Leveraging Data Science for California Policy

The role of the University of California

Prof. Karen Chapple & Evan White
UC Center Sacramento, Oct. 2019
Transition...

- Open data vs closed data
- Public goods vs individually delivered services
Status quo

- **CA government ...**
  - Has pressing policy problems that need analyzing
  - Data is siloed between (and even within) agencies
  - Often has trouble recruiting high-quality researchers
  - Finds academics to be out of touch and slow to respond

- **UC researchers ...**
  - Have expertise to help with current policy problems
  - Want to do applied projects
  - Are often not good at navigating bureaucracies or speaking “government”
CPL is changing that.

We seek to improve the lives of Californians by working with government to generate evidence that transforms public policy.

We do this by forming lasting partnerships between California government and the state’s flagship universities to harness the power of rigorous research and administrative data.

Explicitly cross-sector in terms of impacts and policies:

- Education
- Labor and employment
- Social safety net
- Criminal justice
- Homelessness and high-needs populations
- Health
Simplifying how government and researchers interact
Current CPL partners

- **State**
  - Tax (FTB)
  - Social services (CDSS)
  - Employment (EDD)
  - Financial aid (CSAC)
  - Higher education (CCCO, UC)
  - Criminal justice (DOJ & CDCR)

- **Several counties and cities**
  - 3 police departments, 2 sheriff’s departments
  - 2 prosecutors, 1 public defender, 2 probation departments
  - 1 county CEOs
  - 2 health departments
  - 3 cities
  - 2 homelessness agencies, including LA County Homelessness Initiative (~30 orgs)
How CPL can help change the policy research lifecycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before CPL</th>
<th>With CPL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher brings project to agency for approval</td>
<td>Researcher and agency develop research projects <strong>together</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data use agreements take <strong>6-24 months</strong> to sign</td>
<td>With a existing agreement in place, signatures take <strong>days or weeks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher spends <strong>months</strong> learning and cleaning the data</td>
<td>Researchers <strong>immediately build</strong> on existing data, documentation, and code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When project is done, everything is <strong>destroyed</strong></td>
<td>When project completes, knowledge is <strong>maintained</strong> and value is <strong>shared</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher <strong>moves on</strong> to next project</td>
<td>Agency partner has <strong>continuity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequent policy change because findings take <strong>too long or are too separate</strong> from agency goals</td>
<td>Frequent policy change because findings are <strong>timely</strong> and research <strong>serves agency policy goals</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results from CPL’s infrastructure (as of Sept. 2019)

- **20+ agency data use agreements**
  - Why this matters: Streamlined project setup for these agencies

- **40+ project exhibits on existing agreements**
  - Why this matters: Quickly scaling

- **15 data bridges**
  - Why this matters: Linking across sectors is made easier

- **3 days = our shortest project startup time yet!**
  - Why this matters: Example of streamlined process

- **50+ users on CPL’s Data Hub**
  - Why this matters: Quickly scaling

- **6 data dictionaries under development**
  - Why this matters: This documentation streamlines later projects
### The Benefits of Early Criminal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPL report found that a pilot program providing defense attorneys immediately upon arrest (earlier than usual) doubled rates of release at arraignment and dramatically reduced pre-trial incarceration, saving the city over 16,000 daily jail spots per year.</td>
<td>A day after reviewing the study, the Mayor decided to fund the pilot program for an additional year. Several other counties are following suit nationwide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Graph showing 100% release at arraignment for those receiving arrest-responsive services (significant with 99.5% confidence) and 44% reduction in length of pre-trial incarceration for clients receiving parole advocacy services (significant with 97.5% confidence).](image)

*San Francisco Chronicle*

May 15, 2018

“[T]he program saved approximately 4,689 jail bed days ... according to a new study of the unit by UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy. ... The Public Defender’s Office is now asking the Board of Supervisors for $440,500 to fund its Pretrial Release Unit for the next fiscal year ... .”
Preventing Homelessness Upstream

Finding

Together with the Urban Labs, CPL is helping Los Angeles predict which residents are at highest risk of becoming homeless for the first time. The top of the risk list is **48 times more likely** to become homeless for the first time.

