient rooftop space to test areas for the efficacy of solar power on a building's energy use. If implemented and tested successfully, the university can begin to expand the use of solar power to other buildings on campus.

Initially, this project will be more costly than the original plan of solely promoting awareness initiatives and updating current machinery, but in the long run, the solar panels will save the university a large amount of money by reducing electricity costs. If the university gradually introduces solar panels-one rooftop at a time to facilitate the allocation of renovation funds-then it can still continue to spread the idea of students saving energy, while supporting its mission statement with the introduction of clean energy sources. This would also be a huge step to reaffirm President DeGioia's pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent per square foot by 2020.

The Office of Sustainability and campus officials will be the main parties involved in the implementation of these ideas. While construction may affect the living situation of students in the chosen residence halls, it would be around or less than the amount of disturbance that would be caused by the repairs and installation of new machinery for the heating and cooling systems. This proposal would satisfy Georgetown's desire to stay current with renewable energy sources and would provide students with the ability to live on a more sustainable campus, which is a point of advocacy for many student groups. Georgetown's implementation of costeffective policies in the District would aid other local universities in their mission to commit to clean energy by making it cheaper for them to invest in new solar projects.

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### NEXT STEPS

To implement a clean, cost-effective strategy to incorporate the maximized use of solar-panels at universities in Washington D.C., a two-step plan must be enacted. First, Washington, D.C., or specific wards such as Ward 2 (where Georgetown University is located) should implement the creation of municipal bonds for local solar projects.

Cities such as San Jose and Berkeley in California plan to use these bonds to create low-risk, local initiatives for solar power reformatting for energy efficiency, using the state's Property Assessed Clean Energy program.<sup>5</sup> Although this Californian law is currently under constraints from the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the state government is currently working to set up a reserve fund that would render PACE acceptable.<sup>6</sup> Once this policy is reviewed and approved in California, D.C. can follow its lead and facilitate the cost-effective installation of rooftop solar panels or other clean energy initiatives.

This policy would be in addition to the Washington, D.C., council's recent legislation enabling virtual net-metering to the District through the Community Renewables Energy Act.<sup>7</sup> Net-metering is the idea of reducing an electricity bill by selling or crediting the energy used by solar facilities back to the electricity company grid. By taking advantage of these two possibilities, District universities can maximize their clean energy use, eliminating an unhealthy dependency on electricity, which suffers from both continually rising prices and rising greenhouse gas emissions.

## REDUCING GARBAGE COLLECTION COSTS THROUGH GREEN INNOVATION

Kudzai Tunduwani, CUNY City College

Using proven technology, the issues of soaring garbage collection costs and garbage pile-ups in Harlem can be resolved, and savings from reduced collection may be used for community beautification and local employment.

New York City's garbage collection costs have ballooned by more than 90 percent in under 8 years to almost 1.3 billion dollars, largely due to increased transport costs.' In the same period, fuel prices have nearly doubled.<sup>2</sup> Integral to the wasteful collection system are trucks that collect garbage from sidewalk receptacles. These trucks are extremely fuel inefficient with ratings of 2.8 gallons per mile.<sup>3</sup> In order to mitigate the effects of frequent garbage collection. BigBelly trash receptacles can be utilized. BigBelly receptacles are solar powered garbage cans that compact waste and notify users when collection is necessary. BigBelly receptacles are in use in more than thirty countries as well as in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Arizona, and New York.<sup>4</sup> The receptacles limit garbage collection by storing five times as much garbage as traditional receptacles and by providing an alert when collection is necessary, eliminating inefficient garbage collection practices.<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia officials have noted that BigBelly receptacles also keep trash from blowing out of receptacles during windy conditions because they are enclosed.<sup>6</sup> Funding for the receptacles in Philadelphia comes from Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development and the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department.7

#### **KEY FACTS**

- Philadelphia saved
   \$1 million during the first year of usage of BigBelly receptacles<sup>8</sup>, not including improvements in quality of life, investment and tourism.
- BigBelly Receptacles store 5 times as much garbage as a regular receptacle and notify users when collection is necessary.<sup>5</sup>
- Traditional receptacles cost about \$4,000 a year to maintain compared to yearly costs of as low as \$50 for BigBelly receptacles.<sup>10</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

BigBelly receptacles saved Philadelphia almost \$1 million in their introductory year.<sup>8</sup> This amount does not account for increased investment and tourist activity resulting from cleaner streets, improved quality of life, and reduced garbage truck emissions. Philadelphia officials have stated that the receptacles reduced collections from 17 to 5 times a week.<sup>9</sup> While each receptacle can cost up to \$4,000, when compared with the \$150 hourly cost of operating a garbage truck<sup>10</sup> and the up to \$4,000 yearly cost of maintaining a traditional receptacle<sup>11</sup>, the investment has been projected to save Philadelphia \$12.9 million over 10 years.<sup>12</sup>

Garbage receptacles are daily filled to several times capacity in Harlem.<sup>13</sup> Overflowing trash cans have the immediate effect of rendering the immediate area unattractive, undermining tourism efforts, reducing property values, and adversely affecting businesses.<sup>14</sup> By installing BigBelly receptacles in Harlem, overflow would be eliminated, garbage collection, sometimes as often as twice a day <sup>15</sup>, would be reduced by 70 percent<sup>16</sup>, health risks associated with overflowing trash would be mitigated, community appeal and marketability would improve, and funds would be saved that could be used for community beautification initiatives and the employment of local youth.

This program could be funded through a partnership between the Mayor's office, the Harlem Chamber of Commerce (HCOC) and the New East Harlem Merchants Association (NHEMA). Funds for beautification initiatives would be directed for use as grants for initiatives that engage and employ youth in Harlem, providing a source of income and instilling a personal investment in the upkeep of the neighborhood. The startup cost of purchase and installation of thirty receptacles would be approximately \$120,000, with potential savings of \$250,000 in less than 8 years.<sup>12</sup>

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Installation of BigBelly receptacles will spur improvements to quality of life and increases in tourism and investment.

• Savings generated can be redirected to community improvement programs and the employment of local youth and the homeless.

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### NEXT STEPS

The HCOC and NHEMA should partner with the Mayor's Office to invest in BigBelly receptacles and establish a fund with NHEMA for savings that will be directed towards Harlem beautification initiatives. NHEMA should analyze data from the City of New York Sanitation Department (DSNY) to calculate savings from reduced garbage collection in Harlem and request funds from DSNY commensurate with calculated savings. Savings should be directed to an annually replenished NHEMA fund for beautification initiatives. Requests for project proposals should be disseminated, once savings have been calculated, to local organizations, with the requirement that any proposals engage and provide a source of income for youth and the homeless.

### A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Hilary Yu, Cornell University

Co-management expands participation in the resource management process and can be a more effective and equitable way to manage well-defined common-pool resources, such as fish stocks, across the nation.

Co-management, wherein responsibility for specified natural resources is shared between resource users at the local level and authorities at the state or national level, emphasizes collaboration and dialogue between stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

Co-management supports participatory governance by engaging local users in resource management, increasing peer monitoring, and encouraging users to share knowledge of resources they interact with directly, such as fish stocks. Co-management most effectively addresses shared resource exploitation and was historically implemented within fisheries management.<sup>2</sup>

The current US Regional Fishery Management Council system is one form of co-management. Critics argue it has failed to produce more sustainable fisheries, but this is likely because it divides the country into eight broadly-managed regions.<sup>3</sup> Since divergent interests are still likely to exist regionally, fisheries management is better implemented at state and local levels.

On a state level, the Maine legislature in 1995 enacted a "zone management law" for their lobster industry. The law established a framework for its Commissioner of Marine Resources to create lobster policy management zones, with each zone managed by an elected council of lobster-fishing license holders. The law also

#### **KEY FACTS**

•As of 2009, approximately one-third of global fish stocks are overexploited or depleted.<sup>8</sup>

 Although co-management is "enhanced by strong central governance systems," attributes of the local community are also "necessary for success."<sup>9</sup>

• The co-management law in Maine resulted in the passage of trap limits and limited-entry laws, both of which had long proved to be intractable issues in the Maine legislature.<sup>10</sup> granted zone councils to propose rules on a) maximum trap limits, b) number of traps to be fished on a single line, and c) allowable time of day for fishing. Prior to the 1995 law, seventeen state legislatures were unable to pass trap limit bills due to significant opposition from the lobster industry. By 1998, with local input facilitated by co-management, trap limits were passed in all seven zones.<sup>4</sup> Co-management has also been used in other states, such as Alaska, to allow native organizations to participate in the decision-making process on subsistence management of marine mammals.<sup>5</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Developing the infrastructure for co-management must be done on a site-specific level. For co-management to be successful, prominent community leadership, social cohesion, and clear incentives are key.<sup>6</sup> In situations where these may not be immediately apparent, resources should be leveraged such that community leaders are identified and social capital built up. Methods may involve a series of government-facilitated, open community meetings. Exact costs involved are difficult to estimate, as policies should be resource and community specific.

The process of infrastructure building requires significant investments, particularly as a result of site-specificity, but taking the time to do so expands participation and thus cooperation in decision-making. This can lead to concrete results by reducing community opposition to legislative proposals. Co-management also takes advantage of a community's proximity to a resource to enable peer monitoring and locallevel knowledge, such as regarding population dynamics. This can reduce costs of additional research and monitoring by central government entities often several levels removed from the resource in guestion. In Maine, fishermen help to reduce costs of scientific research on fish stocks by logging all species in their catch, as

#### **TALKING POINTS**

•Co-management of natural resources expands participation from typical central state actors to local community members, creating a more equitable decision-making framework.

• Participation encourages cooperation between state and local actors and takes advantage of resources available at the local level, such as intimate knowledge of a resource, to facilitate sustainable resource management.

• The strategy is most successful where important community members are identified, social cohesion exists, and incentives are clearly established. well as specific amounts and time of year of catch.

When properly implemented, co-management can also effectively support sustainable resource management.<sup>7</sup> Considering the environmental and future costs of overfishing, sustainable management of our current fisheries is both ecologically and economically important.

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### NEXT STEPS

Co-management is already in place in some states but can be expanded significantly. For example, while co-management exists for Maine's lobster industry and Alaska's marine mammals, other states with fishing industries, such as Louisiana and Florida, are lacking in co-management mechanisms beyond those of the less effective regional fishing councils.

States with major aquatic resources such as those mentioned above should support fisheries co-management by providing the resources and infrastructure to identify the key community leaders associated with a specific resource, such as lobster fishing in Maine, and to determine which incentives will be effective to encourage community involvement. This will likely involve communicating with local associations of resource users, for example, the non-profit Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association. In instituting a system of co-management, government recognition of local authority is also crucial, as is establishing a nested hierarchy of constant communication between community actors, local government, state government, and at times, the national government.



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### ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK



### **EQUAL JUSTICE**

Policy of the Year Nominee

JAILBREAK: PARTING WITH PROFIT PRESSURE IN PRISON MANAGEMENT

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## WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# <mark>Wнат</mark> You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

### How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director



# Congratulations to

# MICHAEL UMBRECHT, Hannah Barnes, and Caitlin Miller

authors of Jailbreak: Parting with Profit Pressure in Prison Managment

> Nominee for Policy Of The Year

A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 MICROSTAMPING: SOLVING CRIME THROUGH THE BARREL OF THE GUN Alex Chakrin
- <sup>10</sup> ENDING EXTREME ISOLATION: ALTERNATIVES TO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN NEW YORK STATE Matthew Clauson and Garrison Lovely
- 14 NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING BY MAIL IN VIRGINIA Caitlin Highland
- 17 **PROVIDING LIVING WAGES FOR CAMPUS WORKERS** Patrick McKenzie, Hayley Brundige, and Brandon Cartagena
- 20 RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES DEPENDENT ON MERE GOOD WILL Amanda Purcell and Katie Greenberg
- 23 A MORE JUST SYSTEM: USING MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION TO ELECT MICHIGAN'S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Dominic Russel
- <sup>26</sup> UNDERSERVED AND OVERLOOKED: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS LGBT YOUTH
   Alexander Simon-Fox and Brian Lamberta
- 29 COMBATING RECIDIVISM: COMMUNITY INTEGRATION FOR MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS Griffin Simpson
- <sup>31</sup> IMPROVING ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS Samuel Wylde, Kyle Sieber, and Isabel Robertson
- 34 JAILBREAK: PARTING WITH PROFIT PRESSURE IN PRISON MANAGEMENT Michael Umbrecht, Hannah Barnes, and Caitlin Miller

### MICROSTAMPING: SOLVING CRIME THROUGH THE BARREL OF THE GUN

Alex Chakrin, Cornell University

Ballistic imprinting, or microstamping, should be required on all new firearms to aid police in solving crimes while holding criminals responsible for their actions.

