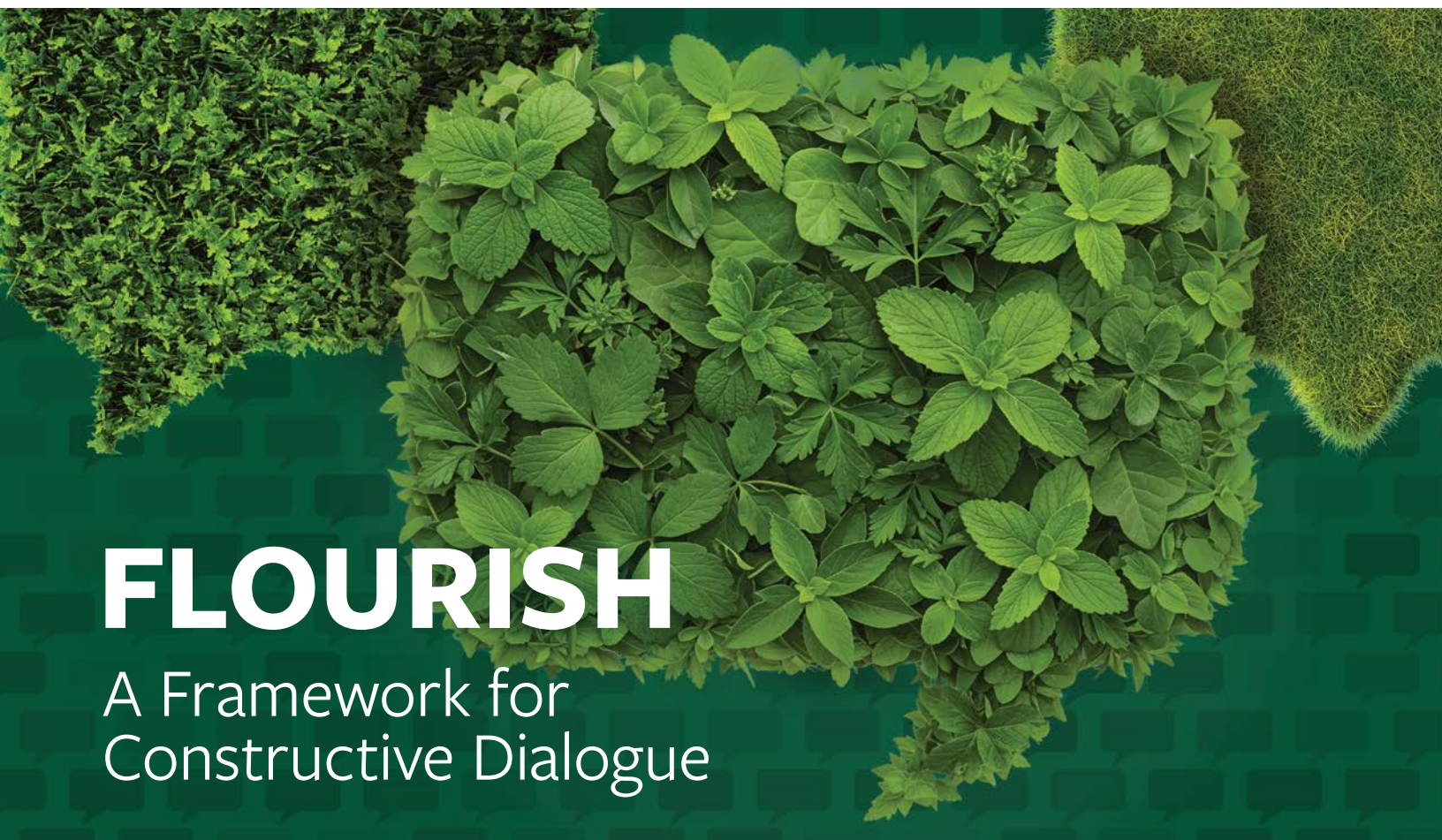


UC Berkeley
Goldman School of
Public Policy

policy notes



FLOURISH

A Framework for
Constructive Dialogue

FALL 2025

Searching for “We the People”

Third Annual Conference
and Alumni Gathering

The Hidden Crisis in
America’s Pension System

gspp.berkeley.edu

From Dean David C. Wilson



THIS IS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR DEMOCRACY — AND FOR THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE IN PUBLIC POLICY AS A FORCE FOR EQUITY, TRUTH, AND COLLECTIVE FLOURISHING.

