RX FOR THE BODY POLITIC
“It’s entirely reminiscent of the tobacco industry, where big tobacco funded research to say smoking was not hazardous to your health. They wanted to raise just enough doubt in the science so people assume the products are not harmful.”

KELLY BROWNELL, dean of the Sanford School, on “Big Soda,” The Boston Globe, Sept. 22, 2015

“The president is right—we aren’t doing enough. Let’s harness the power of the marketplace and put a global price on carbon.”


“For the past seven years, our research team has watched how teenagers in our studies use their phones each day. And we have concluded that when it comes to cell phones, parents often worry about the wrong things.”


“The United States likes to think of itself as the country that does the helping, as we had done when Mexico City was struck by a devastating earthquake in 1985. But few had contemplated the possibility that Mexico would be coming to help us (after Hurricane Katrina).”


“Big data is like teenage sex: everybody talks about it, nobody really knows how to do it, everyone thinks everyone else is doing it...”

Huffington Post, Sept. 29, 2015

“South Africa or Tanzania, where I do a lot of work, or Kenya—they’re working hard to get people on treatment already and to keep them on treatment. I’m not sure the recommendations will help them a lot in the next couple of years. It’s the funding and infrastructure.”


“If we truly want to help poor nations develop and reduce poverty, maybe it is time to stop this global chatter on goals and redouble efforts — selectively and strategically — at the country level and with country leadership.”

FROM THE DEAN’S DESK

During my tenure at the Sanford School, I have been impressed with the sense of innovation that permeates the school.

The cover stories for this issue of Sanford Insights focus on the excitement and energy around a new center at the school, a place for politics on campus and for outreach to people locally, statewide, and nationally (page 10). POLIS: the Center for Politics, Leadership, Innovation and Service, is the result of a year-long effort by the faculty.

Led by Frederick “Fritz” Mayer, Associate Dean for Strategy and Innovation, the new center seeks to inspire Duke students to engage in political life. Even more ambitious, POLIS seeks to improve the democratic process, by directly addressing issues such as partisanism, polarization, and the fact that trust in government is declining.

Another new initiative is the local government innovation program, which kicked off with a workshop attended by city and county officials from across North Carolina (page 12). Presentations illustrated how insights from psychology and behavioral economics can support government policies. Fifty graduate students in Dan Ariely’s class will continue to work with government partners throughout the academic year.

We also have a grant to explore the feasibility of a World Food Policy Center at Sanford (page 5). It could draw together cross-disciplinary research in four areas of food policy: hunger, obesity, food safety and security, and agriculture and sustainability.

Faculty research continues to illuminate many of the pressing issues of our time. Sadly, this fall has been marked by more shootings on college campuses. Studies by Philip Cook on how criminals obtain guns (page 16) have been a big part of the on-going debate on gun policy, although there are striking differences in how his work has been represented in the media. His efforts to correct the record underscore how important it is that the debate be informed by accurate information.

Some changes at the school are quieter, but no less noteworthy. This summer, Francis Lethem retired from his many administrative duties: as director of the Duke Center for International Development, co-director of the Duke-UNC Rotary Peace Center and as associate dean for executive education programs. Fortunately, Francis will continue to teach at DCID, as he has done since 1994, and we will continue to benefit from his talent and wisdom.

Going forward, we will continue to prize and encourage this sense of innovation and curiosity from our entire Sanford community, faculty, students and staff, alike.

Kelly Brownell, Dean Robert L. Flowers Professor of Public Policy, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science

About the Cover: Local political cartoonist VC Rogers created the cover drawing about Sanford’s new center for politics, POLIS.
TWO JOIN DEWITT WALLACE CENTER

Mark Stencel joined the Sanford School this fall as co-director of The Reporters’ Lab in the DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy and a visiting lecturer. He directs a team of eight students on projects relating to political fact-checking and “structured” forms of journalism.

Previously, he was NPR’s managing editor for digital news. Duke alumnus David Graham, a staff writer at The Atlantic magazine, works with Professor Phil Bennett and students creating Rutherford Living History interviews.

ROSC RETIRING

Senior Research Scholar Joel Rosch of the Center for Child and Family Policy is retiring—one step at a time. He formally announced his retirement last spring, but continues to work with graduate students and will teach courses in the spring of 2016. He will also still give lectures for DCID’s executive education program.

Rosch began working with the Center in 2000. “I was supposed to be a liaison between researchers and policymakers,” Rosch says. “I also saw my role as trying to get researchers interested in the issues practitioners wanted to get answers to.”

Center Named in Honor of Samuel DuBois Cook

Samuel DuBois Cook (second from right), and his wife, Sylvia Cook (center), are joined by Duke President Richard H. Brodhead, Cynthia Brodhead, and keynote speaker Billye S. Aaron (second from left), at the celebration of the formal naming of the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity. The center, directed by William A. Darity Jr., professor of public policy, African and African American studies, and economics, is dedicated to the study of the causes, consequences and potential remedies for global inequality. Cook, the first African-American professor at Duke in 1966, is a Duke trustee emeritus and former president of Dillard University.

VISITING SCHOLARS AT DCID

Catherine Honeyman is managing director of Ishya Consulting in Rwanda, an education and youth consulting firm. During her time at Sanford’s Duke Center for International Development, she will work on developing UNESCO/IIEP’s Plan4Learning website, an online portal for education decision-makers. She also will complete her book, The Orderly Entrepreneur: Creativity, Credentials and Controls in Rwanda, forthcoming from Stanford University Press.

Ying Zhang is an assistant professor and senior research fellow at the Institute for Urban and Environmental Studies (IUE), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), in Beijing. She is researching China’s green transformation and low-carbon development; planning for achieving the new UN SDGs; and China-U.S. cooperation in international climate negotiation.

SIX NEW PHD CANDIDATES JOINED SANFORD THIS FALL

James B. Duke scholar Michael Burrows MPP’12, is a research manager for Professor Elizabeth Frankenberg’s STAR survey and a former Peace Corps volunteer.

Dean’s Graduate Fellow Ajenia Clemmons holds an MPP from the University of Denver. She worked for the National Black Caucus of State Legislators as policy director.

Danton Noriega-Goodwin has master’s degrees in applied statistics and economics. He has worked at the Duke Social Science Research Institute as a visiting fellow. His current research project is “Closing the Nutrition Gap: Policy Simulations Using Scanner Data.”

Emily Lambright received a BA in economics from Moravian College, where she was a teaching assistant in economics and business. She also was a data editor for the Brown University Population Studies & Training Center, and is a cross country and track athlete.

Emily Rains received a BA in economics from Stanford University. She was the lead associate at IDinsight in Bihar, India, where she focused on rural electrification and provided analytical support on key policy decisions.

Nivedhitha Subramanian earned an MA in economics from Northwestern University. She has worked with the World Bank Group in Washington, D.C., exploring education financing in Pakistan.
**New Sanford BOV Members**

Several Board of Visitors members have completed their service: Leslie Bains P’87, P’00, Paul W. Sperduto AB’80, MD’84, AM’87, HS’87 and student members Laura Bennett MPP’15, Luiz Pinto MIDP’15 and Diego Quezada PPS’15. J. Adam Abram is now chair emeritus.