In the United States, over 68 percent of all homicides are gun related, amounting to 11,078 deaths in 2010.<sup>1</sup> With so much gun violence in our society, citizens should expect these murders to lead to criminal action in every case. However, there are only a limited number of tools police can use to link a crime to a suspect. In many cases this is due to a lack of evidence. Typically only the shells fired are found at the scene of the crime.

Microstamping is a process in which when a shell is ejected when a gun is fired, it is imprinted with a unique stamp. In a state with microstamping laws, a small pin would be inserted at the tip of the firing pin of each new firearm sold. When the gun is fired, the pin would leave a microscopic stamp on the casing of the fired shell that would be traceable at the crime scene. This allows law enforcement to link shell casings to the original purchaser of the gun.

The National Rifle Assocation (NRA) has gone on record opposing the legislation. It is joined by gun manufacturers opposed to increased manufacturing costs. However, groups such as Mayors Against Illegal Guns along with the American Bar Association support microstamping, believing the technology to be a useful tool to catch criminals.<sup>2</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Gun owners are concerned that microstamp-8

#### **KEY FACTS**

• More than 35.2 percent of all homicide cases go unsolved.<sup>5</sup>

• Finding one microstamped casing at a crime scene gives police a 54 percent chance of identifying the gun owner.<sup>6</sup> ing will place an unnecessary burden on them. According to the manufacturer, having ballistic imprinting mechanisms in each new gun sold could potentially cost consumers anywhere between \$0.50 and \$6 a gun.<sup>3</sup> The cost of implementation should be weighed against the efficacy of the policy.

Microstamping is not a perfect solution; however, it is a step in the right direction. With current technological processes, microstamping bills would marginally increase the cost of purchasing guns. However, gun manufacturers and owners have avoided paying for the true cost of gun ownership, which includes the cost of gun violence. Similar to secondhand smoking, gun ownership has a cost to society that would be more fairly distributed to those people directly responsible it. In a sense, this is forcing gun owners and manufacturers to "pick up their tab" and help reduce the cost of police investigations while increasing their effectiveness.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

 At a minimal cost to gun owners, microstamping can link gun shells found at a crime scene to a gun's original purchaser.

• This gives an advantage to law enforcement to catch suspects who might otherwise be untraceable.

 This policy may help hold gun manufacturers responsible for the end uses of their guns.

### NEXT STEPS

In 2007, California Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a microstamping bill that would go into effect when the technology patent expired.<sup>4</sup> Even though this law has passed several key hurdles in California, there is still a long way to go towards implementing this technology nationwide. States that have recently passed expansive gun control measures, such as New York and Connecticut, have seen microstamping specific language fail under pressure from state gun manufacturers and the NRA. Politicians are too willing to concede gun regulation as a losing issue at the polls.

To pass microstamping legislation, advocates can decide to first implement a study period, providing an assurance of future implementation of the technology. Another consideration which might slow the transition to microstamped firearms is to allow previously existing firearms without the technology to either be slowly phased out or grandfathered into the system as has been done in California. In addition, lobbying efforts are needed at the state and national level to push the legislation forward. Democrats and Republicans need to know that there is a political price to be paid for willful ignorance of common sense solutions. There is too much at stake for gun politics to determine the fate of this crime-fighting technology.

### ENDING EXTREME ISOLATION: ALTERNATIVES TO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN NEW YORK STATE

Matthew Clauson and Garrison Lovely, Cornell University

Due to the harmful social and psychological effects of solitary confinement, new measures must be imposed to prevent the overuse of special housing units (SHUs) in the New York State correctional system.

As the prison population continues to grow, solitary confinement is increasingly used as a tool for punishing and separating prisoners.' At present, more than 80,000 inmates in the United States are in solitary confinement.<sup>2</sup> Within the correctional system, solitary confinement cells are referred to as special housing units (SHUs). With approximately 4,500 inmates housed in SHUs, hundreds of whom are under the age of 21, New York currently has the highest percentage of its inmates incarcerated in conditions of extreme isolation.<sup>3</sup> Between 2007 and 2011, New York issued more than 68,100 SHU sentences, of which the average length was five months.<sup>4</sup> About 50 percent of these inmates live in complete isolation, while the other 50 percent share quarters with another inmate.<sup>5</sup>

According to former New York Prison Commissioner Glenn Goord, SHUs are designed "to house inmates who assault staff and disrupt our facilities."<sup>6</sup> In most cases, inmates are sent to SHUs as punishment (disciplinary segregation) or because they have been deemed a risk to the safety of other inmates or staff (administrative segregation). To minimize contact between prisoners and personnel, inmates often spend 23 hours a day within the confines of the SHUs. with one hour for mandated outdoor recreation.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, they have limited access to vocational training, education courses, and therapy sessions.<sup>8</sup> There is no clear evidence, however, that extreme isolation reduces incidences of violence in prisons.<sup>9</sup> In fact, critics argue that extreme isolation increases the risk of violence by contributing to psychological and social deterioration.<sup>10</sup>

Studies also show that solitary confinement aggravates the onset of mental illness. Even those who do not develop mental illness commonly experience significant psychological pain, which makes it severely difficult to adapt to the broader prison environment and reintegrate into society following their release." Yet, in New York, nearly 2,000 people are released directly from SHUs each year.<sup>12</sup> Due to the intense social

#### **KEY FACTS**

• With approximately 4,500 inmates housed in SHUs, New York currently has the highest percentage of its inmates incarcerated in conditions of extreme isolation.<sup>15</sup>

 In New York, solitary confinement is currently used at a rate
 percent higher than the national average. <sup>16</sup>

• Nearly 30 percent of all suicides in the New York correctional system occur in solitary confinement. <sup>17</sup> and psychological effects of extreme isolation, combined with the complete lack of rehabilitative and transitional programming, these prisoners are likely to commit new crimes sooner than prisoners who are transferred from SHUs to the general prison population prior to their release.<sup>13</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Changing the criteria that state correctional systems use to determine whether inmates require either disciplinary or administrative segregation would effectively reduce the number of inmates subject to extreme isolation. This would improve correctional standards and lower incarceration rates, resulting in savings to the state and a more just prison system in the long-term. In Mississippi, for example, new criteria determined that 80 percent of the inmates in administrative segregation did not need to be isolated, which led to the transfer of 800 inmates from SHUs to the general prison population and a demonstrated 70 percent decrease in violent incidents.<sup>14</sup>

Further restrictions on the use of solitary confinement are needed in the New York State correctional system. SHU sentences should be limited to a maximum of ten days and used only to isolate inmates who have acted violently while in prison. Inmates who are particularly high-risk or vulnerable should be separated from other inmates, but not barred from all human interaction. Rehabilitative and transitional programming should remain available to inmates housed in SHUs, and a graduated system of rewards and punishments should be implemented to incentivize desired behaviors. Inmates currently housed in SHUs should be reclassified according to these new standards.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

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# **Next Steps**

Evidence of the detrimental social and mental health effects of extreme isolation must be brought to the attention of the New York State Legislature. Members of the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Correction and the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Crime, Crime Victims, and Correction should be pressured through petitions and letter writing campaigns to hold hearings on this issue. Additionally, human rights and public interest organizations should make ending solitary confinement a priority in awareness and outreach efforts. Advocacy groups currently engaged in this area of work such as the New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement and the Correctional Association of New York should work together to build a cohesive, statewide campaign. As solitary confinement becomes less commonplace in New York State prisons, funding must also be made available to convert SHUs into traditional cells to account for the reduced number of prisoners in isolation.

## NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING BY Mail in Virginia

Caitlin Highland, Claremont McKenna College

Allowing no-excuse absentee voting by mail in Virginia would increase voter turnout, particularly among those who work long hours or care for young children.

Absentee voting has been evolving since the Civil War, when states began to enact absentee voting measures for soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Civilians were first permitted to vote absentee in Vermont in 1896.<sup>2</sup> Since this time, absentee voting has expanded for a variety of purposes, including work, travel, attending a university away from home, and illness.

California was the first state to allow for noexcuse absentee voting, starting with the 1978 election. No-excuse absentee voting by mail allows voters to register absentee without an excuse. No-excuse absentee voting by mail has not been tried in Virginia, although a bill allowing for *in-person* no-excuse early voting was introduced in the Virginia House of Delegates in 2013 as HB 1937, where it did not pass.<sup>3</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Many studies have found that no-excuse absentee voting increases voter turnout. The cost to voters is minimal: although they must fill out an extra form to apply for an absentee ballot, they do not need to waste gas mileage or time to go to the polls. The drive to the polls can prove a powerful deterrent: in one study, a five-mile drive decreased likelihood to vote by 3.1 percent.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in 2012, Virginia had one of the highest waiting times once at the polls, close to 45 minutes.<sup>6</sup> In Florida, the state with the longest wait average at exactly 45 minutes,

#### TALKING POINTS

 No-excuse absentee voting is a costeffective system that allows for all people to have the time to vote, even in Virginia, where employers are not required to let employees take time off and many low-wage workers cannot afford it. This alternative does not hurt wages or business hours, and still increases access to the polls.

 No-excuse absentee voting benefits voters who can make it to the polls as well, as some voters will choose to vote absentee, shortening lines at precincts. more than 200,000 voters left precincts due to the wait.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, in Virginia, 48,000 workers make the federal minimum wage, and 75,000 make even less.<sup>8</sup> Because of the lack of a law requiring employers to give employees time off to vote, no-excuse absentee voting would allow voters to not lose valuable hours when they are already making so little. Some workers work long hours and care for children or elders, making visiting the polls nearly impossible.

According to several studies, cost to the state to implement no-excuse absentee voting is minimal. It is significantly cheaper than the alternative, allowing early in-person voting, which would require hiring appropriate workers and finding space. It also does not affect business, as requiring employers to give time off to vote would. Thus, it is the most economically sound option.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Voting organizations, including but not limited to the American Civil Liberties Union Voting Rights project, Rock the Vote, Project Vote, and the Virginia League of Women Voters, would advocate for the policy. The Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia would need to pass a bill, with Republican support. Governor Terry McAuliffe would need to sign the bill. The Virginia State Board of Elections, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and the Attorney General would be instrumental in the implementation of this policy. Voters would see a decrease in waiting time at the polls. Employees with hourly wages would not have to choose between voting and their paycheck. Employees not let out of work to vote would still be able to cast their ballot.

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#### **KEY FACTS**

• In states with no-excuse absentee voting, 23.5 percent of voters voted before Election Day.<sup>10</sup>

- Virginia had a 66.4 percent turnout for the 2012 election, and a 37 percent turnout for the 2013 gubernatorial election."
- Virginia does not require employers to allow for time off on Election Day.<sup>12</sup>
- Virginia also does not allow early voting or permanent absentee status.<sup>13</sup>
- Twenty-seven states and D.C. allow no-excuse absentee voting.<sup>14</sup>

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### NEXT STEPS

The conservative Virginia General Assembly may not pass a law expanding voting access and instituting no-excuse absentee voting unless the general public advocated strongly for it. Therefore, the aforementioned voting rights organizations must galvanize their members and other grassroots leaders to pressure the legislature. They should organize letter-writing campaigns, visits to elected officials, social media efforts, and more. One or more of the groups should also draft a bill and find a sympathetic delegate or senator, such as Delegates Alfonso Lopez or Rob Krupicka, who introduced HB 1937. The legislature must then write and pass a bill, to be signed by Governor McAuliffe.

The State Board of Elections, with help from the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Attorney General, would then need to implement the change. Implementation would be simple: new absentee ballot requests would need to be printed. Literature educating voters on the change should be created and distributed. The voting organizations could also create and distribute literature.

### PROVIDING LIVING WAGES FOR CAMPUS WORKERS

Patrick McKenzie, Hayley Brundige, and Brandon Cartagena, University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville should raise the minimum income of all university-employed campus workers to the living wages defined by the UTK Faculty Senate.

Students, faculty, administrators, and many others affiliated with the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) depend on campus Facilities Services workers to keep the campus clean and safe. Facilities Services encompasses a broad array of campus institutions, including sanitation, lock and key services, building services, utilities services, and construction services. Campus workers and their work permeate almost every aspect of university life and play a vital role in the maintenance and sustainability of UTK's campus and its daily operations.