Across the globe and here at home, we're witnessing rising cynicism, fractured institutions, and a growing sense of disconnection and disillusionment between "We, the people," and the systems meant to serve them. Our *Political Psychology of American Democracy* (PPAD, pg 6) survey reveals this plainly: civic trust is eroding, belonging is fraying, and Americans are struggling to make sense of what the government does, and why it matters. Interestingly, the people who say they have the most hope in democracy today are often the ones most distrustful of democratic institutions. Their hope isn't about working together for collective sacrifice — it's tied to a desire for independence, control, and power; "freedom from" the obligations of governing a diverse nation of people and needs.

But at the Goldman School, we believe that hope is not just a feeling — it's a practice. Hope is the ability to set meaningful goals, identify the pathways to achieve them, and summon the will to keep going, especially when the road is difficult. Hope is the product of motivation, pathways, and purpose. **It's a muscle we can rebuild.** Even if atrophied by disillusionment, the memory of its strength remains. With the right support — through bold ideas, inclusive leadership, and community — we can strengthen it again and meet the moment. Hope involves the goal motivating forces of "We-Power," "Will-Power," "Way-Power," and "Why-Power."

This past year, we began to put these forces into motion.

We launched our Democracy Policy Initiative with a vision of making UC Berkeley a national hub for democratic innovation, powered by a science and system of collaborative civic problem-solving. We welcomed our inaugural Democracy Fellows — extraordinary community leaders whose lived experience is now shaping research and practice across the school. We have undertaken public opinion research and collected democracy indicator metrics for assessing California's and the country's state of affairs. And, we have hosted public figures and leadership convenings that steward understanding problems and solutions related to "We [the People]" elements of democracy.

These updates reflect more than progress. They reflect investment in our "why," in our core belief that when we engage deeply — across disciplines, sectors, and generations — we can meet the moment with analytic rigor, courage, creativity, and curiosity. They're a reminder that hope is limited without meaning. And meaning can't thrive without community.

As we look to the year ahead, we are asking ourselves: How do we reinvest in the why, the we, the way, and the will of changemaking? What does this moment truly require? Not just new ideas and energy — but a belief in the power of hope and that our work matters. That we can move the needle. That sacrifice, cooperation, and service still have a place in a strong democracy, and that UC Berkeley and the Goldman School stand ready to serve. **G**

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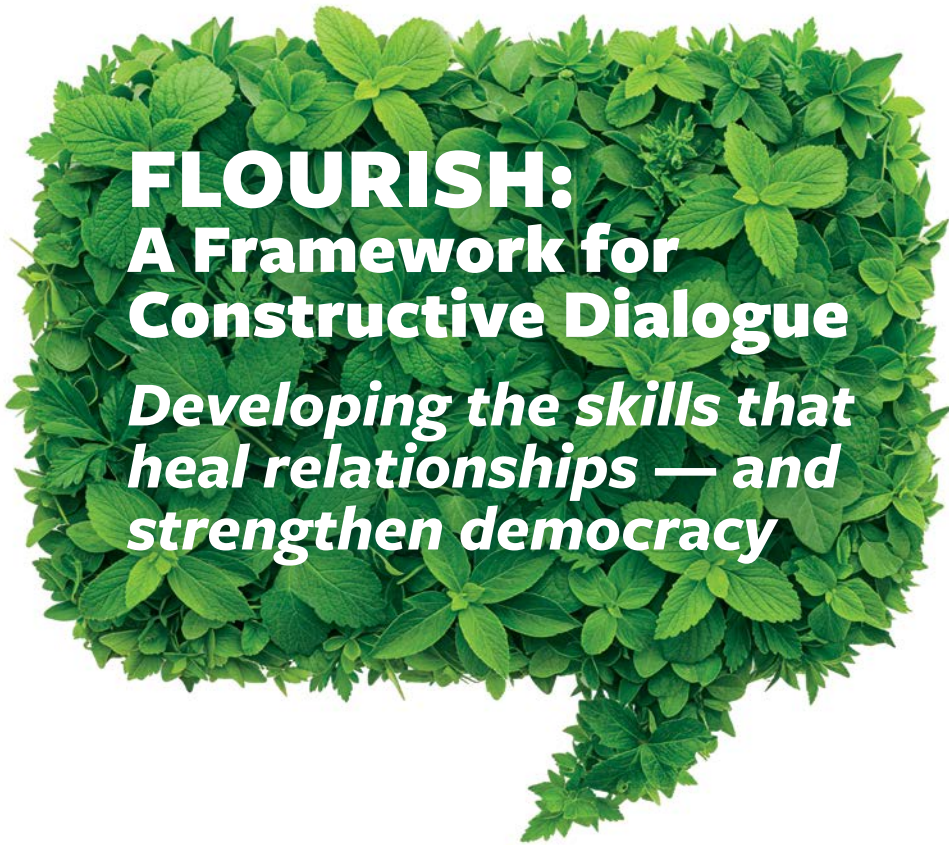
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FLOURISH: A Framework for Constructive Dialogue

