



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

GOLDMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

To: Prospective Clients
From: Jane Mauldon, Associate Professor of Public Policy
Date: September 2009
Subject: Client-Based Projects with Goldman School of Public Policy Graduate Student Teams

OVERVIEW

This is a memo to potential clients for **free policy analysis services** from teams of UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP) graduate students. Each spring, all GSPP first-year graduate students work in three-to-five person teams to produce policy analyses for use by real-world "clients," who are typically individuals in the public sector or non-governmental organizations that are confronting a policy problem or opportunity. Might you, or someone else in your organization, like this sort of pro bono assistance from a team of students as part of their required workshop class called Introduction to Policy Analysis (IPA)?

WHAT OUR STUDENTS CAN DO

Admission to the Master of Public Policy program is very competitive and only one in four applicants were accepted into this year's class. On average, students have had four years of work experience upon entering the program. Before IPA, they will have completed core courses in microeconomics, statistics, political analysis, legal analysis, and management, as well as received training in a systematic analytical approach to problem-solving for the public interest. The main objective of the IPA workshop is to give students the chance to apply this approach to real-world policy problems and opportunities.

Students are expected to act professionally, to keep confidences, and to be respectful of people's busy schedules. The students are closely supervised by IPA instructors: myself (Associate Professor Jane Mauldon, jmauldon@berkeley.edu), Assistant Adjunct Professor Larry Rosenthal (lar@berkeley.edu), and Professor Gene Bardach (e2bar@berkeley.edu).

IDEAL PROJECTS

To meet our education criteria, ideal projects require students to confront some sort of difficult tradeoff inherent in a choice between two or more alternative courses of action. This sort of task imposes intellectual discipline and motivates creativity in trying to find more agreeable alternatives. Ideal projects also often involve pressure to resolve some uncertainty about the projected effects of a policy choice in which the alternative outcomes are very different and very consequential. Although not every project lives up to the ideal, **we generally find that projects that are relatively narrow, though complex, are much better than those that are broad but simple.**

PROJECT TIMING

The workshop class is one of four classes that students take in the spring semester. Students work in teams of three to five students, and we expect each student to allocate about 12 hours a week to the IPA project, beginning in mid-February. The instructors meet with each project group on a regular schedule of about once every ten days, or more often as needed.

The final product is, at a minimum, a written analysis that is rigorous and well-communicated. Prior to submitting this final report, student teams also give an oral presentation at GSPP that is professionally critiqued. Clients are invited to attend these presentations and offer comments. In many cases, clients invite student teams to present their results to their organizations (students generally welcome the opportunity to do this). The deadline for the

final report is the middle of May.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A CLIENT

A client has five main obligations:

- (1) meet with the students early in the life of the project to orient them
- (2) advise students about sources
- (3) when required, arrange for students' access to others in the organization
- (4) read the final report
- (5) return the short evaluation form that will accompany the paper

If possible, clients are also expected to reimburse the students for copying and transportation expenses. Most clients want to do more than the above listed obligations. Interacting more frequently with the students—including commenting on interim written products—typically improves the product and increases the likelihood that it will really meet the client's needs.

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

- One occurs when the client wants the group merely to gather information rather than synthesize that information and make recommendations from it. We try to avoid projects that involve little more than collecting survey data, program descriptions, or information about possible funding sources. To put it another way, it is best to think of members of the project team as “consultants” with a fair degree of professional and analytical autonomy.
- Second, it sometimes happens that a client has a preferred solution to some problem and urges it upon students, either explicitly or implicitly. We enjoin our students to take a critical stance and, if necessary, to try to persuade the client to a different point of view.

NEXT STEPS

In mid-January, we will present students with a menu of about 27 projects, which they will rank according to their top five preferences. To the extent possible, we honor these preferences in constructing project teams, which will be announced at the beginning of February. With a class size of 80 students, we expect 21 projects to be undertaken. Unfortunately, this means that not every project on the menu will be selected.

To get a project on the menu, we will need to receive and approve a few paragraphs from you about the project to be undertaken. This will be shared with students to help them make their selections. Beyond describing the project, it is helpful if you could explain how you or your organization would make use of the final product and what kind of support (such as data, documents, personal contacts) students could expect to receive. You can download descriptions of last year's projects at: http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/emp_projects.html.

If you would like assistance in preparing this text, we are happy to comment on any drafts you send us (preferably by email). We will need to receive your final project proposal by mid-December at the latest, as we will be putting finishing touches on the project menu in late December so that it is ready for students when they return to school in January. Note that in previous years we have found that the earlier we receive projects, the better the chance the project will be included on the project menu and ultimately selected by our students.

If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me (jmauldon@berkeley.edu, (510) 501-1412, (510) 642-3475) or the IPA Course Assistant, Ilana Golin (ilanagolin@gmail.com, 510-479-5656). And if the IPA project does not meet your needs, you might want to consider submitting either an Advanced Policy Analysis project request for a single, advanced student to focus more time as a consultant to your organization (see http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/emp_projects_apa.html), or a request for a summer internship by a GSPP graduate student (http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career_resources/employers.html).

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