As of April 2011, however, 1,141 of these campus workers were earning hourly wages below the living wage threshold as defined by the UTK Faculty Senate Budget and Planning Committee.<sup>1</sup> The 2010-2011 UT Faculty Senate Living Wage Study outlines that "an employee who works full-time and year-round should earn a wage sufficient to pay for basic, bare-bones needs of a family living in today's America, without having to resort to needs-tested public benefits, crime, or private charity." The "basic needs" of each worker depend on the size of family they have, the pricing of goods in local markets, and other factors, but it is clear that a standard of living must be met that takes these variations into account in determining employee income.<sup>1</sup>

#### **KEY FACTS**

• As of April 2011, 1,141 workers at UTK were being paid less than living wages.<sup>1</sup>

- •Living wages reduce net poverty and promote various health benefits.<sup>3</sup>
- Only an extra annual \$4.3 to 5.7 million is needed to pay workers living wages, which itself represents only 1.6 percent of the total money spent on staff salaries and benefits.<sup>6</sup>
- •Living wages boost worker productivity by reducing absenteeism and improving overall quality of life.<sup>5</sup>

To advocate for comprehensive living wages for

campus workers, the Living Wage Campaign began at UTK in 1999 in association with the Progressive Student Alliance (then called the "Alliance for Hope"), and their efforts led to the formation of the United Campus Workers, an independent union of university staff employees.<sup>2</sup> The union has rallied around the intent to increase the minimum wage for the university's lowest paid workers incrementally. For example, in 2001, workers received a 4 percent raise as UCW efforts increased. In 2004 and 2005, similar raises were given: 3 percent or \$750, whichever was greater.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these incremental wage increases, UTK Facilities Services workers are still not being paid a wage adequate to the cost of living. A living wage report conducted by the Faculty Senate in 2000 defines a living wage as \$9.50 per hour plus benefits. On December 3, 2013, UT announced that the minimum wage for campus workers will increase to \$9.50 per hour, falling more than a decade behind the 2000 living wage report recommendation in matching ongoing cost of living increases.

At UTK, the campaign hopes to remedy this gap by specifically appealing for adherence to the UTK Faculty Senate Budget and Planning Committee's recommendation of wage standards at a minimum of \$12.02 per hour, with all current benefits-annual leave, holidays, retirement, health insurance, longevity, Social Security, and 401K Match-included.<sup>1</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

The primary argument in favor of living wages has an ethical basis. The UTK Faculty Senate asserts that a full-time campus worker should make high enough wages to provide basic needs for his or her family, without having to also rely on other sources, including secondary employment and public assistance programs.<sup>1</sup>

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• If the University of Tennessee, Knoxville raises the payments of campus workers to an ethical, living wage standard, it will then reap the benefits of increased worker productivity and campus unity.

- Campus workers, students, faculty, and administration at the University of Tennessee can all gain from worker wage increases.
- The University of Tennessee, Knoxville administration and the Faculty Senate can cooperatively work out a long-term living wage solution with input from campus workers.

However, living wages carry other benefits as well. Evidence suggests that a living wage can lead to decreases in urban poverty and reductions in various health issues that lead to higher than average sick days.<sup>3</sup> For example, a study by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the University of California, San Francisco, showed that an increase to living wages in their city would, by enabling workers to achieve a greater standard of living, result in fewer cases of premature death and other health issues among adults aged 24 to 44 years working full-time in families with annual income of \$20,000.4 With living wages, campus workers would be able to purchase healthier food, maintain safe housing, and invest in preventative health care, which would, in turn, promote fewer conflicts between work responsibilities and medical problems. A living wage experiment in Los Angeles also found that, in addition to the health benefits, living wages caused a drop in absenteeism, low-wage worker turnover, and hours of overtime.<sup>5</sup> All of these outcomes create higher worker productivity for the employer.

At UTK, paying living wages to the remaining 23 percent of full-time campus workers would mean a total additional annual payment of approximately \$4.3 to \$5.7 million, only 1.6 percent of the annual money spent on all staff salaries and benefits.<sup>6</sup> In a Baltimore living wage experiment, even small increases in wages and salaries reduced the overall cost to the city, likely due to the impacts of decreased worker turnover and increased work productivity.<sup>7</sup> A similar effect would likely be observed at UTK.

#### **STAKEHOLDER**

Various parties can benefit from payment of living wages. An increase in the minimum payment for UTK workers would enhance their quality of life, allowing them to better support both themselves and their families. In addition, a living wage would better integrate campus workers into the rest of the campus community and promote a more satisfactory campus for the workers and for administrators, faculty, and students alike. The university as a whole would benefit from workers' boosted productivity, and improved pay for workers would establish UTK as a local standard for worker wage ethics and contribute to its goal of becoming a socially responsible "Top 25 Public Research Institution."

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## NEXT STEPS

To carry through with this proposal, the administration of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville must work cooperatively with the Faculty Senate to produce a budget that includes higher wages for underpaid campus workers. The administration, which will ultimately be responsible for approving any pay raise, should respond to calls for living wages and adjust current incomes of campus workers to at least a UTK Faculty Senatedefined living wage.

It is also recommended that both parties begin to consult with United Campus Workers (UCW) to gain better insights into the current plight of workers. By meeting with UCW, administrators and the Faculty Senate would allow workers a voice in the appropriation debate, strengthening ties between those writing the budget and those affected by it. To give campus workers direct input into policies related to income, the Faculty Senate should integrate representatives from UCW into future income policy revisions by consulting with UCW members for suggestions and for joint research collaborations. Additionally, before being presented to the Faculty Senate for consideration, the policy would have to be approved by UCW with a majority vote. If not approved, UCW would return the proposal to the Faculty Senate with recommendations for revision.

### RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR Workers with Disabilities Dependent on Mere Good Will

Amanda Purcell and Katie Greenberg, College of William & Mary

Congress should no longer allow special wage certificates that allow for disabled workers to be paid less than the minimum wage.

During the summer of 2013, an NBC story about Goodwill Industries' exploitation of workers with disabilities captured the attention of the Internet. In some Goodwill stores, disabled workers were being paid mere cents per hour, with salaries based on timed tests comparing their productivity to that of nondisabled employees.<sup>1</sup> While this news shocked many, Goodwill had not technically done anything illegal. Best known for establishing a federal minimum wage, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, through section 14(c), allows for a special minimum wage to be paid to workers with disabilities that reduce their job productivity. To pay this special minimum wage legally, employers must receive a certificate from the Wage and Hour Division of the US Department of Labor.<sup>2</sup> As of November 1, 2013, 1,638 employers have certificates issued under section 14(c) of the FLSA, and 1,108 employers have certificate applications pending.<sup>3</sup>

To address this inhumanely low wage, which some have called a "loophole" in labor law,<sup>4</sup> on February 26, 2013, Representative Gregg Harper (R-MS-3) introduced H.R.831, or the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013. Currently, the bill has 62 cosponsors from both the Republican and Democratic parties, and is being reviewed by the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections. However, the bill has yet to make it out of committee.<sup>5</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Disability rights advocates such as the National Federation of the Blind argue that the special minimum wage devalues people with disabilities by suggesting that their labor is inherently worth less. Also along these lines, the special minimum wage perpetuates the notion that people with disabilities will naturally be less productive in all occupations than people without disabilities, thus further limiting their potential employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the dehumanizing effects of the special minimum wage, paying disabled employees below the federal minimum wage is an outdated practice. As Representative Harper's bill states in Section 2, "There were virtually no employment opportunities for disabled workers in

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, employers can pay a wage below the federal minimum wage to employees with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

- More than 216,000 workers are eligible to earn a special minimum wage.<sup>1</sup>
- According to 2009 Labor Department records, some Pennsylvania Goodwill employees earn wages as low as 22 cents per hour<sup>1</sup>

the mainstream workforce [in the 1930s]."<sup>9</sup> Today, technology, training, and modern employment opportunities can allow a disabled person to be as productive as his or her non-disabled counterpart. Furthermore, one might justifiably question whether the timed tests used to determine wages for people with disabilities accurately capture a person's productive capacity, since timed tests are stressful for many people (and also "degrading," according to one former Goodwill employee).<sup>1</sup> More importantly, it is unlikely the non-disabled person who serves as the testing standard normally works as if he or she were being timed.

In light of recent criticism, Goodwill argued that if all workers were to be paid the minimum wage, then workers with disabilities would be unable to remain in the workforce due to their inability to produce as much as nondisabled workers.<sup>6</sup> Implicit in this claim is the suggestion that Goodwill would be unable to retain disabled workers at minimum wage because of the financial burden of increased labor costs without increased productivity. But considering Goodwill enjoyed \$4.89 billion in profits in 2012<sup>6</sup> and paid out \$53.7 million in total top executive compensation,<sup>7</sup> it is difficult to be sympathetic to this argument.

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### NEXT STEPS

Congress should remove the FLSA's section 14(c) provisions so that employers will no longer be able to pay disabled workers less than the federal minimum wage. While employers might not want to hire a worker with a disability whose productivity is lower than a worker without a disability, this is theoretically why the government compensates nonprofits such as Goodwill through grants. Businesses have their bottom lines; workers do as well. No one should earn 22 cents an hour.

### A MORE JUST SYSTEM: USING MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION TO ELECT MICHIGAN'S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dominic Russel, University of Michigan

Using mixed-member proportional elections would make Michigan's state legislature more accountable by giving greater value to every vote and create a government more representative of voters' political interests.

Almost every state uses single-member districts (SMD) to elect its lower house, by which the candidate with the plurality of votes in each district wins the seat.<sup>1</sup> This system is unfair, however, as the resulting representation gained by some political interests is often disproportional to popular support. In the 2012 Michigan House of Representatives election, for example, 54 percent of Michigan voters chose Democratic candidates, but the party won only 46 percent of the seats, resulting in a legislature controlled by the less popular Republicans.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, of the 110 seats, only 23 were won by a margin of less than 10 percent, which showed that most districts' elections were not competitive.<sup>3</sup>

SMD also unfairly hinders opposition voting to the two major parties because it encourages strategic voting to defeat the "lesser of two evils."<sup>4</sup> Although 63 percent of Michigan voters held an unfavorable view of the Republicans in the legislature, and 46 percent held an unfavorable view of the Democrats, zero candidates from third parties won a seat in Michigan's House of Representatives.<sup>5</sup>

Many countries, including Germany and New Zealand, use mixed-member proportional

#### **KEY FACTS**

• In five states nationwide, the party that won the largest portion of the vote for the legislature did not win the greatest number of seats.<sup>15</sup>

• In 2012, only 36 percent of Michiganders had a favorable view of Democrats in the legislature, and only 20 percent had a favorable view of Republicans in the legislature.<sup>16</sup>

• MMP was created after World War II and its use is growing; Bolivia, Venezuela, Germany, New Zealand, Hungary, Scotland, and Wales have all adopted MMP systems.<sup>17</sup> (MMP) voting to ensure that their legislatures sufficiently represent voters' political interests.<sup>6</sup> Eligible citizens cast two votes: one for a district representative and one for a party. The party vote determines the overall makeup of the legislature by proportional representation. About half of the party seats are decided by the candidates off the first ballot, and the party appoints additional candidates to guarantee proportional representation.<sup>7</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Using MMP to elect Michigan's House of Representatives would lead to more equitable elections. The proposed system would make the representation of political interests more proportional to popular support, while maintaining geographical representation, and therefore create a legislative body that more accurately reflects the ideologies of voters. It also ends meaningless elections in gerrymandered districts because every vote would count toward state-wide proportionality.

While these changes would benefit voters regardless of party affiliation, third party supporters undoubtedly would receive the greatest benefits from MMP, as the system in other cases has fostered the proliferation of small parties within the legislature.<sup>8</sup> This change would definitively reflect the current beliefs of citizens: 60 percent of Americans say that both the Democratic and Republican parties do such a poor job of representing the American people that a third major party is needed.<sup>9</sup>

The change to MMP may be somewhat confusing for voters due to the prevalence of winner-take-all SMD systems in the American political system. New Zealand made a similar change from SMD to MMP at a national level in 1996, however, and the system has thrived and continues to today.<sup>10</sup> The concept behind MMP is fairly simple: the proportion of the vote

#### TALKING POINTS

• The current SMD electoral system of Michigan discourages voting for small parties and leads to unfair and unrepresentative election results.

• Using MMP in Michigan would ensure each voter's choice counts while still protecting geographical constituencies.

• MMP systems lead to more unique parties that more adequately capture the political interests of voters, not just those that align with two dominating parties. becomes the proportion of the seats, but there are still representatives for each geographical constituency.

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### NEXT STEPS

To change the electoral system, there would need to be an amendment to the state constitution." It would be politically impossible for this changewhich would undermine the two-party system-to occur through a partisan, two-party legislature. Many states, however, including Michigan, allow for initiatives receiving more than half the votes in a statewide election to change the constitution. Bringing the possibility of MMP to the attention of voters through an organized and informative campaign would be the most important next step in changing the electoral system. Third parties and third party supporters would be extremely eager to fund this campaign, as electoral system referendums in Ontario in 2007<sup>12</sup> and Great Britain in 2011 demonstrate.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, electoral reform groups such as FairVote (which has had success using the initiative to reform electoral systems in cities including San Francisco and Oakland) could help generate support for this movement.<sup>14</sup> Voters are so disillusioned with both the Democratic and Republican parties that an organized coalition of these groups could foster enough public support for an MMP initiative to pass.

### Underserved and Overlooked: Addressing the Needs of Runaway and Homeless LGBT Youth

Alexander Simon-Fox and Brian Lamberta, Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York

To properly address the needs of LGBT runaway and homeless youth, President Obama should issue an executive order establishing anti-discrimination standards and requiring compliance from homelessness assistance providers.