*Developing the skills that
heal relationships — and
strengthen democracy*

LAST YEAR, THE GOLDMAN SCHOOL PILOTED a seminar called Constructive Dialogue for Public Policy. According to the Constructive Dialogue Institute, constructive dialogue is “a form of conversation where people with different perspectives try to understand each other — without giving up their own beliefs — in order to live, learn, and work together.” This approach prioritizes mutual understanding rather than persuasion. It frames dialogue as a process of engaging with curiosity, respect, and openness, while recognizing that maintaining one’s own commitments can coexist with efforts to understand others.

Students embraced the chance to practice these skills and apply them directly in seminar discussions. They shared stories about reconnecting across topics that had divided their families, and about navigating disagreements with co-workers and friends. Reflections ranged from everyday conflicts — such as whether a hiking companion’s dog should be off-leash — to weighty questions about the limits of civil discourse in creating social change. Our intuition — supported by research on

how humanizing speech enhances understanding — was that the skills that repair personal relationships are the very ones needed to move through breakdowns in policy settings such as city councils and task forces.

On the other side of these moments, students often described the pain of broken relationships and the loss of community that comes when dialogue collapses. Students reflected on how, in professional settings, even among colleagues who shared the same goals, communication breakdowns disrupted collaboration and progress on working toward policy solutions. The silver lining was discovering tools that could help them not only communicate better next time, but also, in some cases, repair relationships in real time. Our seminars showed us that dialogue skills are not peripheral to policy work — they are essential to sustaining trust, building community, and strengthening our collective capacity to govern.

Students’ deep engagement with the seminars raised an important question: what comes next? Our community saw an

opportunity to build on existing tools that promote constructive dialogue and create something uniquely tailored to GSPP.

Through interviews, surveys, facilitated dialogues, and collaborative conversations — with support from the Center on Civility and Democratic Engagement (CCDE) — students, staff, and faculty co-created the FLOURISH framework for GSPP. It recognizes that dialogue is not about erasing conflict or enforcing con-

sensus, but about cultivating the habits of curiosity and humility that allow us to work together on complex public challenges. FLOURISH is both a guide and a goal: a way of naming the practices that make dialogue possible, and the kind of community we aspire to build. Each letter in the acronym names a principle to help us stay grounded in dialogue.

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Professor Erika Weissinger with her students in the Constructive Dialogue class



FLOURISH: Principles for Engaging in Constructive Dialogue at GSPP

F Find what’s shared
Look for points of connection — shared values, goals, or experiences — even when significant differences remain. Finding what’s shared doesn’t mean avoiding hard truths or minimizing disagreement; it means building enough trust to engage differences more fully.

L Listen to understand, not to react
Listen deeply, focusing on genuinely understanding others’ perspectives rather than preparing your response. Active listening includes asking questions, offering clarifications, or reflecting back on what you’ve heard. In a heated disagreement, reflecting back can help a dialogue partner feel calmer and clearer in their thinking.

O Observe your reactions
Stay aware of what’s happening in your body and mind — your heart rate, breathing, muscle tension, or racing thoughts. These cues can signal fight, flight, freeze, or appease responses. While sometimes necessary, these reactions rarely serve dialogue and can disrupt learning environments. Self-awareness enables intentional responses rather than automatic reactions.

U Uplift marginalized voices
Notice whose perspectives are missing and create opportunities for them to be heard. This may include individuals from communities affected by structural inequities or those whose views are in the numerical minority within a cohort. When these voices are absent, dialogue narrows and risks reinforcing hierarchy.

R Respect confidentiality agreements
When someone shares an idea or experience, honor the trust they place in the group by following confidentiality agreements. Whether the rule is “what’s shared here stays here” or “share the idea, not the name,” the aim is to create an environment where people can be open.

