

Career Connections

Public Policy

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Public policy encompasses the analysis and management of public problems. At its most simple this means seeking to understand and resolve the problems that arise when people form societies. At its most complex this means trying to find a balance between core social values (such as liberty or equality), environmental concerns, and political constraints. In an ideal world everyone could have as much of everything as they wanted. In the real world we are faced with unlimited wants and limited resources. The result is that someone, somewhere, has to make some very difficult, and often painful, decisions—this is the place of public policy.

This Career Connections is designed to develop student skills and training in one of the three stages of the policy process. (1) Students interested in such careers as an environmental analyst, social policy expert, public policy professor, or researcher should consider the policy analysis stage of the policy process. Analysts focus on the gathering and evaluation of evidence in order to propose a course of action. (2) Students interested in actually making laws, working on congressional staffs, or lobby groups are encouraged to focus on the second area, policymaking. Most policymaking careers are within the legislative halls of government, some departments within the executive branches, or with interest groups. (3) Last, students attracted to the actual application of policy, such as being an administrator for the EPA, a field agent for the Forest Service, or a Foreign Officer within the Department of State, would be best served by focusing on the last stage of the policy process, implementation, also often called public administration.

Though each of these three career paths emphasize a slightly different set of skills, this Career Connection is intended to provide you with both a basic theory and set of tools common to all three, and to give you the knowledge and in-depth experiences necessary to excel at one. Successful completion of this program should prepare you equally well to either continue on with advanced studies in graduate school or to seek employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Exploring Options

As the three stages demonstrate, there are many different kinds of career paths emerging from this program—you might become an environmental analyst, an agency administrator, college professor, or even serve as a close advisor to a senator. Thus it's helpful to begin narrowing down your interests as soon as possible in order to get the skills and experience your particular path will need. The Career Center (Top floor of the Campus Center) has resources, such as the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, which can help you gauge your

interests and aptitudes. They also have a wide range of resource materials on various professions, salaries, and requirements.

Additionally, be sure to talk with people about your interests. What excites you? What kind of work or issues would make you jump out of bed every morning? Talk with your professors and check with the Career Center to see if they have any alumni contacts in the field/agency/profession that you could talk with (and start networking). Above all, make contacts. It is fair to say that many, if not most, public policy jobs go to people who are in some way already connected to the issue or the people involved.

Academics

Though there is no specific major requirement for this Career Connection, you will find that there are a number of majors that are particularly well geared toward public policy. These would include: Economics, Political Science, and Sociology. You should select a major that both interests you and will help you reach your career goals.

In terms of specific course work, there is an introductory course to public policy that should be completed by all students wishing to pursue this Career Connections program. There are then a number of “recommended” courses for each of the three career paths that will further develop the necessary tools and deepen your expertise in a given area. You should determine which, and how many, of these courses to take based upon your interests, skills, and academic needs (please note that some of these courses have additional prerequisites).

Introductory Course

Political Science 213-Introduction to Public Policy

(1) Policy Analysis:

Biology 312 - Conservation Biology
Economics 113 - Principles of Microeconomics
Economics 221 - Environmental Economics
Sociology 219 - Social Problems
Sociology 226 - Law and Society
Sociology 318 - Race and Ethnic Relations
Sociology 349 - Social Change
Political Science 321 - Natural Resource Policy

(2) Policymaking

Business 225 - Financial Accounting
Communication 319 - Organizational Communication
Political Science 222 - The U.S. Legislative Process
Political Science 322 - Political Parties and Interest Groups
Sociology 336 - Crime and Corrections

(3) Policy Implementation

Biology 312 - Conservation Biology

Business 225 - Financial Accounting
Business 330 - Corporate Financial Management
Communication 319 - Organizational Communication
Economics 113 - Principles of Microeconomics
Economics 321 - Money and Financial Markets
Political Science 321 - Natural Resource Policy
Political Science 322 - Political Parties and Interest Groups

Co-Curricular Activities:

While at Hanover you should seek out opportunities or jobs that will give you experience in public policy outside of the classroom. This means you should be actively involved in student government, government of your fraternity or sorority, housing councils, advocacy groups, or senior committees. The pamphlet “114 Things to Do at Hanover College” from the Office of Student Organizations and Greek Life contains many excellent suggestions. In particular, experience on the Student Allocations and Budgeting Committee of the Student Senate, which allocates all student funds and reviews grant proposals, would provide excellent exposure to the policy making stage of the policy process. Moreover, serving as a Peer Advisor or a Resident Advisor could provide some hands-on experience working with small groups of people within a larger structure—as is common within the policy implementation stage. Nor do these experiences have to be on-campus. You may want to consider working or volunteering with local civic groups or government.

Work Experience:

Summer Jobs

Students should consider a summer job related to public policy both for the experience but also to strengthen their resume. Even as early as the summer following your freshman year, you should begin looking for positions that allow you to develop the skills that you will need in the future including conducting research, interpreting data, explaining information, making presentations, and managing time and resources. Be sure to start looking early and using contacts to find positions that might not be advertised.

Internships

One of the greatest barriers to a profession in public policy is the inevitable “previous experience required.” Internships provide you with a way around this barrier and thus are essential to successful completion of this Career Connections. In consultation with the Career Center, the Internship Coordinator, and your professors you should find a program that will best meet your needs and interests. Of particular note is the close relationship Hanover College has with the Washington Center and the Philadelphia Center. Both of these programs should be given careful consideration not only for their ability to land top-quality policy internships, but also for the support they offer the students during the experience.

By the time you are ready for an internship you should have already concentrated on one stage of the policy process. Hence, those interested in policy analysis and formation might consider an internship with either a policy think-tank (such as Brookings, CATO,

Enterprise, Hudson, Progressive, or RAND) or a single-issue organization (such as environmental groups, advocacy groups, or PACs).

Those interested in the policy formation stage should consider internships in state legislatures, the U.S. Congress, the policy elements of the state or national executive branches, or lobby groups. Recent students from Hanover, for example, have interned with Senator Richard Lugar, Representative Julia Carson, and the Indiana State Medical Association.

Last, those interested in the implementation and interpretation of policy decisions should consider internships in those local, state, or federal agencies corresponding to your interests and skills. Recent Hanover student internships have ranged from The Indiana State Budget Agency to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Further Education:

For some careers within public policy you will need graduate schooling in order to deepen management skills or learn more sophisticated analytical tools. If you are considering additional schooling, be aware that policy programs are often divided into either an analytical or administrative focus. You should choose your school carefully in consultation with people familiar with the programs in order to insure that you continue within your preferred area. Hence, for example, if you wanted to study the first stage of the policy process (policy analysis) at Indiana University, you might seek a degree from the Political Science Department. However, if you wanted to study public administration (policy implementation) you would enter a program offered by the School of Public and Environmental Affairs. While there are generally no graduate programs that train students exclusively for the middle stage of the policy process (policy formation), a law degree is useful in legislative work.

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