While 3 to 7 percent of the overall US youth population, ages 12 to 21 years old, identifies as LGBT, this population constitutes as much as 40 percent of runaway and homeless youth (RHY).<sup>1</sup> This disproportionate figure most often stems from family rejection and abuse; more than one in four youth who come out to their parents are expelled from their homes and most others face similar negative consequences, such as financial and physical abuse.<sup>2</sup>

In seeking alternatives in shelter and transitional housing systems, LGBT youth often experience the same rejection and hostile treatment. Almost 80 percent of LGBT RHY report feeling threatened in and/or being expelled from their emergency housing.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, without active and enforced anti-discrimination policies, shelters with anti-LGBT histories continue to receive full federal funding.

Historically, President Barack Obama has used executive orders as an effective tool for ensuring that LGBT individuals receive equal treatment by ending the travel ban for people living with HIV/AIDS and by requiring that hospitals accepting Medicare and Medicaid allow

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• LGBT youth experience homelessness at disproportionate rates and providers often fail to meet the needs of these groups.

- An executive order mandating compliance with non-discrimination policies for federally funded programs could combat discrimination against LGBT youth.
- An executive order is feasible because the Executive Branch administers funds to shelters and other services.

visitation regardless of the gender of a partner.<sup>4.3</sup> Likewise, President Obama should mitigate this crisis by issuing a swift executive order mandating that these organizations implement policies and services that respect sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Doing so can ensure fairer outcomes for LGBT RHY.

#### ANALYSIS

The US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) manages federal funding for homeless assistance. Last year, USICH distributed \$4.7 billion<sup>5</sup> with most earmarked for youth services in faith-based organizations, many of which are generally less tolerant of LGBT people.<sup>6</sup> With no provisions in place shielding against these providers' beliefs, it remains legal to completely refuse service based on sexual orientation and/ or gender identity.

An existing coalition of politicians and advocacy groups have already been working on this issue by pushing passage of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Inclusion Act (RHYIA), a bill sponsored by Representatives Gwen Moore (WI-4) and Mark Pocan (WI-2) to specifically address the needs of LGBT RHY. The bill has the support of nine Congressional co-sponsors, including two from the conservative-majority states of Arizona and Florida, as well as the support of many organizations, including the Human Rights Campaign and the National Network 4 Youth.<sup>7</sup>

Despite some momentum around RHYIA, floor action and passage are extremely unlikely. Congress last year reached a record low level of productivity-passing only fifty-five laws total, none of which were LGBT-supportive, and failing to act on crucial and popular issues.<sup>8</sup> As such, the coalition working to push RHYIA should redirect their efforts toward securing an executive order from President Obama. The executive order cannot go as far as RHYIA because it cannot increase spending for LGBT-specific services, but it represents a powerful way to cir-

#### **KEY FACTS**

• One in three transgender individuals are denied access to shelter services because of their gender identity. The 42 percent who receive shelter services are forced to stay with the wrong gender.<sup>10</sup>

• Three to 7 percent of the overall United States youth population identify as LGBT, but such individuals constitute as much as 40 percent of runaway and homeless youth."

• More than one in four young people who come out to their parents are expelled from their home and many others face similar negative consequences.<sup>12</sup> cumvent the political gridlock of Congress. An executive order is a feasible step in the right direction and could have immense impact on the lives of housing-insecure LGBT youth.

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### NEXT STEPS

The President should issue an executive order that establishes standards of non-discrimination and makes federal funding for providers contingent on compliance with these guidelines. These new standards would require that all aspects of the support network are identity-affirming, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Homeless services providers that offer family reunification, mental health, and other health services must ensure that therapists and other professional staff support and empower clients' sexual and gender identities. All providers must also ensure that clients' gender identities are respected by honoring name, pronoun, and housing gender preferences. Volunteer and staff trainings at transitional housing programs already required by law must also incorporate content that teaches an acceptable level of cultural competency surrounding LGBT issues and rights.<sup>9</sup>

Under the executive order, USICH would be empowered to take and investigate complaints of LGBT-related noncompliance. If complaints are valid, USICH will make recommendations for reinstating compliance or withdraw its certification from noncompliant providers' programs.

Because USICH certification ensures continued federal funding and is often a prerequisite for state-level funding as well, compliance with new LGBT standards is a powerful incentive for keeping providers' services operating. USICH is already federally funded, so the recommendation for an executive order is essentially costless; it merely reforms the current policy infrastructure rather than create additional infrastructure.
### Combating Recidivism: Community Integration for Mentally Ill Offenders

Griffin Simpson, New York University

Using the framework of Kendra's Law, New York state should place select inmates with mental health concerns into community-based rehabilitation programs.

In 1999, New York state introduced Kendra's Law in response to intervention needs in the treatment of dangerous mental illnesses. The law created an assisted outpatient treatment program, keeping patients in their communities and instilling healthy mental health norms with the goal of independent living. Kendra's Law is a court-ordered treatment specifically for those who are not criminal offenders. New York state should implement a similar program of assisted outpatient treatment for a select group of inmates who also suffer from mental illness.

#### ANALYSIS

Placing select prisoners in community rehabilitation would have direct benefits for the entire prison population, correctional officers, and the state of New York. By treating a select group in a community environment, the risk of repeat offense is diminished by simultaneously treating their illness and improving their ability to interact positively with society. A similar, smaller program in New York resulted in a mean reduction in recidivism from 104 to 45 days behind bars a year, saving the state \$4,500 per patient for that year in prison expenses alone.<sup>1</sup>

In New Mexico, an intensive supervision and treatment program saved the state \$2 for every dollar spent.<sup>2</sup> In addition to lowering future incarceration costs, the expense associated with assisted outpatient treatment is offset by the

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The difficulties all inmates have reintegrating into society are compounded by the pre-existing challenges of functioning in society with a mental illness.

• National spending on mental health has fallen as the number of mentally ill prisoners has risen. This proposal would combat the imbalance.

• While the general prison population is slowly decreasing in New York state, the percentage of the population suffering from mental illness is growing. New York must change its approach in response to this trend.

• This program gives New York an opportunity to help, rather than penalize, its worst-off citizens. reduced net cost to the mental health system.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the cumulative decades of prison time saved by reducing recidivism and emergency mental health interventions will save taxpayers money.

For the prison population at large, there is the benefit of reduced crowding. The strain on resources that accompanies overcrowding increases recidivism<sup>4</sup> and prison violence.<sup>5</sup> Corrections officers also benefit from a reduction in prison populations, as officers are safer and better able to administrate prisons with appropriately sized populations.<sup>6</sup>

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

In constructing such a program, there must be consultation between prison administrators, corrections officers, and psychological professionals, along with advocates for the rights of prisoners and the mentally ill. New York state residents are also stakeholders, as taxpayers would shoulder the initial costs and receive the benefits of a reduction in recidivism. In addition, there would need to be a case-by-case outreach effort to the communities selected to host the programs, as the support of these communities is antecedent to any attempt at reintegration. Forcing a community to play a rehabilitative role could breed resentment and hamper efforts to promote positive social integration.

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#### **KEY FACTS**

• New York would save \$43 million a year with just a 10 percent cut in recidivism rates.<sup>7</sup>

- There are more than 80,000 prisoners in the New York prison system. <sup>8</sup>
- Thirty-seven percent of New York City's prison population suffers from mental illness.<sup>9</sup>
- Individuals placed in assisted outpatient treatment under Kendra's Law were half as likely to be arrested<sup>10</sup> and four times less likely to commit violent crime after undergoing treatment."
- New York state has the highest per inmate cost in the nation at \$60,000 per year, nearly twice the national average. New York City's cost is over \$160,000 per prisoner.<sup>12</sup>

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### NEXT STEPS

To bring this program to fruition, a law would have to be drafted and passed in both the New York State Senate and Assembly, then signed into law by the governor. As stated, the law can be written using Kendra's Law as a framework for the type of mental health assistance provided through the program. Innovations would need to be made in designing the institutions the subjects would be placed in and deciding on the desired level of integration with host communities. Communities must also be willing partners for the program to be a success. In addition to the jobs that would be created in host communities, financial incentives could be provided by the state to encourage participation.

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO LEGAL Services in Rural Areas

Samuel Wylde, Kyle Sieber, and Isabel Robertson, Northwestern University

We propose the creation of a state-based professional network and scholarship program for law students sponsored by a partnership of law schools, bar associations, and state governments to further access to legal services in rural areas.

Recent years have seen a major shift in the employment outlook for law school graduates. Assuming the 2012 law school graduation rate continues through 2020, the result is an influx of 370,913 new lawyers<sup>1</sup> for 333,400 open positions<sup>2</sup> – and an unemployment rate of over 10 percent for those graduates. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, rural

areas throughout America are beginning to report declining access to legal services. As a result, residents in places like Bennett County, Nebraska<sup>3</sup>, and Clay County, Georgia<sup>4</sup>, may have to travel anywhere from 50 to 120 miles to the nearest attorney.

While close to a fifth of the US population lives in rural areas, only 2 percent of small law practices are located outside of urban settings.<sup>5</sup> The resulting situation is a problematic disequilibrium in which rural communities have become unfortunate deserts in a flood of lawyers. To combat this trend, the state of South Dakota, in partnership with the State Bar of South Dakota and rural counties throughout the state, has established a pilot program that pays a \$12,000 annual stipend to law students who agree to practice in rural areas for a minimum of five years after graduation.

#### ANALYSIS

All states should strives to remedy this gap in legal services, with programs based on South Dakota's. The need is not just a matter of principle, but also one of economics. Many ordinary legal issues, such as settling contract disputes, suing for damages incurred in a car accident or on the job, or simply obtaining a divorce can quickly become a significant economic impediment for communities without ready access to a lawyer. According to rural lawyer Steve Evenson, "Given the robust economic activity in some rural areas, there simply are not enough lawyers there." The state should ask for a four-year commitment<sup>6</sup> as a condition for a scholarship that pays an annual tuition stipend of \$10,000 (the average annual in-state cost of tuition is \$22,116<sup>7</sup>) as well as a competitive salary as a state employee during the lawyer's rural residency.<sup>8</sup> The cost of the program will be paid for by a grant from the federal government to individual states based upon their demonstrated need for rural legal services. States will work

#### **KEY FACTS**

• There is a five to one ratio of rural counties with poverty rates above the national average to urban counties with above average poverty rates.<sup>9</sup>

• Rural communities constitute 459 of the 500 poorest counties.<sup>10</sup>

• Rural communities constitute 481 of the lowest per capita income counties in the country." directly with law schools, which will themselves begin developing grant programs to eventually ease the burden on the government. Additionally, the creation of a statewide online professional network of rural practices would act as a marketplace to allow for the best possible allocation of lawyers and grant money among communities in need.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

The direct beneficiaries of this program would obviously be those rural communities in need of legal access, but many other parties will ultimately benefit from a more efficient legal system. The states themselves-especially those like Nebraska and Kansas, with largely rural-based economies-will reap the economic benefits of a well-functioning legal system, including decreased state-borne costs associated with insufficient legal representation (e.g. inexpedient court proceedings). Proper implementation of this program would also benefit law schools by increasing post-graduate employment statistics, and raise the prominence of the state Bar Associations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this program would be one step closer to the normative goal of ensuring equal justice for all.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• There are more law school graduates than open legal jobs.

• At the same time, rural citizens' access to legal services is in decline.

 Legal access is crucial to a well-functioning economy and community.

• Connecting jobseeking law students to communities in need of legal access solves two problems at once.

### NEXT STEPS

The necessary first step for this program would be to secure federal funding, after which it will be necessary to assess the need for legal access on a state-by-state basis, as well as on an individual community basis within each state. Such a comprehensive project can be best accomplished through a partnership between state Departments of Justice, state Bar Associations, and law schools. The latter two organizations likely already have substantial research pertaining to the problem of access to legal aid, as well as the resources to make a comprehensive evaluation for each community.

It will also help to have the communities themselves apply for the program, and then be assessed by the same standards and process. This research would ultimately culminate in the creation of the proposed legal-network marketplace, which would keep an up-to-date record of legal need. As possible job placement locations are assessed, the state Department of Justice will reach out to law schools and begin to promote the program to current students. Eventually, a developed partnership between the state Department of Justice, Bar Association, law schools, and local communities will emerge.

### JAILBREAK: PARTING WITH PROFIT PRESSURE IN PRISON MANAGEMENT

Michael Umbrecht, Hannah Barnes, and Caitlin Miller, Georgetown University

Following the Correction Corporation of America's (CCA) decision not to renew its contract to run the Idaho Correctional Center (ICC), Idaho should re-staff the facility with government employees, serving as a model for states currently suffering from the deleterious outcomes of prison privatization.