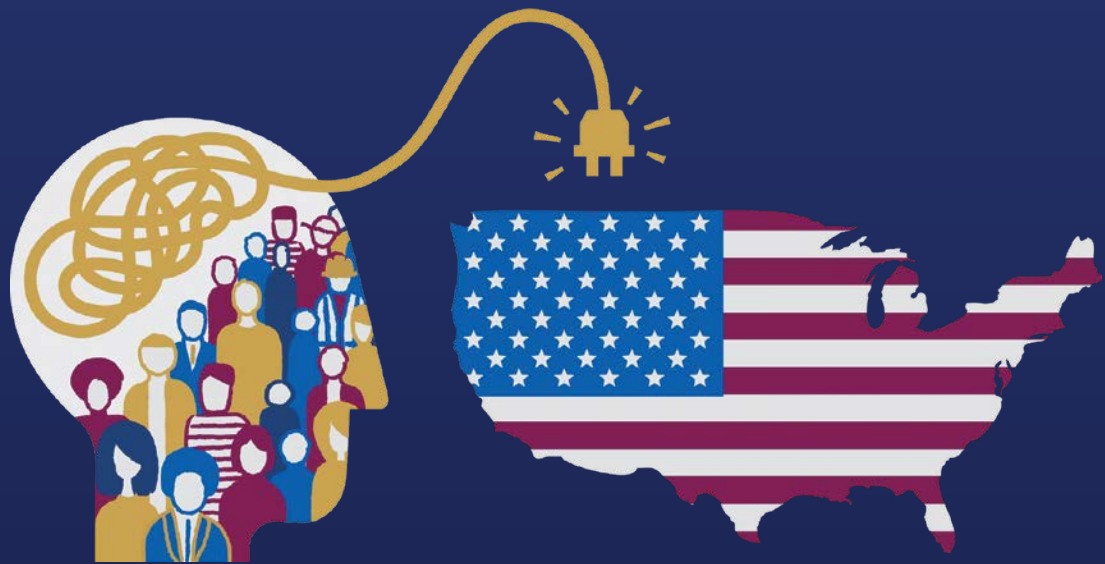
I Introduce your view
Constructive dialogue is not only about listening — it is also about sharing your own views in ways that others can hear. Speak from the “I,” grounding your points in your own reasoning, experiences, and values. Acknowledge what you’ve understood from others before adding your view, so it’s clear you are building on the conversation. Name what’s at stake for you and why you care. Making your thinking visible allows others to engage with your ideas more deeply and invites a fuller exchange of perspectives.

S Set boundaries and know your role
Recognize that not every moment is right for dialogue, and not every person should engage in it. Before entering a conversation, check: Do I have the capacity for this now? Am I the right person to have it? Boundaries sustain healthier environments for both the conversation and the community.

H Humanize the dialogue
Consider dignity, story, and emotion alongside facts and theories. Policy is never just abstract — it touches people’s lives, histories, and communities. By seeing each other as whole people — not only as professionals or debaters — we create the trust and connection needed to imagine and build better public policy.

Searching for “We the People”

The Political Psychology of American Democracy



By Edward Lempinen UC Berkeley Public Affairs

FOR A DECADE, SCHOLARS, PUNDITS, AND OTHER ANALYSTS

have been searching deep in the American political experience to understand why democracy seems so stressed. A report from the Goldman School based on extensive surveys finds that Americans are confused about the meaning of democracy and frustrated with the leaders and institutions responsible for guiding the country — but also open to hope for repair.

In an interview, lead author David C. Wilson detailed the findings of this plunge into our political psyche, surveying a tangle of concerning trends. Americans are struggling with epidemic mistrust, but they're also eager for solutions. For democracy to flourish, the report finds, its people must be flourishing, too.

Wilson, a political psychologist, offered a potentially innovative course of therapy: Just as the nation has economic and health policy, local, state, and federal leaders need a commitment to democracy policy to strengthen the system and nurture commitment to democratic values and practices.

The report, “Delivering on the Promises of ‘We the People,’” is based on surveys of more than 2,400 Americans conducted before and after the November 2024 election. The report was produced by the Goldman School’s Democracy Policy Lab.

Berkeley News: This paper, and the larger project, focus on the broad patterns and complexities of political psychology among Americans. Why is this important? What’s the study about, in a nutshell?