New members beginning their service are: John Ford AB’79, P’13, president of the Discovery Channel; Jennifer Hillman AB’79, AM’79, P’18, law partner in Cassidy Levy Kent; Rob McDowell AB’85, former FCC commissioner and partner in Wiley Rein LLP; Rachel Kaganoff Stern, AM’90, vice president of the Junior Statesman Foundation; and Samuel Walker AB’80, global chief people and legal officer at Molson Coors Brewing Co.

New student members are Blair Lanier MPP/MBA’17, Christie Lawrence PPS’16 and Betty Tushabe MIDP’16. PhD candidate Ying Shi is continuing to serve.

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**Lethem Steps Down as Director of DCID**

By Julia Vail

After leading the school’s Duke Center for International Development since 2006, Visiting Professor of the Practice Francis Lethem stepped down as director on June 30.

“It’s not what has changed that I’m most proud of; it’s what hasn’t changed,” Lethem said. “DCID has extraordinary faculty and staff, all at the top of their expertise, all guided by values of selfless dedication to the future of developing countries, and all caring for their students and each other.”

Lethem joined Duke in 1994 after working for 30 years at the World Bank in institutional development and human resource management. He also served as a policy adviser on project design and was responsible for quality assurance of the bank’s Eastern Africa project portfolio. In 2002, Lethem became director of graduate studies for the Master of International Development Policy program.

“If there is one thing I hope MIDP fellows take from the program, it’s the importance of appreciating what you do not know,” Lethem said. “Interdisciplinarity means your ability to bring together and synthesize a variety of different fields and viewpoints.”

A native of Belgium, Lethem earned his doctorate in economics from Neuchatel University in Switzerland in 1967 and was a fellow at Harvard University’s Center for International Affairs in 1975 and 1976.

He is also stepping down from his roles as associate dean of DCID’s executive education programs and co-director of the Duke-UNC Rotary Peace Center. He will continue to teach as a member of the faculty.

“Francis Lethem is a treasure,” said Kelly Brownell, dean of the Sanford School. “Few people are as talented, wise, experienced and giving. Francis is a remarkable presence at Duke, in Sanford, and of course at DCID. I have so enjoyed working with him.”

Jonathan Abels, executive director of DCID, is serving as interim director while the search for a new director is underway.

“If there is one thing I hope MIDP fellows take from the program, it’s the importance of appreciating what you do not know.”

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**GIFT SUPPORTS UNDERGRAD RESEARCH AT CENTER FOR CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY**

A gift to the school from Hanna Elmore PPS’15 and her mother established the Mary Jane and Hanna Elmore Child and Family Policy Center Endowment Fund, and the Child and Family Policy Center Undergraduate Research Fellowship program.

While at Duke, Hanna earned a Child Policy Research Certificate. She also worked with Shane Goodridge, visiting assistant professor, through the School Research Partnership program, to develop a dual-language preschool program for Durham children.

“The center allowed me to focus my studies around the policy issues I cared about most with some of the most engaging, thoughtful professors on campus,” Elmore said. “Outside the classroom, the School Research Partnership gave me insight into how to best interact with a local policy partner and experience how I can best make a policy difference in the real world, in real time.”

She and her mother say they created the endowment to provide future students with similar opportunities. Elmore works for Teach for America in New Orleans.
Hal Brands is working in the office of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense in Washington, D.C., during his yearlong Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellowship.

The National Science Foundation has awarded Christina Gibson-Davis two grants as co-principal investigator. One on “Education, Engagement, and Well-Being among Adolescents,” for $250,000, examines how “soft skills” determine academic performance and civic engagement. The other grant of $100,000 is for the project “Family Structure and Performance and Civic Engagement. Skills” determine academic performance, Engagement, and Well-being among Adolescents,” for the Center for Scientific Review.

The inaugural meeting of the new section on Class and Inequality of the American Political Science Association was held at the APSA annual meeting this summer.

Nicholas Carnes is the founder and chair of the new section.

Anthony So was appointed to the High-Level Technical Working Group, Equitable Access Initiative, which is developing a new framework to help global agencies to transition middle-income countries from continued support. He also joined the advisory board of RhEACH (Rheumatic Heart Disease. Evidence. Advocacy. Communication. Hope), which identifies and disseminates solutions for this neglected disease.

Tom Taylor was reappointed to the Judicial Proceedings Panel by the Department of Defense to assess reforms in military sexual assault. He was also reappointed as a Pentagon legal consultant by the Department of the Army and recently made recommendations on senior officials’ accountability.

The American Psychological Association honored Candice Odgers with the 2015 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest, Early Career. It recognizes Odgers for advancing psychology as a science and/or profession through an extraordinary achievement in the public interest.

Duke Global Health Institute Associate Director Gavin Yamey has received a secondary appointment at Sanford. He is a professor of the practice of global health and co-editor of The Handbook of Global Health Policy.

This fall, Armen Mazmanny is a visiting professor from Armenia. His appointment is supported by former Sanford Board of Visitors member Magdalena Yesil.

The National Academy of Medicine has announced Dodge’s election. “I’m honored to join other policymakers and scholars will convene on noteworthy knowledge in education. Jennifer Lansford was appointed to a two-year term as chairperson of the National Institutes of Health’s Psychosocial Development, Risk, and Prevention Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review.

The inauguration of the new section on Class and Inequality of the American Political Science Association was held at the APSA annual meeting this summer. Nicholas Carnes is the founder and chair of the new section.

Kenneth Dodge, founding director of the Duke Center for Child and Family Policy and William McDougall Professor of Public Policy at the Sanford School, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine.

“I’m honored to join other Sanford and Duke faculty members in this body and grateful for their support,” Dodge said. New members were selected by a vote of the academy’s members.

“Membership in the National Academy of Medicine is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievements and commitment to service,” the academy said in announcing Dodge’s election.

“Ken Dodge is an outstanding scholar and epitomizes the ability to connect the highest quality research with the real world of public policy,” said Sanford School Dean Kelly Brownell. “This is a top honor bestowed on a top scientist.”

Dodge said he sees his selection by the academy as further validation of the work he chose to pursue at Duke and the Sanford School. “For me, coming to Sanford in 1998 and starting the Center for Child and Family Policy was an investment in multidisciplinary, real-world, group scholarship,” he explained. “This honor is an indication that other scholars conclude it was a wise decision that has paid off.”
The world’s approach to food policy challenges is largely siloed. Some groups focus primarily on addressing obesity, while others work to combat hunger. Others focus on food safety and security. Still others concentrate on the environmental effects of modern food production.

But just as pulling a loose thread can cause a knitted sweater to unravel, addressing a single food problem in isolation can have unintended consequences. Duke University hopes to address that phenomenon by exploring the possibility of a world food policy center that would encourage cross-disciplinary problem-solving. The effort also responds to growing student interest in understanding food systems.

“There is incredible interest in food topics among students, not only with regard to their own physical health and nutrition. Many are dismayed by problems with the governance of their food system, and they are interested in hunting for solutions,” said Sarah Zoubek. Zoubek is the new planning director for the envisioned world food policy center at the Sanford School of Public Policy. Sanford school dean Kelly Brownell, a nationally recognized food policy expert, is principal investigator during the planning phase.