Since the practice began in 1984, contracting prison administration to private companies such as CCA has become commonplace. The shift in

ideological tides toward free-market policies brought with it the notion that private administration could solve the inefficiencies of government functions through competitive innovation.<sup>1</sup> This reasoning permeated the prison system, resulting in widespread private contracting. Thirty years later, however, data shows that prison privatization "is at odds with the goals of reducing incarceration rates and raising correctional standards."<sup>2</sup> A recent report by Grassroots Leadership and the Public Safety and Justice Campaign details 30 specific incidents, including riots, murder, abuse, and other human rights violations that have occurred in private prisons throughout the country.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, prison privatization has led to the rise of private prison lobbies, which aim for harsher criminal penalties and sentencing. Due to the nature of their contracts, which stipulate government funding on a per-prisoner basis, private prison lobbies have a strong incentive to increase the number of inmates by any means necessary. To this end, lobbying efforts supported by private prison corporations have negatively altered the nature of the industry.

CCA is a private corporation that administers prisons across the US under government contract. Allegations of contract fraud and operational malfeasance led the company to withdraw from the Idaho Correctional Center. opting to not renew its contract with the state in 2014. Accusations of human rights abuses by CCA staff at the Idaho Correctional Center are still under investigation.<sup>4</sup> Opened in 1997, the ICC is one of two facilities operated by CCA in Idaho. The contract with CCA will expire on July 1, 2014, more than a year after the Associated Press first reported allegations of these offenses. A combination of timing and the state's recognition of systemic issues with prison privatization thus make the ICC an ideal laboratory for implementing reform.

#### **KEY FACTS**

 Prison privatization, conceived as a cost-saving measure, has failed to reliably reduce costs to taxpayers.

• Rates of assault on guards and fellow inmates are 33 percent and 39 percent lower in public prisons, respectively.

#### ANALYSIS

Returning Idaho's two currently private prisons to public administration would reduce costs for the state, allow government oversight on issues of prisoner rights, and mitigate lobbying efforts that subvert the aims of the criminal justice and correctional system.

Current data do not support the common argument that private prisons operate more efficiently and thus save money. Research shows that even when savings are realized, they are minimal. In fact, one study found that Arizona is overpaying by \$7 million due to 100 percent occupancy contracts with private administrators. When private administrators<sup>6</sup> do save, they do so primarily by "spending less for the biggest business cost-personnel."7 Reducing guard wages, however, often contributes to a higher turnover rate and a greater number of inexperienced guards, creating conditions susceptible to riots, conflict, and abuse.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, many private prisons accept only low-risk inmates. leaving state prisons burdened with costly sick and high-risk inmates.<sup>9</sup>

De-privatization is more than a cost-saving measure. Returning responsibility over prison maintenance to those also responsible for sentencing creates positive incentives for accountability in the public system. This culpability is manifested in quality of care and extends to prisoner-guard relationships; rates of assaults on guards are 49 percent higher in private prisons than in their public counterparts, while assaults among inmates are a staggering 65 percent more frequent.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, transitioning back to public administration in Idaho's prisons would mean lower costs to the state and ultimately a less discriminatory criminal justice system unfettered by lobbying efforts.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Malfeasance in the Idaho Correctional Center has reopened the debate about the efficacy and morality of private prisons in the US.

• Private prison lobbies' goals, such as felonizing minor crimes and drug-offenses as well as widely opposing immigration reform laws, are discriminatory in nature.

 Public administration of prisons aligns the authority to sentence prisoners with the responsibility over their internment, affirming culpability in the system.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

While the state of Idaho is the immediate target for returning prisons to public administration, successful state-level implementation of this policy could spark a similar effort nation-wide. The policy would benefit prisoners and victims of discriminatory laws supported by prison lobbies and reduce costs to taxpayers.

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### NEXT STEPS

Following a successful transition back to public administration of the ICC, the state should move to de-privatize its second private prison upon termination of its contract with the CCA. Savings to the state and gains in prisoner welfare would be quickly realized. The greater impact to human rights, however, will occur only through the cooperation of all states to revert their private prisons to public administration. Reform to the system should, moreover, involve detailed research into the specific failings and benefits of both private and public prisons to ensure humane treatment of inmates and appropriate sentencing norms. As this issue has largely eluded the public eye until recently, the most important next step is to spread awareness of the perverse profiteering in which private prison administrators have been allowed to engage over the last three decades.

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### **ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**



Policy of the Year Nominee

HOW TO TACKLE THE BIKE SHARE HELMET PROBLEM



### **10 IDEAS FOR HEALTHCARE 2014**

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# WHO WE ARE

Established in the wake of the 2004 election, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network was formed by college students across the country in order to engage our generation as powerful actors in the policy process. They envisioned a movement in which young people could fill the critical ideas gap in their communities, generating new solutions for the nation's greatest challenges.

We believe in the value of a robust and active democracy, one in which all citizens have the opportunity to positively impact communities they love. By giving students a platform to elevate their ideas for local, regional, and national change, we contribute to that vision.

# <mark>Wнат</mark> You're Holding

Now in its sixth year, the 10 Ideas series promotes the most promising student-generated ideas from across our network. This year's journals, which include submissions from 20 different schools located from New York to Georgia to California, stand as a testament to the depth and breadth of these student ideas.

Entries in 10 Ideas are selected for publication on the basis that they are smart, rigorously researched, and feasible. Simply put, they're darn good ideas.

## How You Can Join

As you explore these ideas, we encourage you to take special note of the "Next Steps" sections. Here our authors have outlined how their ideas can move from the pages of this journal to implementation. We invite you to join our authors in the process.

Contact us on our website www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org or by tweeting with us @Vivaroosevelt.

Thank you for reading and supporting student generated ideas.

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

December 2014 will mark ten years since a group of college students united behind a new model for engaging young people in the political process, a model that became the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. Deeply grounded in the belief that young people have more to offer than just showing up on Election Day, the Campus Network has continued to evolve and grow from its visionary beginning into the nation's largest student policy organization, with a membership capable of shifting dialogue and effecting policy at the local, state, and national levels.

We believe that in the context of a stagnant public discourse and increasing disillusionment with a political system incapable of tackling our complex collective challenges, it is more important than ever to invest in a generation of leaders committed to active problem-solving and concrete change in the public sphere. As the Campus Network expands to more than 120 chapters in 38 states, we serve as a vehicle for fresh ideas, exciting talent, and real change.

In these pages you will find some of those ideas - from reforming western water rights to supporting green infrastructure through progressive toll taxes, students are envisioning and acting on better solutions. It's indicative of our Network's larger impact; in the past year, we've leveraged the effectiveness of our model to work with and inform dozens of other organizations on how to engage Millennials on critical issues, ranging from campaign finance to inequality to climate change. We've elevated a fresh, Millennial-driven vision for government in an otherwise stale public debate, and launched an initiative that taps into our generation's unfettered thinking and ambition to reimagine the role of citizens in shaping fairer and more equitable local economies. Our members have continued to substantively engage in local processes to shape and shift the policy outcomes that directly impact their communities, from introducing new mapping systems to improve health outcomes in low-income neighborhoods to consulting local governments on flood prevention.

These ideas are just the starting place, because ideas are only powerful when acted upon. Yet this work is occurring in a dramatically shifting political and social context. The ways citizens engage their government, participate locally, and advocate for their communities are changing every day. As a vibrant, evolving network driven by our active members nationwide, we believe there is immense potential to capture these innovations and ensure better and more progressive ideas take hold. We believe that:

• Millennials are turning away from traditional institutions and are looking to build new ones as vehicles for social change. We believe there is an opportunity to channel this reform-mindedness into building a healthier, more inclusive system that's responsive to citizen engagement and evidence-based solutions.

• To jump-start political engagement and combat disillusionment, the focus needs to be on pragmatic problem-solving and intersectional thinking across key issues. We can no longer tackle economic mobility separately from climate change.

• There is immense potential (and need) for scalable policy innovation at the local and state levels, and much of the most effective and important policy change in the coming decade will be local.

• With the shift from top-down institutions to networked approaches and collective problem-solving, it is more important than ever before to invest in the development of informed, engaged community leaders capable of driving engagement and action on ideas.

As you engage with the ideas, ambitions, and goals in these journals, I encourage you to dig in and explore how our country's future leaders are taking the initiative to create the change they know we desperately need. You won't be disappointed.

Happy Reading,

Taylor Jo Isenberg, National Director



# TORRE LAVELLE

author of How To Tackle The Bike Share Helmet Problem

> Nominee for Policy Of The Year

A jury of Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network members, staff and alumni elevate one piece from each journal as a nominee for Policy Of The Year based off the quality of idea, rigor of research and ability to be implemented effectively. The cover design of this journal is themed to portray the above idea in visual form.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IN PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS Emily Cerciello and Muad Hrezi
- CONFRONTING THE PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE
  THROUGH MENTORSHIP
  Kimberley Downer, Melissa Audige, and Angela Choi
- 14 **MENTAL HEALTH IN FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA, HIGH SCHOOLS** Serena Gobbi
- 17 IMPROVING SNAP SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNITIES Kaylin Greene and Layla Hood
- A Tax-Deferred Trust: Reducing the Financial Burden of Families with Special Needs Children Mitra Kumareswaran
- 23 How to Tackle the Bike Share Helmet Problem Torre Lavelle
- 26 **LOWERING HEALTH COSTS THROUGH REFERENCE PRICING** Mike Malloy and Dhruv Alexander
- <sup>28</sup> **CENTRALIZED PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM** Alexius Marcano
- 31 **DECREASING THE TEEN PREGNANCY RATE IN ATHENS, GEORGIA** MarQuenda Sanders
- 35 **TRANSITIONING VACCINES TO ERADICATE POLIO** Amelia Watson

## Mental Health First Aid in Pennsylvania Public Schools

Emily Cerciello and Muad Hrezi, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Public school teachers in Pennsylvania should receive Continuing Professional Education credit for completing the Mental Health First Aid program to promote early detection and treatment of mental illness.

Every day, children and adolescents living with mental illness struggle to access basic treatment resources. One in five youth meets criteria for a mental disorder,<sup>1</sup> but only half of affected children received treatment in the last year.<sup>2</sup> Common mental disorders, including anxiety, mood, behavioral, and substance use disorders, often emerge in childhood and adolescence.<sup>3</sup> There exists an average 8 to 10 year gap between onset of symptoms and treatment interventions,<sup>4</sup> which is costly for both taxpayers and the health care system.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an interactive 8-hour training program that aims to help the public identify, understand, and react to signs of mental illness, or reduce the harm that an individual may cause to themselves or others during a mental health crisis.<sup>5</sup> MHFA strives to increase knowledge and confidence, reduce stigma, and improve the effectiveness of a community in connecting individuals with unmet mental health needs to treatment resources.<sup>6</sup>

MHFA shows great promise for educators. At a Canadian University, educator training in Mental Health First Aid resulted in a knowledge increase of between 18 and 32 percentage points in every category of mental illness, and a 30 percent increase in confidence to react to

#### **KEY FACTS**

• In Pennsylvania, 118,000 educators serve 1.8 million public school students daily.<sup>17,18</sup>

- One in five youth currently meets criteria for a mental disorder. <sup>19</sup>
- Half of mental illnesses in children remain untreated each year.<sup>20</sup>
- The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion annually.<sup>21</sup>

a mental health crisis.<sup>7</sup> A course for high school teachers in Australia increased teachers' knowledge, reduced stigma, and increased confidence in providing help to students.<sup>8</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Public school teachers in Pennsylvania should receive Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit for completing the Mental Health First Aid program. Act 48 of 1999 requires all Pennsylvania educators with public school certification to complete 180 hours of CPE every 5 years to remain certified.<sup>9</sup> Educators can meet these hours by pursuing collegiate study, completing approved CPE courses, or attending relevant trainings and conferences.<sup>10</sup> Included are courses or noncredit activities in the areas of student health as well as safe and supportive schools,<sup>11</sup> under which MHFA would qualify.

If MHFA training reaches just 5 percent of Pennsylvania educators, the program will affect 90,000 students.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 360,000 Pennsylvania students experience some form of mental illness, with an estimated half of these cases remaining untreated.<sup>13</sup> Currently, MHFA training is provided free of charge by several community organizations in southeastern Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup> MHFA is a practical and economical solution for Pennsylvania youth, as every \$1 invested in mental health treatment saves \$3 to \$8 in reduced criminal activity and hospitalizations.<sup>15</sup> Amid a \$55 million cut to Pennsylvania's mental health programs in 2012<sup>16</sup> and continued cost pressures in 2013, investing in early identification and treatment can save money for the state while improving outcomes for vulnerable public school students.

#### **ENDNOTES**

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The US Surgeon General considers schools to be a major setting for the potential recognition of mental disorders in children and adolescents.<sup>22</sup>

• Mental Health First Aid increases teachers' ability to recognize signs of mental illness and provides strategies to connect students to treatment resources.<sup>23</sup>

• Incentivizing teachers to complete MHFA by receiving CPE credit is a cost-effective solution for Pennsylvania's struggling mental health system.