David C. Wilson: The basic premise is that in order for people to see the value and the faith and the nuance of democracy, they have to have a psychological connection with it. It’s just like any other relationship. If you can’t find a way to understand it and be connected with it, then it’s more difficult to care about its fate.

When people invest in their connection to democracy, it improves a sense of belonging, and willingness to see others are worthy of the rights and freedoms we cherish. If that doesn’t happen, it’s easier to feel like democracy is eroding.

There’s a really odd feature right now: Since Republicans won the last presidential election, they are the ones who have more faith in democracy and feel like America’s best days are ahead. This is because they believe their version of democracy is winning. If your team is winning, it strengthens your identity and connection with it.

Democrats have significantly less hope and optimism than Republicans, but they also have stronger grounding in values tied to a collective “we” and willingness to help others in need.

A central theme in the report is that the condition of democracy depends on the condition of the people — as you say, their sense of belonging, their sense of being served by the system. So a basic question: How are “we the people” doing?

Right now, people mostly pay attention to national government, which is characterized by political parties, Democrats and Republicans. But that’s not democracy — that’s politics.

When you ask about specific things that are going well with democracy — for example, do they trust local government to regulate clean water? Yes, they do, overwhelmingly. Do they support the federal government managing the cybersecurity infrastructure for the nation? Yes, they do. Do they support community organizations that partner with government to help set public health standards? Yes, they do, a lot. Do they see a value in jury duty? Overwhelmingly. And do they have an interest in learning more about democracy, especially how to improve it? Again, the answer is a resounding yes.

The report characterizes Americans as divided and confused about democracy. What does your research tell you?

Our polarization is not about democracy so much as it is about partisan and campaign politics and power, and appeals about threats of change eroding standards and values for the country.

When the country seems to believe, for example, that immigrants — them — are eroding the future of America through crime, and we ought to blame government for the problem, that becomes the lens by which people evaluate democracy. The contributions

of immigrants and the role they play in strengthening the idea of America — us — gets lost.

So the American public is polarized not just around Democrats and Republicans, but around how we should exist as a country, about who should benefit from the freedoms of American democracy. Should we allow special considerations to take place for women and minorities and other identities? What are the boundaries of freedom of expression and speech? Should protests be policed more strongly?

Another central point in the report: Polarization can be described as a lack of shared identity, a lack a shared sense of belonging. Does the report tell us anything about why that sense of a common bond isn’t there right now?

We all have what’s called a justice motive. We hold a general belief that people ought to get what they deserve and deserve what they get. And when you’re doing things that should yield a reward — you’re paying your taxes, your children are going to school, you’re not committing any crimes — and yet your life is not getting better, the easy thing for one to do is to blame others.

In essence, much of the polarization we see is grounded in resentment and beliefs about who deserves to get what in society.

The report also seems to say that diversity and racial resentment remain deep challenges. How is that impacting the health of U.S. democracy?

This is where the collective “we” in democracy needs our attention.

If I’m a local or state leader and I see this problem that exists between two different communities — white and Black, immigrant and domestic, men and women, north side and south side — that’s a public problem. It’s no different than if I see land use problems or a health crisis in one area and not the other.

As a leader, I need to find a way to bridge the gap. But there’s not a lot of policy designed to bring groups together. It’s almost as if government leaders feel like that shouldn’t be their job.

But if we could design platforms and programs, and if government could find ways to bring disagreeing groups together around a common project or a common idea, that might reduce polarization.

Good democracy is really not about what I’m getting in terms of a tax break or the benefits I’m getting because I’m poor or wealthy. It’s about the “we.” How can we design good ways of keeping domestic tranquility, keeping the collective “we” together, knowing that it won’t be perfect?

So we need more constructive dialogue to promote rapport and human flourishing.

Human flourishing — in the new report, that’s crucial to the psychology of American democracy. What constitutes flourishing and who’s flourishing in the United States right now? Who is not?

This idea of human flourishing comes from positive psychology — it’s a measure of well-being. And it is perhaps the most widely

used as a measure of living a good life. The good life is not only about how much money you have and how many material assets you have. It's about a host of internal values and perceived capacity to contribute to society.

We use several items to measure human flourishing: Happiness and satisfaction. Meaning and purpose — are things that you're doing in life worthwhile? Character and virtue, the idea that you always try and do good, even when it's challenging. And then the last ones are about capacity: Do you worry about your monthly expenses? Do you worry about food, clothing, shelter, just having the basic things you need to live a good life?