Outcome

Los Angeles County is using this information to target millions of dollars for homelessness prevention programs. The goal is to counter the rise in LA’s homeless population.

**L.A. County homelessness soars**

- 2015: 31,025 unsheltered, 13,334 in shelters, **44,359 total homeless**
- 2016:
- 2017: 42,828, 14,966, **57,794**

Source: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Jon Schleuss / @latimesgraphics
Effectively Intercepting Drugs in CA’s Prisons

Finding

CPL’s report found that “the ‘moderate’ or less intensive arm of a $15.3m intervention to reduce drug use in California prisons was ineffective at reducing drug use.”

Outcome

Two weeks later, the Governor replaced the pilot program with an alternative.

San Francisco Chronicle

May 13, 2017

“Gov. Jerry Brown is dumping a three-year, $15.3 million program intended to thwart prison smuggling [after]... Researchers from UC Berkeley and the Public Policy Institute of California found that it cut drug use by nearly 25 percent at three prisons with the most intensive programs, but it had little effect elsewhere [nor was there] any measurable decline in prison violence.”
CPL designed a new outreach letter to encourage more students to claim the Cal Grant. The new letters encouraged 14% more students to take the first step in claiming the college scholarship.

The Student Aid Commission has changed their baseline letter and is now partnering with CPL to provide net price comparisons for college applicants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Living situation</th>
<th>Estimated tuition, fees, housing, and other costs</th>
<th>Estimated grant aid you will receive</th>
<th>Estimated cost for you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of California – Berkeley</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>$28,240</td>
<td>$19,440</td>
<td>$8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California – Santa Cruz</td>
<td>on campus</td>
<td>$33,604</td>
<td>$24,804</td>
<td>$8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal State – East Bay</td>
<td>on campus</td>
<td>$22,427</td>
<td>$12,903</td>
<td>$9,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal State – Los Angeles</td>
<td>on campus</td>
<td>$25,642</td>
<td>$17,747</td>
<td>$7,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal State – Channel Islands</td>
<td>on campus</td>
<td>$24,472</td>
<td>$14,561</td>
<td>$9,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley City College</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>$7,484</td>
<td>$2,465</td>
<td>$5,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Anza College</td>
<td>off campus</td>
<td>$19,864</td>
<td>$5,815</td>
<td>$14,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Southern California</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
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<td>Estimate not available</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Art University</td>
<td>Estimate not available</td>
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<td>Estimate not available</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Finding

CPL study found that “letters of recommendation help, not hurt applicants from under-represented groups.”

Outcome

A day after the study’s release, the University of California system decided to allow all campuses to solicit letters of recommendation from a portion of applicants.

Los Angeles Times

July 12, 2018

“The University of California is headed toward allowing all campuses to use letters of recommendation in admissions decisions for the first time . . . . Two studies of the program found that letters did not hurt underserved students and likely helped them. The studies also found that those students were more likely not to submit a letter, but that the positive impact outweighed the negative.”
Some other examples of our work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Justice</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Homelessness</th>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>Safety Net</th>
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<tr>
<td>Studying the impact of cash bail and reform efforts such as SB 10.</td>
<td>Assessing regional variations in community college outcomes.</td>
<td>Studying employment trends among the homeless.</td>
<td>Providing a more granular understanding of the gig economy.</td>
<td>Encouraging uptake of the state and federal EITC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing police pursuits and measuring public trust in police.</td>
<td>Evaluating the impact of the Student Centered Funding Formula.</td>
<td>Studying the intersections between behavioral health, criminal justice, and homelessness.</td>
<td>Studying impact of the minimum wage increases in LA.</td>
<td>Addressing churn in Calfresh recertification.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thanks!

Contact me at evan@capolicylab.org

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