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### NEXT STEPS

First, the Pennsylvania Department of Education must recognize MHFA as an approved CPE course to incentivize educator attendance. Second, the number of MHFA trainings and enrollment capacities for trainings must increase. To lay the foundation for sustainable success, implementation must begin at the grassroots level, with mental health advocates and educators contacting legislators and the Department of Education to recognize the Mental Health First Aid program as an approved CPE option.

### Confronting the Primary Care Physician Shortage through Mentorship

Kimberley Downer, Melissa Audige, and Angela Choi, City College of New York

Establishing a mentorship program that gives medical students interested in primary care the ability to experience the clinical aspects of the field along with the opportunity to be fostered by their mentors will increase the number of primary care physicians in New York State.

Primary care physicians (PCPs) are trained for and skilled in comprehensive first contact and continuity care. Primary Care is proven to provide better health outcomes and lower costs by reducing hospitalization, promoting disease prevention, and managing chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup>

In 2011. New York State had about 18.000 primary care physicians that cared for of 19.6 million New York State residents.<sup>2</sup> Currently, roughly 12 percent of medical school graduates are entering primary care, not enough to match the demand of PCPs in the US.<sup>3</sup> By 2030, growth in demand for physicians in New York State will likely outpace growth in the supply of physicians. There is a forecasted shortage of up to 17,000 PCPs by 2030 because of the increase in insurance coverage enacted by the Affordable Care Act.<sup>4</sup> There is significant gap between the number of available PCPs and the large medically underserved population. This primary care shortage is primarily due to medical school debts, underpayment, and a stressful work environment.

The Affordable Care Act also indicated the need to train more PCPs because of increasing health care coverage.<sup>5</sup> Studies have shown

#### **KEY FACTS**

In 2011, New York
 State had about
 18,000 primary care
 physicians who care for
 the state's 19.6 million
 residents.

 Roughly 12 percent of graduating medical students enter the primary care specialty.<sup>3</sup>

• There is a forecasted shortage of up to 17,000 PCPs by 2030 because of the increase in insurance coverage enacted by the Affordable Care Act. that mentorship is an important part in the success of physicians.<sup>6</sup> The Medical Student Home (MeSH) program and iLearn Mentor Program are two examples of effective mentoring programs.

#### ANALYSIS

Medical students who show interest in primary care are usually discouraged or lose interest halfway through medical school.7 Mentorship is a formal social support that includes emotional and informational support; it is important for medical professional development.<sup>8</sup> The mentorship program is a cost-effective tool as compared to some of the other provisions in the Affordable Care Act created to encourage the increase of PCPs.<sup>9</sup> Students enrolled in a mentoring program for the full course had a residency match rate of 87.5 percent in the first year and 78.9 percent in the second year compared to 55.8 percent and 35.9 percent of students that left the program. Overall, students who participated in mentorship had a higher match rate to primary care.<sup>10</sup>

The iLearn Mentoring Program provides a forum for doctors to share their career experiences with students. However, the iLearn mentoring program lacks an interpersonal dimension and face-to-face meetings are not required. The MeSH program at Quinnipiac Medical School allows medical students to see patients in the office setting over an extended period of time. Under a supervising physician, the student works alongside the clinical care team. Our proposal aims to combine the strengths of these two programs.

#### **ENDNOTES**

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The US has a shortage of primary care physicians.<sup>13</sup>

- By 2030, in New York State, the demand for physicians will likely outpace growth in the supply of physicians.
- Students who had continuing participation in a mentoring program have a higher matching rate to primary care residencies.

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# **Next Steps**

New York State medical schools should seek partnership with primary care organizations such as the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) for medical students." The AAFP currently provides mentorship for medical students throughout the country. This mentoring program will engage students in primary care before and during the rotations stage of medical school. Establishing a mentor prior to a medical students' residency will help decrease the shortage gap of primary care physicians by increasing the number of students choosing primary care residencies. Students will be paired with practicing primary care physician and will be provided with opportunities to shadow doctors and clinic staff. Along with this component, mentors will stress the importance and value of the primary care field.

Working alongside a PCP can influence students to become practicing PCPs in New York State. Through the mentoring program, medical schools will be able to identify students that have an interest in becoming PCPs and guide them through the residency application process to assure that they will be able to become PCPs. Students who pursue primary care in New York's medically underserved areas are eligible for loan forgiveness.<sup>12</sup> This new mentoring program will allow students to gain experience and knowledge before choosing their careers, therefore sustaining and increasing the amount of students who become PCPs.

# Mental Health in Fairfax, Virginia, High Schools

Serena Gobbi, Georgetown University

High schools can transform the attitudes stigmatizing mental illness by implementing the QPR suicide prevention program, which empowers students by giving them the tools necessary to act in mental health crises.

High schools currently design mental health programs around crisis intervention, intervening only once a problem has been identified, which limits the community's involvement and knowledge of mental health problems and contributes to the stigma surrounding mental illness.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, half of all Americans will suffer from mental illness at some point in their lives.<sup>2</sup> One of the most devastating forms of mental illness is depression, which can lead to suicide, a rising problem among teens.<sup>3</sup> Instead of stopping suicide through crisis intervention, high schools should move towards secondary prevention, focusing on teaching communities methods to diagnose depression in early stages. Concentrating on prevention will not only save lives, but also begin a needed dialogue on mental health. which will reduce the ignorance surrounding depression and other mental illnesses.

#### ANALYSIS

The US Department of Health and Human Services calls the stigma associated with mental health the "most formidable obstacle to future progress in the arena of mental illness and health."<sup>4</sup> One successful evidence-based program that has brought de-stigmatization and secondary prevention to hundreds of college campuses is Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), which is similar in concept to CPR training.<sup>5</sup> QPR teaches students to recognize situations

#### KEY FACTS

• Half of all Americans suffer from mental illness at some point in their lives.<sup>13</sup>

• QPR is a program designed to prevent suicides and empower students by teaching them how to be responders instead of bystanders during suicide crises.

• Implementation of QPR across the Fairfax County, Virginia, high schools would cost an estimated \$3 per student.<sup>14</sup> involving depression and potential suicide and intervene appropriately. Instead of remaining bystanders, students gain the confidence to ask someone if he or she has suicidal thoughts.

QPR has been taught to firefighters, policemen, and college students with great success. More recently, a QPR program geared toward youth has been developed in Northern Idaho.<sup>6</sup> Crucially, QPR also includes three review sessions per year, which has been shown to significantly boost effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

Fairfax County, Virginia, is an ideal candidate to implement QPR across its public high schools. After the tragic Virginia Tech shooting of 2007, public support pushed for legislation that successfully altered Virginia's mental health system.<sup>8</sup> Any substantial change to school systems requires public support, and Virginia's demonstrated commitment to mental health reform bodes well for implementing QPR in Fairfax County, which with the second highest median household income in the country, has the financial resources to support it.<sup>9</sup>

Fairfax currently employs 140 psychologists and social workers. There are 25 high schools with approximately 49,000 students total.<sup>10</sup> A QPR unlimited Level I license to train all students, staff, willing parents, and stakeholders of the school system costs \$1 per enrolled student per year. Together with the costs of training roughly three instructors per school, an annual estimate based on this data would total \$150,000, about \$3 per student. Fairfax currently spends \$13,472 on each student, so \$3 would be 0.2 percent of per student expenditure.<sup>11</sup>

#### **ENDNOTES**

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Ending the stigma surrounding mental illness should be a basic goal of high school health systems.

 Through QPR, not only are high-risk students helped, all students are given the confidence to address mental health issues.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Attitudes Toward Mental Illness 59, no. 20. May 28, 2010. 619-25. http:// www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5920a3.htm (accessed November 15, 2013).

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### NEXT STEPS

Fairfax has the necessary infrastructure for QPR in place already. Its Office of Intervention and Prevention Services provides close supervision over school mental health professionals.<sup>12</sup> The directors of the QPR program, coordinating with the central office, could directly train instructors, probably school psychologists and social workers, and then provide the support material for those employees to teach staff, students, and willing parents QPR. Both in-person and online training options are available, allowing implementation across additional locations.

Once Fairfax commits to using QPR, the summer provides an ideal time for initial planning and instructor training. QPR could then be implemented during the school year in 90-minute sessions. The program in Fairfax county could serve as a guide to implementation across Virginia and, ultimately, across the US.

### IMPROVING SNAP SUSTAINABILITY IN Communities

Kaylin Greene and Layla Hood, Cornell University

To provide SNAP participants with fresh produce and boost local farming economies, Congress must launch a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative with nutrition education based on successful existing infrastructure.

Low-income families face the highest obesity rates,<sup>1</sup> and children living in these households have a 25 percent obesity rate.<sup>2</sup> This is attributed to lack of nutritional education and inability to afford fresh produce.<sup>3</sup> Adolescent dietary habits also persist into adulthood.<sup>4</sup> A daily serving of fruits and vegetables costs \$2.18, which some families cannot afford.<sup>5</sup> While the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides participants with funds to buy food, a USDA study shows that participants buy more food composed of simple starches and sugars instead of healthier, more expensive food.<sup>6</sup> In 2012, the average monthly per capita SNAP benefit was \$133.41.7 Currently, the SNAP program is facing scrutiny due to concerns regarding effectiveness.8

Community nutrition education along with SNAP participation has resulted in healthier decisions among participants. Cornell Cooperative Extension in Onondaga County has a six-week program that teaches SNAP participants nutrition and cooking education. A follow-up of 18,690 graduates found 87 percent improved diet quality, 79 percent improved food purchasing practices, 64 percent improved food handling practices and 41 percent increased frequency of excercise.<sup>9</sup>

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a shareholder-supported financial scheme in which subscribers pay a fee (or a share) to

### **KEY FACTS**

• Factors for obesity in adulthood are determined by eating habits as children.<sup>18</sup>

• CSA farms and the demand for locallygrown produce is rising and contributing to financial success of small, local farmers.

• Distribution of CSA boxes can be executed using existing SNAP administrative framework and volunteer resources farmers in the beginning of a crop season to finance production costs and, in turn, receive boxes of produce on a weekly basis. The average cost per share is \$400 a season for a family of 4 to 6 people. A season generally lasts 22 weeks, from May to October. Winter subscriptions are available for farms that operate year-round. CSA farms post higher profits than non-CSA farms.<sup>10</sup> CSA's are popular in both rural and urban areas—as of 2007, 12,549 CSA farms existed in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Food boxes can be picked up at a central location or easily dropped off door-to-door.

#### ANALYSIS

A mutually beneficial relationship between food insecure, low-income families and a growing area of agriculture can flourish with government support. SNAP restrictions are insufficient in providing a nutritious, balanced diet.<sup>12</sup> It costs \$532 per month in SNAP funding to feed a 4 person family. The proposed \$400 season-long share is a cost-effective way to provide families with fresh produce. In comparison, buying produce at supermarkets for the same season costs \$1438. Balancing funds entails reducing funds per family to \$459 per month. However, some farmers markets incentivize SNAP participants \$2 in credit for every \$5 spent.<sup>13</sup> It is possible to reapply this credit so that each \$400 CSA share yields \$160 in general SNAP funds.

This program would be most effective if implemented with an educational component catered toward low-income families with young children developing eating habits. Encouraging families to establish healthier habits for their children is crucial, as poor food choices contribute to childhood obesity.<sup>14</sup> A longitudinal study focusing on adolescent food choice behaviors recommends "interventions should begin prior to sixth grade, before behavioral patterns become more difficult to change."<sup>15</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

•A study performed in Southwest Iowa found that a modest increase in fruit and vegetable production on farms could bring an additional \$2.67 million in labor income and 45 farm-level jobs to the region.<sup>16</sup>

- Obesity rates are highest in lowerincome households, where financial access to healthier foods is often not an option.<sup>17</sup>
- Purchasing a CSA subscription for a family of 4 to 6 would save \$1000 in fresh produce purchases that would otherwise be purchased at a supermarket over a 22 week period.

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### NEXT STEPS

SNAP participants will automatically be eligible to opt-in to the CSA program. CSA boxes are easily transported to rural residents, and can be quickly shipped into urban areas, where a large proportion of SNAP participants live. Weekly programs in urban areas will be modeled after the Cornell Co-Op Extension in Onondaga County and host nutrition and cooking programs at a central location at which CSA boxes will be distributed. Program graduates will receive a cookbook and remain eligible for the SNAP-CSA option. The rural program will be similar, involving educators, student interns and volunteers that are a part of the existing low-cost infrastructure to deliver the crates while teaching nutrition and cooking strategies within individual homes. Prior to implementation, individual sites should first be evaluated to ensure adaptability of the aforementioned Cornell Co-Op Extension program to account for differences of cross-regional contexts.

# A TAX-DEFERRED TRUST: REDUCING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Mitra Kumareswaran, The University of Georgia

Congress should approve a tax-deferred special needs trust fund to alleviate the financial strains of parents with special needs children and to reduce the societal cost of taking care of special needs individuals.