If you're high on all of those things, you're characterized as flourishing. It doesn't mean you're wealthy or rich, but you're in a position to live a good life.

How does all that tie into democracy?

Flourishing is not a fixed state of well-being. Before the election last fall, you found a lot of Democrats had positivity. They believed that things they do in their life were worthwhile. You had a lot of Republicans that had lower flourishing, that didn't feel they would be able to meet their expenses and month-to-month and the like. After the election, all of a sudden, the Republicans had higher levels of flourishing, and the Democrats had lower levels.

Who's flourishing in the country is highly correlated with how they're experiencing democracy. Those who won in the last election, the Republicans, now have higher hopes for democracy. In America today, those who support the president's vision of the country tend to also have fewer worries about their economic capacity and a greater sense of purpose, more happiness, and the like. They have higher human flourishing, but to sustain that good life, they are motivated to believe their version of democracy and American society is the "right" direction.

They do not want to lose their psychological or political standing. It's odd, but that fear of loss gives them purpose and meaning.

And yet the report says that some groups — women and younger people, for example — tend to be more on the side of not flourishing.

It depends on when you're looking at flourishing. We didn't see any gender or racial differences in terms of the levels of human flourishing across each individual wave of our survey. But in the very last wave, after the presidential inauguration, we found more women in the suffering category than in the flourishing category.

The consistent pattern that we did see is that people who are 30 or younger tended to fall in the suffering category more. They're lower on both the internal values and the economic capacity than most other age groups. They're having the biggest problem reconciling what democracy promises and what they're seeing in reality.

They're in a faster-paced world where they want to see change happen. They're saying that they don't have a connection with democracy, or it's a weaker connection with democracy, and until democracy gets its stuff together, they're going to push for change.

Democracy policy — policy that supports and strengthens democracy — is a core idea in this report. You're saying that if there's economic policy, or education policy, there also should be democracy policy.

Democracy policy is a framework where you have to think about: How do you encourage people to care about the system and one another? How do you keep them engaged in service and sacrifice for the collective good? How do you bolster tolerance for free speech and protest, and religious freedoms? How do we keep people supportive of due process and rights? How do you keep people from being hostile toward different group identities?

Democracy is one of the few areas that doesn't have a policy framework, just in the same way that maybe 25 years ago or so, climate change and climate policy didn't really exist. It was just an environmental problem. But we needed real policy just on the science of climate. We're seeing the same thing now with technology policy: As the problems become more pervasive and outside of the market's control, the government must step in to help offer solutions.

We know there's a lot of bad news about democracy, and in the report there's a lot of data that are concerning. But what gives you hope for the future of democracy?

I think about it like this: Our research team got almost 2,500 respondents to answer three waves of data collection during a busy time period before and after the election. In the grand scheme of 330 million Americans, it's not a lot, but it shows that some people are still willing to engage in public discussion and trust the organization that's collecting the data.

We find very low support for political violence. People support learning programs about government and policy and civic education — not just for young people in school, but for the public in general.

I believe that the public is not trying to run from democracy. Their relationship to democracy is frayed, but they're trying to get help. People still want to read information and data, they still want to learn about democracy, they're intellectually curious about democracy and government and politics and different issues.

That's good news — that's hope. **G**

This article was edited for length. The full-length piece can be found at gspp.berkeley.edu.

2025 Goldman School Annual Conference and Alumni Gathering



Professor Steve Raphael delivered the Friday morning keynote.

MANY THANKS TO THE OVER 500 ALUMNI, STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, AND POLICY EXPERTS who gathered at the Goldman School's 2025 Annual Public Policy Conference and Alumni Gathering. More photos can be viewed at conference.gspp.berkeley.edu.



MPP Class of 2010 (from left): Deepa Patel, Sarah Anders Masi, Todd Fawley-King, Carrie Scheib, Justina Acevedo-Cross, Ari Amerikaner, Evan White, Kaitlyn Connors, Julia Caplan



GSPP students (from left) Shogo Nakata, Max Fang, Mujahed Alsayouhi, FeJordan McHenry

The conference offered many opportunities to network and connect with friends, old and new.