Before coming to Duke in 2013, Brownell was the James Roland Angell Professor of Psychology and director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University.

“When I came to Duke, I saw tremendous potential to build on the strengths and interests of faculty here and at other area universities and institutions,” Brownell said.

“A cross-disciplinary food working group formed here about a year and a half ago. Now we have reached the point where we are actively exploring the feasibility of a center. A great deal of planning is needed in order to determine how to structure this effort to have maximum impact.”

Start-up grants from The Duke Endowment and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation totaling $500,000 made it possible to begin the planning phase. The planning grants received for possible world food policy center.
Gen. Dempsey named Rubenstein Fellow at Duke

Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation’s highest-ranking military officer, has been named a 2016 Rubenstein Fellow at Duke University. Dempsey will be in residence at Duke in the spring 2016 and fall 2016 semesters.

In the spring, he will co-teach a course in the Sanford School of Public Policy on American civil-military relations with political scientist Peter Feaver. In the fall, Dempsey will teach a course on management and leadership at the Fuqua School of Business. In addition, he will deepen his existing ties to the Duke Program on American Grand Strategy, the Fuqua/Coach K Center on Leadership & Ethics (COLE) and Duke Athletics, and speak to student and faculty groups.

The Rubenstein Fellows, a university-wide initiative to bring thought leaders to Duke to share insights on global challenges, was established by Duke Board of Trustees chairman David M. Rubenstein.

Current Rubenstein Fellows are Jim Rogers, former CEO and chair of Duke Energy, who is also a visiting professor at Sanford, and Jack Matlock, who served as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia and as director of European and Soviet Affairs at the National Security Council during the Reagan administration. Rogers leads the Energy Access Project at Duke, which is looking for solutions for bringing energy to those without it.

Malcolm Gillis, Duke and DCID Leader, Dies at 74

Malcolm Gillis, who began his career as a development economist at Duke University and helped guide the creation of the Duke Center for International Development (DCID), died Oct. 4 at age 74 in Houston, Texas.

He was president emeritus of Rice University, University Professor, the Ervin Kenneth Zingler Professor of Economics and a professor of management. Sanford School faculty remembered him for his keen intelligence, for his contributions to Duke and to higher education, and for his wit and warmth.

“He did a terrific job as dean of the graduate school, in which capacity he helped Bill Ascher develop DCID and nurture it in a way that allowed it to have the impact it is having today,” said Sanford Professor Bruce Kuniholm, inaugural dean of the Sanford School.

Gillis began his teaching career at Duke as an assistant professor of economics in 1967. The following year, he went to Harvard as a research fellow and lecturer in economics. About 15 years later, he returned to Duke as a professor of economics and public policy. In 1986, he became dean of the Duke graduate school and vice provost for academic affairs.

Duke has established support for the Malcolm Gillis Chair of Public Policy. Gillis was told of the decision about a month before his passing.

#MMX15 Trends on Twitter in South Africa


Speakers included Andrew Phelps of The New York Times, who spoke about the changes his innovation report has brought to the NYT newsroom. Other presenters offered tools and resources as well as in-depth panel discussions of news stories, innovation, sustainability, branding and storytelling. Community journalists, nonprofits, independent bloggers, scholars and students rubbed elbows and shared stories with owners, editors, managers and reporters from established media companies.

Easing Pathways to Policy Careers

Many Sanford School undergraduates choose first jobs with consulting companies. With so many career alternatives open to public policy majors and their wide array of interests, that fact is somewhat surprising. What’s behind it?

For public policy majors who want to pursue other options, the Sanford School Career Services Office has launched a new program in collaboration with Duke Career Services.

“EMBARK: navigating & networking for aspiring policy professionals,” will provide students with strategies and networking opportunities.

“We have several opportunities rolling out this fall, including a trip to Washington, D.C. during fall break,” said program coordinator Suzanne Valdivia.

During the D.C. trip, students had the chance to network with young Sanford alumni, learn about specific entry-level policy jobs, receive coaching on setting up informational interviews, and create an effective “elevator speech” summarizing their interests and internship experiences.

Other EMBARK efforts this fall include networking opportunities with master’s of public policy students and Skype sessions with young alumni.
Duke Kunshan University (DKU) may soon offer a new professional degree for people interested in international environmental policy.

“The goal is nothing less than training the next generation of global leaders on environmental policy problems,” said Billy Pizer, Sanford professor and faculty fellow at the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions.

Pizer and Nicholas School of the Environment faculty members Erika Weinthal and Jin Zhang are spearheading the International Master of Environmental Policy (IMEP). If approved this fall by Duke faculty and trustees, the program will be offered jointly by the Nicholas and Sanford schools at the campus in southern China that welcomed its first students in August 2014.

The initiative will build on Duke’s strengths in environmental science, policy, interdisciplinary collaboration, and building bridges between the academy and government. The program has the added advantage of being located where the need for environmental solutions is acute.

“The biggest environmental problems in the world right now are in China and Asia, because of the rapid economic development that’s been occurring,” Pizer said. “They are facing the same challenges the U.S. faced 40 years ago with air, water and toxic waste problems. Layered on top of that is concern about global climate change and food security.”

The first class of students will matriculate in the fall of 2017. Pizer expects the program to attract students from China, Europe, other Asian countries, and the United States. Students will spend three semesters in Kunshan and one in Durham. In addition to classwork, they will complete internships and build international professional networks.

New faculty will be hired at Kunshan, and professors from Duke will visit on a semester basis. Some DKU classes may be taught jointly with Duke classes via teleconferencing and other technologies, and Duke graduate students will have the opportunity to spend a semester in Kunshan. A research center for environmental policy at DKU is scheduled to open next year.

Pizer said the time is right for a master’s level program in international environmental policy. “The demand is huge for people with this kind of expertise and it will only be growing over time.”
Promoting Accountability in Health Care Delivery in India

By Jackie Ogburn

The challenge was to plan and design systems where community members can report local problems.

Fighting a typhoid outbreak in a village in Uttar Pradesh, India, might be as simple as disinfecting a pool of standing water with a bucket of bleach. But getting that bleach to the right person in the right village at the right time requires a system of health and government infrastructure that doesn’t really exist yet.

For his summer internship, Matt Bunyi MPP’16 worked with the government in this northern state in India on making public sector health workers accountable to the community to deliver that bucket, as well as other critically important health services such as immunizations and supplementary nutrition for malnourished children.

Sanford Assistant Professor Manoj Mohanan assigned Bunyi to the position as part of his research project in Lucknow, India. Mohanan is working with a social accountability initiative in collaboration with the World Bank and the government of Uttar Pradesh. The Uttar Pradesh Health Systems Strengthening Project (UPHSSP) and the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) developed the protocols and handled the planning, management and roll-out of the interventions.

The challenge was to plan and design systems where community members can report local problems, such as unavailability of timely child nutritional supplements, to government workers who could have the capacity to solve the problem.

“There was no social accountability,” for the delivery of health services, Bunyi said. Many villagers didn’t know they had a right to services, and those who did lacked information about where to get services or where to direct complaints.