More than 20 million families in the US have at least one family member with a special need.<sup>1</sup> The Center for Disease Control's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network states that 1 out of 88 children have been diagnosed with autism.<sup>2</sup> The US Department of Agriculture estimates that a family spends an average of \$241,080 (excluding college fees) raising a neurotypical child from birth to age seventeen.<sup>3</sup> For parents of special needs children, this expense, much of which is out of pocket, can quadruple to enormous figures such as \$964,320.4 Parents of children with autism will spend approximately \$60,000 a year to cover their child's therapy and medical bills. The costs and needs are similar for special needs individuals with conditions outside of the autism spectrum disorder. Depending on the IQ level of the disabled, lifetime expenses can vary from \$1.4 to \$2.3 million.

On top of current health expenses, parents with special needs children must plan how to financially support their children over the course of their lifetimes. A special needs trust is a fund primarily used to preserve the public assistance benefits for the beneficiary whose disability impairs the ability to engage in any substantial gainful activity.<sup>5</sup> Public assistance includes

#### **KEY FACTS**

• For many special needs families, one parent has to stop working in order to stay at home to take care of the child, thus reducing the money parents can use for therapy and trust funding.<sup>8</sup>

• A disabled individual may receive up to \$710 per month from Social Security Income, which is not enough with the current cost of living.<sup>o</sup>

• Distribution of societal costs of autism estimates the total cost of care for all individuals with autism over a lifetime at \$35 billion.<sup>10</sup> Social Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid eligibility.

#### ANALYSIS

Currently, the money that parents deposit into a special needs trust is not tax exempt. To improve upon the status quo, a new special needs trust should be created that combines the tax benefits of the 401(k) and Roth IRA retirement plans. For a 401(k), employees are able to deposit money from their earnings into their retirement funds, and this money is excluded from taxable income.<sup>6</sup> The money in the 401(k) benefits from tax-deferred growth, so it compounds more quickly than it would if it were taxed annually. In a Roth IRA, the savings also grow tax-free although the money from the account comes from after-tax dollars.<sup>7</sup> The money that the retiree withdraws from a Roth IRA is not taxed.

Parents who create a special needs trust fund are essentially creating a long-term care plan for their disabled children who will not be able to support themselves after their parents are deceased. In a tax-deferred special needs trust, the money that parents deposit will not be included in their taxable income. When the appointed trustee withdraws money for the beneficiary's care, the money will also not be taxed. The money that can be deposited into the trust will be a set percentage of the parents' income up to a certain maximum limit decided by the government. The children will then have more money from their parents, which will reduce their dependence on the state. The beneficiaries can use this money to live in their own homes and hire a caretaker (if needed) instead of relying on limited state group homes. These funds may also pay for medical expenses not covered by Medicaid. When parents have their taxable income reduced to some extent. they can use more of their own money on their children's current health and therapy expenses, which may increase the children's long-term

### TALKING POINTS

• The cost of caring for a special needs child is exponentially higher than the cost of caring for a child without disabilities.

• The average income of a typical middle-class family is decreasing, yet the number of families with a special needs child is increasing. This will result in a financial strain on both parents and the state."

• Many individuals diagnosed with a disability as children face a decline in available social services after they age out of the school system.<sup>12</sup> independence and productivity. The cost of the implementation of this idea is negligible, because the government is not taxing only a small portion of the parents' income, yet this untaxed portion will later reduce the amount of government funds needed for the disabled.

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### TALKING POINTS

• The proposed special needs trust will not only help parents retain more money to spend on their disabled children, but will also decrease the societal cost of providing for the child when he/she reaches adulthood.

### NEXT STEPS

Special needs interest groups and organizations such as The National Down Syndrome Congress and Autism Speaks should bring the proposed special needs trust fund to the attention of Congress. Congress and the Social Security Administration should amend the current special needs trust guidelines to accommodate the proposed special needs trust. The financial organizations that currently cater to retirement plans can then reach out to families who may benefit from the modified special needs trust guidelines. A clause should be added to the amended special needs trust so that in the event that the fund is no longer needed by the disabled beneficiary, the remaining funds in the trust can be returned to the family and the federal government can decide how to reasonably tax the sum.

### How to Tackle the Bike Share Helmet Problem

Torre Lavelle, The University of Georgia

The lack of onsite helmets provided by New York City's Citi Bike bicycle share program contributes to low helmet use among bike share participants. Improving helmet vending machine pilot sites by bundling the bike and helmet rental fee would address this public health hazard.

The reinvention of city and campus transportation is demonstrated most clearly by the popular embrace of bike share programs, short-term bicycle rentals provided at unattended stations.<sup>1</sup> However, the discrepancy in helmet use among bike share riders as compared to personal bike users is the one impediment to bike shares' integration into communities.<sup>2,3</sup> Helmets are not available at rental stations, so New York City's Citi Bike bicycle share program currently recommends that its participants bring a helmet from home. In addition, the company offers \$10 helmet coupons for annual members and encourages helmet rentals through a rental company.

Nevertheless, geographic inaccessibility is one of the most cited reasons why bike share participants do not wear helmets and any off-site attempts to obtain a helmet deters commuters, tourists, and quick trips.<sup>4</sup> Helmet rental vending machines, currently undergoing local expansion at Boston bike share hubs, demonstrate a feasible onsite helmet accessibility. Integrating the \$2 cost of this vending machine helmet rental into Citi Bike's bike rental fee, instead making it an optional expense, will encourage helmet use. A bundled fee allows users the choice of whether or not to use the helmet, but doesn't provide savings for unsafe bicycling practices.<sup>5</sup>

#### **KEY FACTS**

• There are currently 26 active bike share programs within the US, a number that is expected to double within the next two years."

- About 80 percent of bike share riders fail to wear a helmet versus 48.6 percent of other riders.<sup>2</sup>
- Bikers who die of head injuries are three times as likely to be without a helmet.<sup>3</sup>
- The lifetime medical, educational, and social costs for one youth with a traumatic brain injury total approximately \$7.65 million.<sup>12</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Citi Bike greatly influences bicycle safety in New York City; 432,000 people have purchased Citi Bike access passes and approximately 35,000 people use Citi Bike daily.<sup>6,7</sup> Direct, on-site availability of helmets at Citi Bike would decrease the total number of bicyclists seriously injured in crashes, of which there were 500,000 in 2012.<sup>8</sup>

A key merit of this proposal is the flexibility of both funding and management of the helmet rental vending machines. For example, Boston's vending machine helmet rental program is maintained by a separate company. Citi Bike's bundled helmet fee offers the opportunity for similar collaboration between the bike share company and an external investor, potentially even a local bike rental store interested in benefiting from the unique platform of bike shares. This collaboration would impose no additional cost to Citi Bike as the vending machine maintenance fees, including helmet inspection and sanitization, would be undertaken by the collaborating company. A slight increase in the daily bike rental fee of \$9.95 would be added to reflect the helmet rental, but the price advantage of using a bike share bicycle would still overwhelmingly win out over the annual cost to operate a car or to maintain a personal bicycle.<sup>9,10</sup> Citi Bike's size makes it an influential model for all US bike shares while its relative newness makes it receptive to helmet policy initiatives.

The use of helmets at every age is supported by two key stakeholders, the Department of Transportation and the American College of Emergency Physicians.<sup>3, 11, 12, 13</sup>

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The helmet vending machine has been called by *Time*'s Jon Marcus "the engineering feat that solved bike shares' biggest problem."<sup>2</sup>

• Citi Bike's current policy measures directly violate the American College of Emergency Physician's helmet recommendations.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

• Citi Bike's recommendation that cyclists wear a helmet when none are available onsite is equivalent to major car companies recommending the use of seatbelts when there are no seatbelts in the automobile. bike-sharings-big-safety-problem/ (accessed November 21, 2013).

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### NEXT STEPS

Citi Bike officials will meet with the creators of the helmet vending machine, who have voiced their desire to branch out to other cities, as well as Hubway, Boston's bike share program, in order to confirm that the helmet system could translate from a Boston setting to a New York City setting. After gaining support for this initiative from the Department of Transportation, Citi Bike can discuss with the vending machine creators and potential outside companies the possibility of expanding the program to a bundled bike and helmet rental fee. There is a great likelihood for approval, as the integrated fee provides secured payment to the managing company of the vending machine with every bike rental.

Just as in Boston's pilot sites, Citi Bike should begin with four or five vending machine sites on main bike share locations. User feedback should be collected on convenience and usage rates to gauge approval during a testing period. If successful, the program should be expanded citywide, and perhaps even nationwide.

### LOWERING HEALTH COSTS THROUGH REFERENCE PRICING

Mike Malloy and Dhruv Alexander, Michigan State University

Michigan's public employee unions should use reference pricing to combat exorbitant health costs.

Two of the greatest problems in the US healthcare system are high costs and great variance in procedure costs across hospitals.<sup>1</sup> High costs are especially problematic for state and local governments that provide health insurance to current and former employees. States' peremployee healthcare costs nearly tripled from 1999 to 2009, with both state-paid premiums and employee contributions skyrocketing.<sup>2</sup>

One possible solution to this problem is reference pricing. Reference pricing leverages an insurer's size to encourage competition, thus lowering the price of certain procedures. A pilot program saved the California Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS) nearly \$2.8 million in 2011. CalPERS negotiated with 47 hospitals to cap prices for hip and knee replacements at \$30,000, and informed employees that they would only cover costs up to \$30,000 for those procedures. Consequently, hospitals charging more than \$30,000 saw a 34 percent decline in patients, forcing them to substantially cut prices. As a result, prices for those procedures were reduced by 26.3 percent for all patients.<sup>3</sup> While reference pricing is still a pilot program, its success in California has shown that it should be considered for implementation in other states

#### ANALYSIS

The key component to reference pricing is a group of employees so large that it has the buying power to convince clinics to agree to fixed lower costs for certain procedures. Once

### **KEY FACTS**

• Healthcare spending in Michigan is equal to 18.8 percent of the gross state product, the 12th highest percentage in the nation. Costs increased annually at an average rate of 3.1 percent from 2000 to 2009.<sup>6</sup>

• CalPERS lowered costs of knee and hip replacements more than 25 percent through reference pricing.<sup>3</sup>

• Union workers make up 17.5 percent of Michigan's workforce.<sup>4</sup>
provider partners are secured, an insurer informs their beneficiaries that the procedure cost will only be covered up to the agreed price, and beneficiaries are compelled to compare prices. This encourages other providers to lower their procedure costs to remain competitive, benefiting all patients.

Comprising 17.5 percent of the state's workers, Michigan's union workers are one such large employee group.<sup>4</sup> Unions could be convinced to engage in an experimental practice with the ultimate benefit of extending beyond their membership because it is in their best interest. First, their employees stand to benefit from reduced procedure costs and greater clinic choice as a result of increased competition among clinics. Second, union members are in danger of being penalized by the "Cadillac tax" included in the Affordable Care Act. The tax applies to high cost insurance benefit packages, and is intended to spur employers to seek out cost-cutting measures.<sup>5</sup> Reference pricing can reduce costs to avoid the tax without sacrificing coverage or quality of care.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

While unions and their members are obviously key players in the success of reference pricing, it is imperative that enough healthcare providers agree to fixed prices for procedures. If too few hospitals and clinics agree to a baseline price, providers across the state will not be compelled to lower their prices to remain competitive.

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#### **TALKING POINTS**

• The United States pays far more for healthcare than other countries, without seeing better results.

 Reference pricing has been effective at reducing procedure costs in California.

• Unions have the scale necessary to help combat high costs for all consumers through reference pricing.

# NEXT STEPS

Reference pricing may eventually become a standard union practice, but there is currently little information available on the practice outside of the promising experience of CalPERS. Before wider adoption, more experimentation must occur. Unions should proactively seek out partnerships with medical providers to fix prices for certain procedures. Universities, which often have faculty unions and medical clinics, could both implement and evaluate reference pricing.

Additionally, more procedures must be identified as candidates for price fixing to achieve the full potential of referencing pricing. CalPERS identified knee and hip replacements as candidates for reference pricing because both are procedures with little variation in quality and great variation in cost. A panel of medical experts should be tasked with identifying more procedures with these features. Prescription drug prices in Europe are largely controlled by reference pricing, and the application of reference pricing to drug coverage should also be explored.

## CENTRALIZED PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM

Alexius Marcano, Emory University

Implement regional databases that track patient prescription history so that health professionals can prevent medication drug abuse and redistribution.