The project needed to ramp up quickly. At the government office, funds and office spaces were available, but no workers had been hired. Bunyi discovered part of the problem was that jobs were posted only online, when the local people they needed to hire didn’t have Internet access or skills. He assisted the committee that eventually hired five managers and 27 county-level employees, who in turn will be recruiting 300 community organizers.

Bunyi drew on his experience as a Peace Corps Fellow in Indonesia to understand the local culture, both at the village level and within the government. He took Hindi lessons in the mornings before going to work.

“Language brings such big baggage of culture and history,” he said. The lessons helped him understand the mindset of the people he wanted to serve. The soft skills he had learned in the Peace Corps—learning the local culture, listening to people and learning about the power dynamics in the group—were complemented by the hard skills he learned at Sanford. He decided to enroll in the MPP program because of the professors’ depth of experience in international development.

“Working with Manoj (Mohanan) was a fantastic opportunity. I learned so much about how research design and project analysis can help create evidence-based policy. Professor Anthony So taught me how to frame problems to get the best solution,” he said.

“Matt’s understanding of the quantitative aspects of the evaluation research, combined with his ability to work creatively in resource-constrained settings, made him very effective in the field,” Mohanan said. “Our project made remarkable progress in planning and design over the summer, and the support that Matt provided was critical in achieving this progress.”

Bunyi is continuing to work on the project during the academic year.

Matt Bunyi

Midwives providing health care in rural Uttar Pradesh.

Promoting Accountability in Health Care Delivery in India

student research

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Midwives providing health care in rural Uttar Pradesh.
By Erin McKenzie

A team of Duke University students, staff, and faculty are helping to advance the university’s goal of carbon neutrality with a pilot program that connects Duke employees with vendors providing discounted rooftop solar installations.

“This project is a great example of how the Nicholas Institute not only brings its expertise to students, but also furthers Duke’s sustainability endeavors.”

“From rigorous research of the state’s solar landscape, Duke students developed a pragmatic project that took advantage of tax credits, vetted solar installers, and gained university approvals to make deployment of a relatively climate-friendly energy technology a more affordable reality for university employees,” said Tim Profeta, director of the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions and Sanford professor. “Billy [Pizer] and I were excited to come along on their intellectual exploration.”

The Solarize Duke program—open to locally-based university employees—was borne out of an energy-themed Bass Connections project. Partners were the Nicholas Institute, the Carbon Offsets Initiative, the Sanford School and NextClimate.

During three months in spring 2015, the program connected some 200 employees with two top Triangle area solar installers, Southern Energy Management and Yes! Solar Solutions, to install discounted solar at employees’ homes.

The program takes advantage of 2016 federal and 2015 state solar tax credits, combining them with vendor-provided group discounts to deliver price cuts of as much as 65 percent.

Although the program is slated to conclude in December 2015, Duke Carbon Offsets Initiative Manager Charles Adair said the university plans to ensure some elements of it are more permanent.

“Even if the tax credit does go away, we will find something more permanent, whether it’s through an employee benefits program or something similar,” Adair said.

For student partners like Ellis Baehr and Daniel Ketyer PPS’15 the opportunity to gain experience outside the classroom left a lasting impression.

Baehr says it was his best experience at Duke. He credits his involvement with helping him to secure his current job as an energy analyst at Jones Lang LaSalle.

“Starting with a vague notion of what we wanted to accomplish and actually pushing it through is something to be proud of. I look forward to coming back in five or 10 years and seeing the solar panels this project helped to install.”

For Ketyer, the most significant part of his involvement was interacting with “the top faculty that study energy at Duke.”

“You can listen to a great professor in a lecture hall with 200 other students, but through this project I got the chance to be one of seven or eight people regularly sitting around a table with Tim Profeta and Billy Pizer, benefiting from the knowledge they had to share.”

Solarize Duke team, from left: Michelle Nowlin, Jason Elliott, James Ferguson, Charles Adair, Daniel Ketyer, Ellis Baehr and Jennifer Sekar
Politics.
An essential part of life or a dirty word? It depends on whom you ask.

According to many students, it’s the latter. Hyper-partisanship, incivility, and dysfunction in Washington dominate the headlines, so it’s no wonder young people are disenchanted with the political process and even, in some cases, actively avoid it at all costs.

It’s a peculiar position, especially considering that college students are typically idealists and deeply committed to improving the lives of those around them. Yet they see government as an impediment to progress, not a key ingredient.

But what if we could harness the talent, energy, creativity and ambition of students, faculty and staff to change that? To not only inspire students to see politics as a viable, aspirational and necessary pursuit, but to improve the health of our political system in the process?

Enter POLIS: The Center for Politics, Leadership, Innovation and Service. Born of a years-long grassroots effort of Duke faculty concerned with political cynicism and apathy on campus, POLIS seeks to:

1. Inspire and empower Duke students to engage in political life in all its forms, and
2. Improve democratic processes in the United States and around the world.

These may be lofty ambitions, but Duke and the Sanford School are getting started. According to Landy Elliott, the newly hired associate director of POLIS, the center has begun pursuing programming and research opportunities “to inspire students and faculty to jump in, get involved and imagine politics at its best.”

In addition to covering the basics, such as creating an online clearinghouse for all political opportunities on campus, POLIS’s first year will highlight speakers and programs that focus not on politics as it is, but politics as it could or should be.

Activities in the pipeline include political skill-building workshops, a pilot leadership initiative that includes a spring course and summer internship grants (in partnership with the Sanford School’s Hart Leadership Program), experimental research opportunities to reimagine political and policymaking challenges, collaborations with the arts and storytelling communities, forums and panels that model civil discourse, and, of course, events related to the 2016 elections.

“I’m so excited about the potential of POLIS,” said Frederick “Fritz” Mayer, associate dean of strategy and innovation at Sanford and director of POLIS. “It’s going to be a real signature of Sanford’s commitment to engaging the great issues of our time in innovative ways.”

About the name: POLIS

More than just an acronym, the name POLIS also references the Athenian polis, the Greek word for city-state and the site of the first great experiment in democracy. By connecting to this original democratic undertaking, where it was the duty of every citizen to participate fully in public affairs, POLIS signals its commitment to facing the political challenges of our time by drawing on the same spirit of deliberation, cooperation, and innovation that was a hallmark of our democracy’s forbearers.
A new online hub dubbed “Campaign Stop 2016” will gather the Duke community's conversations and viewpoints on the 2016 election season. The website, a yearlong project of the Duke Office of News and Communications, will both foster and showcase dialogue about politics.

It will use a variety of media — including video, podcasts, Twitter chats, blogs, news clips and op-eds — to share Duke student and faculty expertise and views about the presidential election, as well as important congressional, state and local contests. The site launched on Oct. 26.

Student voices will be a key feature, with more than 30 graduate and undergraduate student bloggers participating.

Duke professors will share their expertise on issues that arise during the campaign, such as immigration, health care, Iran, voting rights and more. North Carolina is expected to be a battleground state again in the national election, and the site will also offer perspectives on Southern and regional politics.

The “Glad You Asked,” series will give faculty a platform to discuss issues they wish the candidates would talk about, but are not.

One regular video feature is “Foreign Exchange,” a biweekly discussion on America’s global role, with Sanford professors Bruce Jentleson and Peter Feaver. Jentleson served as a senior advisor to the U.S. State Department Policy Planning Director from 2009 to 2011, and was on the national security advisory committee for the Obama 2012 campaign. Feaver was a special advisor to the National Security Council at the White House from 2005 to 2007, during the G.W. Bush administration. He is also directs the Duke Program on American Grand Strategy.

### Politicians Who Teach

One of the strengths of the faculty of the Sanford School lies with professors of the practice, who have real-world experience with the types of policy problems they teach about. This academic year, two Sanford faculty are running for political office.

Steve Schewel, visiting assistant professor with the Hart Leadership Program, is running for re-election to Durham City Council this fall.

Ellis Hankins, visiting professor of the practice, is running in the Democratic primary for a seat in the North Carolina Senate for district 16 in western Wake County. He is former executive director of the N.C. League of Municipalities.
Sanford Pilots Local Government Innovation Program  By Carol Jackson

The timing could not have been better. On September 15, President Barack Obama issued an executive order: use behavioral science insights to better serve the American people.

Two days later, 70 North Carolina mayors, city managers and other officials from 30 local governments gathered at a Sanford School workshop to learn about that very thing. What is behavioral science, and how can it be used to spur innovation at the local level?

As Obama’s order spelled out, research findings from fields such as behavioral economics and psychology — which analyze how people actually make decisions and act on them — can inspire better, more successful government policies.

The local officials learned from among the best in the field. Dan Ariely, professor in the Sanford School, and James B. Duke Professor of behavioral economics, has authored three best-selling books on the topic: Predictably Irrational, The Upside of Irrationality, and The Honest Truth about Dishonesty.

Peter Ubel, the Madge and Dennis T. McLawhorn University Professor of Business, Public Policy and Medicine, uses the tools of decision psychology and behavioral economics to explore health care topics like informed consent, shared decision making and health care cost containment.

Bryan Sivak also addressed the crowd. As chief innovation officer to Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley, he led that state’s efforts to embed concepts of innovation into the DNA of state government. Later he was chief technology officer for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Sivak ran an “Idea Lab” in which he identified government workers with good ideas, and gave them six months and $10,000 dollars to try those ideas out.

Sivak discovered six months was too long, and the money didn’t matter much. People just needed a green light to try fresh ideas.

The results were “remarkable, a game changer,” he said, adding that some of the best ideas came from those “who had been in the bowels of the CDC for 20 years.” Sivak encouraged the workshop participants to attempt small acts of innovation on specific problems, noting such small successes build momentum and trust.

“It all comes down to trust,” he said.

The workshop kicked off a local government policy innovation initiative at Sanford. Fifty students from Sanford and the Pratt School of Engineering are enrolled in Ariely’s yearlong “Behavioral Economics for Municipal Policy” course. They will work in small teams with the local government leaders to design “behavioral interventions” to address specific problems.

One of the local government partners is Bertha Johnson, budget and management services director for the city of Durham. The city already has a focus on innovation and she was inspired by the workshop.

“This is the first time I have ever engaged with Duke in a meaningful way that’s not about money,” she said. “Let’s leverage our capital, our human capital, to improve the community we love.”
Marshmallows and Voter Turnout

By John Holbein

Voter turnout in the United States is low. In last year’s midterm elections, only 36 percent of eligible voters participated. Voter turnout is also unequal: educated, wealthier, and older voters are much more likely to vote. These patterns shape the election outcomes we see and the public policies that get implemented.

Unfortunately, most approaches to address low and unequal turnout tend to fall short. Many get-out-the-vote efforts by political campaigns have small effects. Worse still, many of these efforts actually seem to make turnout inequalities more extreme—they tend to disproportionately benefit the wealthy, educated people who already vote in large numbers.

Likewise, in-school civics education programs that teach adolescents knowledge and facts about government or target students’ cognitive abilities have failed to encourage people to vote.

My work takes a different approach. Recently, psychologists, economists, and neuroscientists have discovered that a set of psychological and social skills that children develop while in school are just as important—if not more so—than measures of cognitive ability for their success in school and beyond.

The most well-known skill is the ability to delay gratification, often symbolized by the marshmallow test. In the original version of this test, researchers at Stanford offered kids the opportunity to have one marshmallow now, or two if they were willing to wait a few minutes. The kids who lasted longer, they said, were better at delaying gratification, something that isn’t captured by standard measures of intelligence or cognitive skills.

Although scholars have debated the factors that help kids delay gratification, there is no doubt that skills like these affect virtually every aspect of our lives. Things like grit or tenacity, empathy, efficacy (believing in yourself), self-control, and social skills all matter immensely. And my recent research suggests they matter for voting, too.

I recently analyzed data from the Fast Track program—an early-childhood, in-school program that targeted kids’ psychological and social skills. In 1991-93, Fast Track randomly assigned some incoming kindergarteners to this program, which continued through elementary school. The program used school curriculum, after school programs, and home visits to teach kids how to regulate their individual motivations, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and to work well with others.

This early childhood program had a large impact on voter turnout—even though a long time elapsed between the end of the program and when these kids became eligible to vote. I calculated the percentage who voted at least once between 2004 and 2012. Those who participated in Fast Track as kids voted at a rate 11-14 percentage points higher when they became adults, compared with those who did not participate in the program. That is a 40 percent increase.

Moreover, this effect was largest among the poorest individuals—those least likely to vote at the beginning of the program.

Fast Track appears to have been effective because it taught children to regulate their motivations, emotions, thoughts, and behavior and to work productively with others. Those who developed these skills appear to be more equipped to follow through on their intentions to participate in politics, even when distractions or obstacles got in their way.

These experimental results are promising and have important policy implications. More work remains to be done to see just how psychological and social skills help encourage people to vote—and I’m actively involved in research trying to do so.

Although I do not believe we should abandon other methods of mobilizing citizens, it may be time to reorient civics education so that it focuses not only on knowledge of government, but also on social and behavioral skills that help encourage active participation in politics.

John Holbein is a PhD candidate at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. This article was originally published online by The Washington Post on Oct. 4, 2015.

“Marshmallows and Votes? Childhood Skill Development and Adult Political Participation,” is available online at the Social Science Research Network.
Is China at Risk for an HIV Epidemic? Using Networks to Model Spread of Disease

By Mary-Russell Roberson

Sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and chlamydia have spread widely in China during the past few decades, prompting concerns among policymakers and researchers that HIV might do the same. The prevalence of HIV in China is low — government estimates put it at less than 0.1 percent of the population. But some predict the rate might skyrocket given the increasing prevalence of prostitution and internal and international migration since the opening of China to the outside world.

Sanford professor Maria-Giovanna Merli has a different perspective. After decades of research in China, she had a hunch that the patterns of sexual mixing in China were not compatible with a rapid spread of HIV.

Merli, a native of Milan, studied in China twice as an exchange student — two years in Shanghai and one in Nanjing — and later spent four summers in rural northern China. She was conducting doctoral research into the demography and politics of reproductive health and contraception under China’s One Child Policy.

To delve into the HIV question, Merli won a grant from NIH to survey about 1,500 members of the general public and about 500 female sex workers in Shanghai. The surveys collected data related to socioeconomic and demographic attributes of the respondents and their sexual partners, as well as information about the number, length and timing of partnerships.