The US leads the world in the consumption of prescription drugs, a rapidly increasing trend demonstrated by the 70 percent of Americans who take prescription medications.<sup>1</sup> Prescription drugs help patients treat or manage conditions such as chronic pain and depression. However, the continued prevalence of these medications has led to widespread abuse and the emergence of a pharmaceutical black market. The need for prescriptive oversight is particularly salient in Broward County, Florida. Addicts and traffickers throughout the American Southeast ride down Interstate 75, dubbed the "Oxy Express," to purchase massive quantities of oxycodone in South Florida. Lax prescriptive oversight has fueled the region's illicit

drug trade as "doctors in Florida prescribe 10 times more oxycodone pills than every other state in the country combined."<sup>2</sup>

There is clear legislative precedent in the documentation and prevention of drug diversion with the enactment of the National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Report (NASPER) Act of 2005.<sup>3</sup> NASPER created a grant program to assist states in developing their own prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP). Additionally, in 2011 the Prescription Drug Information Exchange (PMIX) was established to provide critical assistance in the digital implementation of state-based PDMPs.<sup>4</sup> The bipartisan endeavor to address the growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse is indicative of the issue's political capital in Washington and throughout the states.

#### ANALYSIS

The abuse of controlled substances stems from two fronts-the abuser and the prescriber. Without a means of recording the outflow of prescription drugs, the tracking of patients' prescription consumption and prescribers' dispensing patterns become nearly impossible. To address this issue, regional prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) databases should be implemented to prevent prescription drug abuse on individual and systemic levels. These databases would compile confidential patient prescription history derived from information reported by prescribing medical professionals.

Medical practitioners with prescription authority would be able to access patient medication history to flag and intervene with high-risk individuals, thus avoiding drug diversion by detecting suspicious activity. As well, regional PDMPs would collaborate with participating state medical boards to assess prescribers' dispensing patterns. Deviations from medically acceptable practices would be recorded to identify excessive narcotic prescriptions dis-

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• An oversight program would be cost-effective since prescription drug abuse costs an estimated \$72.5 billion per year to insurers in fraud<sup>10</sup> and \$53.4 billion to the US government in lost productivity, criminal justice costs, drug abuse treatment, and medical complications for opioid abuse alone.<sup>11</sup>

• The ability to map prescriptions would yield more effective oversight and better inform policymakers on legislation concerning prescription drug diversion.

• Centralized databases also help non-abusing patients, as prescriber access to prescription history would help avoid deadly drug interactions arising from poly-pharmacy drug incompatibility. tributed at pill mills. Records would prevent patients from taking advantage of non-coordination between physicians to request multiple prescriptions.

To protect patient privacy, personally identifiable information (PII) relating to patient prescription history would only be accessible to prescribing medical professionals abiding with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. PII is protected from law enforcement because HIPAA federally preempts such action as, "no State law may either authorize or compel any disclosure."5 State medical boards would have access to non-patient PII, however, and would be able to sanction doctors abusing their prescription privileges.

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#### **KEY FACTS**

• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have classified prescription drug abuse as an epidemic, with deaths from prescription painkiller overdoses more than tripling in the past decade.<sup>7</sup>

 Twenty-six million Americans between 26 and 50 have used prescriptive medication for non-intended or nonmedical use. Opioids, depressants and stimulants are the most common categories of misused prescription drugs.<sup>8</sup>

• The majority of drug overdose deaths (57.7 percent) in the US involve pharmaceuticals, claiming over 14,800 lives in 2008 alone.9

# NEXT STEPS

1. Task US Department of Health & Human Services with program execution and maintenance.

2. Charge PDMPs with oversight of the five geographic regions used by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for its prevention technologies.<sup>6</sup>

2. Consolidate existing state and county prescription records into their respective regional databases while ensuring interregional communication to prevent interstate prescription drug trafficking.

3. Consult with state medical boards about program implementation and enforcing prescriber accountability through their authority to investigate and discipline those violating licensing laws.

4. Inform and educate the broader medical community by collaborating with medical professional associations such as the American Medical Association and the Federation of State Medical Boards.

# DECREASING THE TEEN PREGNANCY RATE IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

MarQuenda Sanders, University of Georgia

The Carrera Program, which provides adolescents with a comprehensive life education program, should be adopted to lower the teen pregnancy rate in Athens-Clarke County, where the school system currently provides only a single sexual education course.

The teen pregnancy rate for Georgia is the 10th highest in the nation at 37.9 pregnancies each year per 1,000 girls age 15 to 19.<sup>2</sup> Athens-Clarke County's is a staggering 48 per 1,000, while the national rate is 31.3 per thousand.<sup>2.4</sup> Though sex education and contraception use are encouraged as the most practical pregnancy avoidance measures, research suggests

that these measures must be coupled with others in order to maximize their effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Incorporating a more holistic approach would provide teens with numerous after school activities—such as daily academic tutoring, sports and art activities, and job skill preparation—in addition to sexual education.<sup>1</sup>

The Family Life and Sexual Health curriculum (FLASH) in the Athens-Clarke County school district, adopted in 2009, educates students about STDs and contraceptive options, and is the county's current chosen pregnancy prevention strategy.<sup>3</sup> The FLASH curriculum, however, is only taught while students are in the classroom, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that this strategy is reinforced outside of the school environment. Community centers offering after-school tutoring and recreation time throughout inner city Athens only serve those in the 5th grade or younger.

Community leaders for Whatever It Takes (WIT), an organization centered on improving children's welfare in Athens, agree that more needs to be done to significantly reduce the teen pregnancy rate. The Carrera Program should be adopted by WIT and established community centers to help lower teen pregnancy rates in the Athens community.

#### ANALYSIS

The Carrera Program has proven to be highly effective with 50 percent teen pregnancy reduction, as demonstrated through the large controlled trial among community centers in New York.<sup>1</sup> The program's success is attributed to the fact that it targets a variety of aspects of teens' lives, including daily academic tutoring, arts activities, sports activities, job preparation, and family and sexual education.<sup>1,5</sup> In addition, students who began the Carrera Program between ages 10 and 13 then continued throughout high school had an increase

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Athens-Clarke County's teen pregnancy rate is 48 per 1,000 girls age 15 to 19 in a state that already holds the 10th highest rate in the nation.<sup>2,4</sup>

• Teen pregnancies are costly for local and state governments, so any effective means to reduce the elevated rate is economically beneficial.<sup>7</sup>

• The Carrera program has proved that it confers a 50 percent reduction in teen pregnancies and has been effective in the other states.' in high school graduation, college acceptance, and employment.' This program provides those students who usually remain idle during the gap between school and home lives with a beneficial means to use their time.

If a more comprehensive and highly successful intervention program is not implemented, and only the FLASH curriculum is maintained, the economic costs of high teen pregnancy rates will continue to increase, in addition to the already well-documented social costs. Pregnancies and subsequent births are extremely expensive not only for the mother and child but also for taxpayers. In 2008, teen births cost the United States an estimated \$10.9 billion, while Georgia taxpayers contributed \$465 million dollars.7 Fifty-two percent of that sum was from state and local taxpayers; \$75 million contributed to public health care and \$89 million for childhood welfare.<sup>6</sup> The economic burden on taxpayers in Georgia is enormous for the large number of teen births. The Carrera Program costs an average \$4,750 per teen to implement, with the majority of the funding coming from private foundations and donors.<sup>1,6</sup> However, the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) awards \$75 million in grant funding for Tier 1 teen pregnancy prevention programs and \$25 million for Tier 2 prevention programs.<sup>8</sup> Tier 1 programs are those labeled effective via thorough testing and evaluation, while Tier 2 programs are those still undergoing evaluation.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Whatever It Takes could potentially be awarded \$75 million to implement the Tier 1 Carrera Program in Athens.<sup>8</sup>

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

The Carrera Program can be most effectively implemented through the WIT organization. If the OAH awards a grant to WIT, WIT can distribute the funds to implement and conduct trainings for the multifaceted components of the program in local high schools and clinics. For example, the Health and Wellness Team of WIT,

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Athens' teen pregnancy rate is 48 per 1,000 teen girls and sexual education in school is not as effective at preventing teen pregnancy as it once was.<sup>2</sup>

• The Carrera Program not only reduces teen pregnancy, it also provides teens with health education, job preparation skills, and daily academic tutoring, among a host of other services.<sup>1</sup>

• Changing a teen's perspective on her future, not just her knowledge about sex, will help to ensure a more significant reduction in teen pregnancies. consisting of health centers in Athens, could receive part of the funding to provide free contraception and physical exams.

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### NEXT STEPS

It is imperative WIT compiles a grant for OAH funding for FY 2015 to ensure the Carrera program be implemented as soon as possible. If awarded the grant, WIT must restructure the current after school curriculum to fully implement the Carrera Program and provide Athens-Clarke County teens with the services associated with the program. A health clinic will need to be established at the location of the after-school program to provide teens with access to contraception options. This will involve the assistance of the Public Health Department of Athens-Clarke County to provide the clinic with staff and medicine. Since a grant is funding all of the necessary changes, no financial burden is placed on the county to support the new program.

Rather than replace the current sexual education program taught in the county schools, the Carrera Program would be a supplemental after-school program to expand upon the effectiveness of the FLASH curriculum.

## Transitioning Vaccines to Eradicate Polio

Amelia Watson, University of Georgia

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative should augment its vaccine schedule to incorporate benefits from both vaccines available on the market.

Poliomyelitis is a devastating disease that attacks the central nervous system and often causes paralysis.<sup>1</sup> The World Health Assembly sought to eradicate poliomyelitis in 1988, when the disease paralyzed more than 350,000 people each year. The most recent deadline for polio eradication was missed in 2012. Unfortunately, polio is still endemic in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria, despite continual eradication efforts.

The current state of control is financially unsustainable and eradication is needed to save lives and money.<sup>2</sup> A change in vaccine policy would be instrumental in eradicating polio. There are two main types of vaccines available: oral poliovirus (OPV) and inactivated poliovirus (IPV). OPV is still the vaccine of choice in most of the developing world because it is effective, easy to immunize, and inexpensive.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, OPV is not perfect, and it causes vaccine-associated paralytic polio (VAPP) and circulating-vaccine derived poliovirus (c-VDPV), which makes eradication unattainable.<sup>4</sup> IPV is used in most of the developed world. IPV is expensive and more technically demanding due to its intramuscular administration route.<sup>5</sup> South Africa is the only country that has switched to a dual vaccine schedule, and it has experienced success already, even though it is still at beginning phase of the switch.6

#### ANALYSIS

Since OPV is a live-attenuated virus, it can

#### **KEY FACTS**

• Polio has still not been eliminated in Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

• The oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV) has problems, in rare cases causing vaccine associated paralytic paralysis (VAPP) and circulating-vaccine derived poliovirus (c-VDPV) that stands in the way of eradication.<sup>4</sup> still, in rare cases, cause VAPP.<sup>7</sup> Also, after accumulated mutations in the genome, the live attenuated OPV viruses can replicate and revert to neurovirulence and become transmissible c-VDPVs.<sup>8</sup> This is especially problematic in areas where poor supplementary immunization activities are completed.<sup>2</sup> In Nigeria between January and November 2009, a large-scale outbreak of cVDPV type 2 occurred, amounting to 148 cases.<sup>9</sup> Among individuals with immunodeficiency, the live-attenuated virus in OPV can cause individuals to be asymptomatic long-term excretors of immunodeficient vaccine-derived poliovirus (iVDPV).<sup>9</sup> This is very dangerous to the eradication effort. Switching completely over to an IPV policy is important to the polio endgame, however, a dual policy would be better until IPV is financially feasible. The largest drawback for many of these countries is that IPV is 32 times more expensive than tOPV.<sup>10</sup> Incorporating IPV into the current vaccination plan in the remaining polio-eliminated countries would help decrease the number of c-VDPVs and VAPP cases. This could be coupled with the diphtheria-pertussistetanus vaccine to bolster routine immunization as well, leaving an important legacy for the polio eradication initiative.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Many organizations have come together as part of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). The GPEI incorporates both private NGOs and governmental agencies. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Rotary International have both been instrumental in polio eradication thus far. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Emergency Communications Center was activated on December 2, 2011. by Director Thomas Frieden." Also, the World Health Organization has been instrumental in helping overcome many barriers to eradication. All of these partners make up the GPEI, but the largest benefits to this policy remain to the children under 5 who are at risk of paralysis or c-VDPV from OPV.

#### **TALKING POINTS**

• Introducing IPV into every vaccination schedule is an important step in polio eradication's future.

• The challenges of this policy are that implementation is expensive and requires the intensive training of vaccination workers compared to OPV. However, this solution will increase demand for the vaccine, be more politically accepted, and prevent the most cases of polio, which all to drive towards eradication.

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# NEXT STEPS

The GPEI and its partners should introduce IPV as first dose of polio vaccine into all vaccine schedules as soon as possible. The international health community has realized that the OPV paradox exists, so they are trying to push for a change in vaccination policies.

To overcome production troubles and introduce IPV to the developing world, the World Health Organization and their country offices have been working with manufacturers to purchase existing IPV products in volume (to lower the cost per dose) and develop alternative IPV options that can be priced at less than a dollar a dose.<sup>2</sup> As production of IPV increases, the goal can be expanded to other countries until IPV is universally administered.

From here, OPV will start to be removed from vaccination campaigns. Polio eradication is possible with IPV introduction and carefully planned campaigns.

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