To make sure the data was accurate, Merli partnered with Chinese researchers experienced in conducting sex surveys. To check the validity of responses, a random subsample of respondents were resurveyed two months after the original survey; the results were highly consistent with the original findings.

Collecting the data was only the first step. “I wanted to ask whether the patterns of sexual mixing in Shanghai would sustain an HIV epidemic,” she said. To answer that question, she collaborated with James Moody, the Robert O. Keohane Professor of Sociology. Moody studies and develops visualizations for networks that capture how beliefs, behaviors, or viruses travel from person to person.

“Jim has amazing skills in network simulations,” Merli said. “He’s a leader in the field.”

Using the survey data, Moody and Merli built a network of sexual mixing in Shanghai and ran simulations showing how HIV might spread, incorporating equations describing the probability of transmitting HIV during a partnership. None of the simulations showed an explosive spread.

In fact, even in simulations that assumed survey respondents underreported their sexual activity or that assumed a very high probability of HIV infection per sexual act, HIV prevalence increased to only 0.2 percent over the course of 30 years of simulated sexual interactions, including break-ups, new relationships and concurrent relationships.

According to Merli and Moody, the slow spread can be explained by the structure of the sexual network, which they describe as sparsely connected with few redundant pathways.

A network with redundant pathways provides multiple routes for a virus to travel across the network; if it doesn’t make via one route, it may well make it via another. In parts of the world with a high rate of HIV infection, the sexual network has enough redundant pathways to allow even a fragile virus like HIV to reach a large number of people.

The Shanghai network is sparse because many people there have only one lifetime sexual partner. The densest part of the network — the “highly connected core” — consists of female sex workers and their clients, two groups who have a relatively high rate of partner change. But even in this core, there are not enough redundant pathways to promote rapid spread of HIV throughout the population. This is because the typical female sex worker in Shanghai has a relatively small and consistent set of clients.

Merli noted that if the network model had included injected-drug users and men who have sex with men, the number of people infected with HIV might have been greater.

“The absences of appropriate data on these population groups makes it impossible to test these hypotheses,” she said.

The structure of the Shanghai sexual network also helps explains why syphilis and chlamydia are widespread in China. These diseases are more infectious than HIV, so they can flourish in the absence of redundant pathways.

Policies designed to reduce HIV in China can be informed by this kind of research, Merli said. For one thing, cracking down on prostitution could backfire. Decreasing the number of female sex workers would increase redundant pathways.

“Unless you also reduce demand, trying to reduce the number of sex workers is not the way to go, because you might end up with more people infected rather than fewer, given the structure of this network,” Merli said.

Report Calls for New Discipline: Planetary Health

The well-being of future generations is jeopardized by continuing degradation of natural resources and ecological systems, and requires immediate global action, according to a high-level scientific commission. The scientists recommend creation of a new academic discipline to address the threat: planetary health.

The commission was convened by The Lancet, a leading medical and public health journal, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Its report, Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch, was published in a special edition of The Lancet in July.

The phrase “planetary health” expresses the profound interdependence of the health of the planet and human health as the key to survival of human civilization.

The commission included 15 leading academics and policymakers from eight countries, chaired by Professor Sir Andy Haines of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. As one of the two social scientists on the commission, Sanford Professor Subhrendu K. Pattanayak contributed much of the report’s sections on governance and policy.

“The report articulates the problem, but the solution depends on evidence gathered from the field about what works, where, when and for whom. Policymakers will believe in interventions that are field-tested,” said Pattanayak.

Pattanayak created, and since 2008 has been teaching, a cross-disciplinary class on the economics and policy aspects of environmental health. The class focuses on understanding how environmental mismanagement hurts human health, and how to harness the actions of households, communities, politicians, bureaucrats, donors, NGOs and the private sector to address this problem.

An environmental economist and research professor of global health, Pattanayak has led several interdisciplinary projects, most recently on household energy transitions. For example, what does it take to convince rural households in India to buy and use more efficient and cleaner-burning cookstoves? They found their interventions reduce biomass use for cooking, which if scaled up, could profoundly reduce greenhouse gases and pollutants, while also directly improving the health of women cooks and their young children.

The rising global population, coupled with overuse of natural resources, will exacerbate health challenges in the future. The world’s poorest communities are at the greatest risk because they live in areas most strongly affected by environmental changes and have greater sensitivity to disease and poor health.

The final section of the report outlines three main challenges to address: conceptual, research and implementation.

Conceptual challenges include new ways of thinking about nature, economics and health. The report calls for an end to the false separation of the economy and the environment, by, for example, developing new indicators to measure the progress of nations (instead of GDP) that take into account the depreciation of natural capital.

Research challenges require transdisciplinary research, especially through expanding collections of health, socioeconomic and environmental data over long timeframes. Improved communication to policymakers and the public also are necessary to enable evidence-informed decision-making.

Current systems of governance are inadequate, largely because of enormous implementation challenges. Against a backdrop of growth in population, technology and economic development, governments must use a variety of approaches to impact future trajectories for global environmental degradation, the report recommends. These approaches include regulations, mass media campaigns, environmental stewardship by the private sector and engaging with civil society and community organizations in ways that promote public support and participation.

“This requires more than effort on the individual level. It requires action on the international, nation and local level, by all the policy actors in those spaces: governments, NGO and donors. But first and foremost, these implementation plans must be whetted by science. We must draw on theories from economics, political science, sociology, psychology, to generate hypotheses and test how these behavioral adjustments will work in the field,” Pattanayak said.

The Rockefeller Foundation is providing $15 million to support the creation of the new planetary health discipline, in addition to $200 million it has spent on related projects over the last five years.

Both The Rockefeller Foundation and Lancet created websites dedicated to the report.
Criminals are far more likely to acquire guns from family and acquaintances than by theft, according to new research from Duke’s Sanford School and the University of Chicago.

“There are a number of myths about how criminals get their guns, such as most of them are stolen or come from dirty dealers. We didn’t find that to be the case,” said Philip J. Cook, ITT/Terry Sanford Professor of Public Policy.

One study asked inmates of the Cook County Jail in Chicago how they had obtained guns, while a second project analyzed data that traced guns used in crimes. The gun trace requests were submitted to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) by the Chicago Police Department from 2009 to 2013.

Key findings from the studies include:

• 60 percent of the respondents obtained guns by purchase or trade.
• Most offenders obtained guns from personal connections, not from gun stores or by theft.
• Most of the guns were old (11 years old on average), and criminals held onto the guns a short time, frequently less than a year.
• Chicago gangs sometimes organize gun buys and distribute guns to members.
• The Chicago Police Department’s enforcement efforts had an influence on the underground gun market. Respondents were concerned with the higher arrest risk in buying from a stranger and about being caught with a “dirty” gun that had been fired in a previous crime.

In 2013, researchers interviewed 99 inmates with a record of violence and gang involvement about their gun purchases. The resulting report, “Sources of guns to dangerous people: What we learn by asking them,” was published online by the journal Preventive Medicine.

“One survey respondent gave what amounted to a lecture on how guns enter the neighborhood,” said Cook.

That respondent said, “Chicago—it’s so close to Indiana…there’s gun laws, but it’s easier to get access to guns in Indiana so most people either go to the down-South states or go to Indiana to get guns or people obtain gun licenses, go the store and then resell.”

Information from the Cook County inmates lined up with findings in a second study, which identified straw purchasers and gun traffickers as a key source of crime guns in Chicago. Straw purchasers can pass a background check and buy guns that they transfer to others. This study, “Some Sources of Crime Guns in Chicago: Dirty dealers, straw purchasers and traffickers,” is forthcoming in the 2015 Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology.

By linking ATF information that traced guns to crimes with information from the Chicago Police Department about the person caught with the gun, the researchers could identify which were gang members and compare their guns with those possessed by non-gang members.

“Dirty dealers,” who deliberately violate the law and sell to buyers who cannot pass a background check, accounted for less than five percent of the guns sold to gang members.

More than 60 percent of the crime guns were initially purchased out of state. Meanwhile, 15 percent of new crime guns confiscated from a man were first purchased by a woman, which suggests a straw purchase.

The findings suggest that targeting by law enforcement of the intermediaries in the underground market, the straw purchasers and traffickers, helps reduce access to guns by some dangerous people, Cook said.

“This research, along with our previous studies and interviews underway with gun brokers in Chicago, is showing that brokers do a lot to manage and minimize their legal risks, such as not selling to people they don’t know. This suggests that law enforcement efforts are having a big effect on availability of guns.”


SCIENCE, TWISTED
By Karen Kemp

When you study a public health issue as volatile and unrelenting as gun violence, inevitably you sometimes find yourself in the media spotlight—for the wrong reasons.

That’s what happened to Philip J. Cook, ITT/Terry Sanford Professor of public policy, economics and sociology, after publication of research he conducted with colleagues at the University of Chicago Crime Lab.

A Sept. 15 Las Vegas Review Journal editorial used their findings to conclude, “background checks do not deter criminals from obtaining weapons” therefore, “expanded background checks will do nothing to keep such criminals from perpetrating gun violence.”

This misinterpretation prompted Cook and coauthors Susan Parker and Harold Pollack to write a letter to the editor to “correct the record.” They wrote: “...by similar logic, there would be no reason to have any laws. We doubt the editorial board of this newspaper would take a stance against legal prohibitions of burglary, domestic violence or drunken driving, just because those prohibitions—like regulations on gun transactions—are sometimes violated.”

Meanwhile, the National Review and the National Rifle Association claimed the study supported only the law-abiding. Bruce Tinsley’s “Mallard Fillmore” comic strip tied the study to President Obama’s call for stricter gun regulations and ridiculed expansion of regulation as pointless.

“I would be glad to have a forum to rebut the scurrilous lies being told about (this study),” Cook told the Columbia Journalism Review. “But how do you rebut a comic strip?”

Pollack noted the stories “seemed to just grab a soundbite...that we don’t feel accurately reflects what we found. Especially for an issue this sensitive, it adds to the general cacophony. When every study becomes ammunition for a prior advocacy belief, we lose that ability to have a public conversation,” Pollack said.

Cook has researched gun violence for 40 years. Having his work misapplied to support erroneous conclusions is a perennial problem. Surprisingly, though, it comes from all directions.

While “pro-gun people always are very quick to write letters to the editor or to members of Congress about people like me who, they say, are biased or stupid,” regulation advocates are not necessarily his allies either, he told The Chronicle of Higher Education, “because some of my work undercuts their positions.”

“My goal as a scholar is to be respected rather than liked, although being human, I’d like to have both.”

U.S. Law Enforcement Ranks Anti-Government Extremism as Most Prevalent Terrorist Threat
By Jackie Ogburn

U.S. law enforcement agencies rank the threat of violence from anti-government extremists higher than the threat from radicalized Muslims, according to a report by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security (TCTHS).

The report, “Law Enforcement Assessment of the Violent Extremism Threat,” was based on survey research by Charles Kurzman, professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and David Schanzer, director of TCTHS and associate professor of the practice at the Sanford School.

“The data show that we have two distinct, serious, ongoing terrorist threats in the United States,” Schanzer said. “Tragic incidents of violence, whether they be in Charleston or the Boston Marathon, tend to exaggerate the magnitude of the threat, but both will require consistent societal and law enforcement vigilance in the foreseeable future.”

The survey — conducted by the center with the Police Executive Research Forum — found that 74 percent of 382 law enforcement agencies rated anti-government extremism as one of the top three terrorist threats in their jurisdiction.

“The data were collected in early 2014, before security agencies began noting increased activity and recruitment of Americans by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). In follow-up telephone interviews, the officers did not modify their initial responses in light of ISIS threats within the United States.

Schanzer and Kurzman wrote about their findings in an op-ed published in The New York Times June 16, the day before the shooting of nine African Americans in a church in Charleston, S.C. Their research has become part of the national dialogue about mass shootings.

74 percent of 382 law enforcement agencies rated anti-government extremism as one of the top three terrorist threats in their jurisdiction

“While public attention focuses primarily on violent extremism associated with Muslims, this horrible crime drew public attention to other forms of violent extremism that law enforcement agencies have been concerned about for a while,” Kurzman said.

The report is the first issued from a larger project that will also review community-outreach programs by law enforcement agencies as a counter-terrorism technique.

The project is supported by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (Award No. 2012-ZA-BX-0002).
Black parents demonstrate an outsized commitment to using their limited resources to invest in their children’s education, a new study concludes. And that investment pays off, bringing their children to near parity in terms of educational achievement with their white counterparts.

Black families contribute to higher education with a median net worth of only $24,000, the study found, while white families provide support with a much higher median net worth of more than $168,000—a nearly 19 to 1 difference.

"Bootstraps Are For Black Kids: Race, Wealth, and the Impact of Intergenerational Transfers on Adult Outcomes," was co-authored by William Darity, the Samuel DuBois Cook Professor of Public Policy, African and African American Studies, and Economics at Duke, Darrick Hamilton of The New School, Yunju Nam of the State University of New York, Buffalo, and Anne Price of The Insight Center for Community Economic Development.

"Data on intergenerational transfers of economic resources for higher education is limited," said Darity, director of the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke. "However, this type of parental financial support might ultimately prove to be a decisive factor determining the racial wealth gap in the next generation."

The study is based on the 2013 Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) that found the racial wealth gap might be one of the main mechanisms for perpetuating economic inequality. Using PSID data collected between 1982 and 2013, researchers began to investigate the relationships between parental income and wealth, parental financial support, and their child’s economic achievement. The study distinguished three types of parental financial support—support for higher education, support for home ownership, and support for "other purposes."

Researchers found that parental financial support for education has the strongest positive association with adult outcomes among the three categories. Blacks and whites who received any parental support for education experience better outcomes than their counterparts who never received such support for every outcome examined: educational attainment, home ownership, income, and net worth.

"Black parents who are able to contribute to their child’s education are better able to transfer their own socioeconomic status to the next generation," said Price, managing director and chief asset officer for the Insight Center. "However, it’s important to remember that while parental support for education lowers black/white disparities in education and home ownership, there is little variation in racial gaps in income and wealth."

Despite the findings that over half of the blacks who received parental help have a graduate education, stark racial differences in both income and net worth persist. Among those who received financial support from parents, the median income is $98,066 for whites and $69,306 for blacks. Median net worth is $63,000 and $35,996, respectively.

The study was released by Insight Center for Community Economic Development and is part of the National Asset Scorecard and Communities of Color project, supported by the Ford Foundation. The study can be found online at www.insightcced.org.
The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft
Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, editors
Brookings Institution Press, November 2015, 300 pages
The insights, narratives, knowledge and lessons of history are central to the ways in which the United States interacts with the world. Historians note that policymakers both use and misuse history to justify current actions. This book brings together leading scholars and policymakers to address essential questions surrounding the history-policy relationship in hopes of modeling a new approach to collaboration between the two fields.

The 11 essays include two by Sanford professors: “The Shadow of White Slavery: Race, Innocence, and History in Contemporary Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns” by Gunther Peck; and “Looking Forward Through the Past: The Role of History in the Bush White House National Security Policymaking” by Peter Feaver and William Inboden, associate professor, University of Texas at Austin. Co-editor Hal Brands is an associate professor of public policy and history at the Sanford School.

Saved for a Purpose
James A. Joseph
Duke University Press, September 2015
352 pages
In this “moral autobiography,” Amb. James A. Joseph, emeritus professor of the practice, recounts the ethical considerations of a life lived at the vanguard of some of the most important human and civil rights movements of the 20th century. In addition to being his life story, the book is a reflection on the characteristics of transformational leadership.

His upbringing as the son of a minister in Louisiana and his studies at Yale Divinity School provided the ethical grounding for his work in the civil rights movement, philanthropy, higher education and in leadership and advisory roles to four U.S. presidents. Joseph was the U.S. ambassador to South Africa during the presidency of Nelson Mandela as the country moved away from apartheid.

He taught these principles of transformational leadership to emerging leaders at his center at the Sanford School.
Would our understanding of poverty, food insecurity, and social service programs improve if people studying them had firsthand experience with economic hardship and hunger?

“Poverty and welfare were never abstract research interests for me, but rather, an acute reality,” said new faculty member Carolyn Barnes. “While growing up, my family was dependent on a range of private and public programs to make ends meet. Unfortunately, the social safety net was insufficient in alleviating deep poverty for my family.”

Barnes joined Sanford in July as an assistant professor of public policy. Coming to Duke was a homecoming of sorts for Barnes, who grew up in a rural area near Elizabeth City, N.C.

Last spring, while she was a researcher and lecturer at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, Barnes was awarded the first New Perspectives Fellowship from the Duke-UNC USDA Center for Behavioral Economics and Healthy Food Choice Research (BECR). The grant will allow her to study the food choices of individuals receiving WIC and SNAP benefits and the influence of public policy on those decisions.

Barnes’ research will complement the center’s efforts to discover ways to motivate healthy food choices, particularly among low-income individuals. The center focuses specifically on people receiving aid from the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and people receiving aid from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), both programs with which Barnes has an expertise studying.

“I really am interested in how interactions with social services have broad social and political implications for poor families.”

“Really am interested in how interactions with social services have broad social and political implications for poor families,” she said, noting that one of her surprising discoveries in past research was that organizations with programs targeting poor children often contribute to the development of the parents as citizens.

Barnes plans to conduct in-depth interviews with WIC and SNAP recipients to study how low-income individuals make decisions about health and nutrition. She is also interested in the role of public policy in shaping those decision-making processes.

“My personal experiences taught me about the complexities of poverty,” Barnes said, “in particular, the survival strategies used by low-income individuals and the long-term effects of poverty on families.”

Her previous research has examined how public policies and publicly funded social services shape the political behavior of the economically disadvantaged. She also studies the inner workings of human service agencies and client program experiences.

Her current book project looks at the ways social service programs affect involvement in the political process among low-income families. Much of her previous work required interviews and observations, which took place on-site at the organizations she studies in the Chicago and metropolitan Detroit areas. She is now adding organizations in North Carolina to the study. She also performs statistical analyses to model how experiences with social service agencies affect well-being.

Beyond her work as a researcher and teacher, Barnes is a self-proclaimed “music buff” and uses her talents to sing for weddings.

Barnes received her masters and PhD in public policy and political science in 2014 from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is teaching a graduate social policy class this fall.
The Madge Dennis T. McLawhorn University Professor of Business Administration, Peter Ubel is a physician and behavioral scientist. His research employs the tools of psychology and behavioral economics to explain the rational and irrational forces affecting human health and happiness.

He is the author of several books on healthcare economics including Free Market Madness: How economics is at odds with human nature—and why it matters (Harvard Business Press, 2009) and most recently, Critical Decisions (HarperCollins, 2012). He won the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, is a member of the World Economic Forum Global Health Committee and has taught at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Ubel earned his MD from the University of Minnesota. In addition to his appointments in business and public policy, he is a professor of medicine and a member of the Duke Cancer Institute. 

For Leslie Babinski, assistant research professor of public policy, working as a preschool teacher while doing her graduate work solidified her research interest in teaching and learning. Two new grants from the U.S. Department of Education enable her to do just that. One project focuses on finding ways for ESL teachers to better collaborate with students and faculty, while the other aims to create a neuroscience based healthy-living curriculum for ninth graders.

Babinski has a doctorate in Educational and School Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, and is a licensed school psychologist in North Carolina. She has been at Duke since 2008 and is a co-director of the Center for Child and Family Policy.

Research Professor Jennifer Lansford studies the development of behavioral problems in youth, especially in the family and peer contexts, often employing long-term analyses to inform best-practices in parenting and family policy. She has edited numerous professional journals including the International Journal of Behavior Development, the Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, and Parenting: Science and Practice.

Her research in child development and policy has won several awards including “Article of the Year” from Child Maltreatment. She was recently appointed to a two-year term as chairperson of the National Institutes of Health’s Psychosocial Development, Risk and Prevention Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review. Lansford earned her doctorate in developmental psychology from the University of Michigan.

Jennifer Lansford

Leslie Babinski

Peter Ubel

JENNIFER LANSFORD

LESLIE BABINSKI

PETER UBEL
#PolicyInAction Photo Contest

Grand Prize Winner: Tara Bansal PPS’17

Public policy undergraduate Tara Bansal PPS’17 submitted the winning photograph (left) for the Sanford School’s 2015 contest. The judges selected it for "candidly capturing the messy reality of public policy research."

“To know how government policies actually function, you must find and speak directly with the people affected by them, in spite of language and cultural differences, and in spite of your own nervousness,” they wrote.

Bansal spent the summer working in the slums of Bangalore, India, interviewing people in Hindi and Kannada with the help of translators. The team was attempting to identify formal and informal community leaders in order to analyze the relationship between local leadership density and government services.

“As you can see here, many members of the political ‘entourage’ of the leader [the man in the tan shirt] are watching warily,” she said.

There were four other winners in the contest, including this photo by Matthew Borden MPP’16. These fruits are the source of palm oil and palm oil plantations are a leading cause of deforestation in Indonesia. Borden took this photo during his internship in Borneo with the United Nations Office for REDD+ Coordination.