GSPP gratefully presented Professor Eugene Bardach with an award for lifetime achievement. From left: Annie Campbell Washington (Sr. Assistant Dean of Academic Programs and Dean of Students), Dean David C. Wilson, Professor Eugene Bardach, Larry Rosenthal (Continuing Lecturer), and Jane Mauldon (Emerita Professor of Practice)



Former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland joined Dean David C. Wilson for the afternoon keynote.



From left: Alexis Atsilvsgi Zaragoza (MPP '25) speaks with Center on Civility and Democracy Engagement board member Jay Miller and Democracy Policy Fellow Briana Mullen, co-founder and executive director of the Education Justice Academy



MPP Class of 1985 (from left) Carla Javits, Neal Taniguchi, Aaron Estis, Avi Black



From left: David C. Wilson, Mary Ann Bates (MPP '10), winner of an award for Outstanding Service in Policy Innovation and Leadership, Erika Weissinger (Assistant Professor of Practice), and Anne Campbell Washington (Sr. Assistant Dean of Academic Programs and Dean of Students).



Khadija Shahper Bhaktiar (MPP '10), the founder of Teach for Pakistan (and the 2025 MPP Alumna of the Year), joined Dean David C. Wilson for a Thursday evening conversation to kick off the conference.



Rachel Gillum, Vice President of Ethical and Humane Use of Technology at Salesforce, speaks on the panel, "The States Shaping AI's Fate: How Local Leadership is Shaping Global Governance"



Panelists discussed "Democracy Policy and Public Principles: Berkeley Voices Discuss Freedom and Flourishing." From left: Dean David Wilson, Professor John A. Powell (Director, Othering and Belonging Institute), Catherine E. Lhamon (Exec Director, Edley Center on Law and Democracy), and Micah Weinberg (Senior Strategic Advisor, GSPP).



From left: Tangerine Brigham with MPP '90 classmate CJai Sookprasert



Andrea St. Julian, Democracy Policy Fellow and president and co-founder of The Justice Workshop, asks a question at the democracy policy panel discussion.

The Hidden Crisis in America's Public Pension System

By Andrew Fraught

AS AMERICANS WATCH THEIR RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS WHIPSAW in the opening months of the second Trump administration, there's a less discussed trend impacting the road to retirement.

Public pension funds in the last two decades increasingly have turned to private equity — investments in companies that aren't publicly traded — to create earnings for retirement funds that in many cases are underfunded and subject to overly optimistic assumptions on the rate of return.

More than 20 million Americans, including teachers, police officers, firefighters, and sanitation workers, receive public pensions as part of their compensation. Nationally, the plans are underfunded by \$1.25 trillion, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts, threatening the solvency of their local government guarantors.

"Increasingly, pension funds are investing in riskier ways, in hopes that it will eliminate this enormous problem that many of these funds are facing," says Sarah Anzia, a Chancellor's Professor of public policy and political science who highlights the evolution of public pensions.



Sarah Anzia

"This is one of the most important and least discussed domestic policy issues in the United States today," Anzia says. "What we're trying to do is elevate the problem and increase discussion of it. For the most part, people just don't like to talk about it."

Anzia, whose research interests are state and local government, elections, interest groups, political parties, and public policy, wrote "Labor's Capital: Public Pensions and Private Equity" with co-author Mark Spindel, chief investment officer and co-founder of Potomac River Capital, a Washington, D.C.-based global investment firm.

During her sabbatical in the early part of this year, Anzia also started work on a treatise that is yielding surprising findings on the roots of public-sector unions. Additionally, she's at work on a book that considers how business engages in politics in American local governments.

In the private equity paper, Anzia and Spindel describe investment patterns that have emerged since the 2008 recession. The pair don't delve into the viability of such investments moving forward, instead creating new insights that could aid future research.

"This paper is very much describing broad patterns that we think are important," says Anzia, noting that local governments have seen private equity as a way to fund retirement plans without making cuts to critical services impacting residents. "Public pensions saw private equity as a way to invest themselves out of a problem."

The financial health of public pensions became a particular concern during the recession, when funds collectively lost \$889 billion. As a consequence, two California cities — Vallejo and Stockton — declared Chapter 9 bankruptcy to freeze their debts and renegotiate employee contracts after they were unable to fulfill pension obligations. Large cities including Chicago and Dallas, and educational entities such as the Oakland Unified School District, are experiencing similar challenges.

It is thought that government organizations are tapping \$1 trillion in private equity — in addition to risky non-traditional investments such as real estate — but the actual total is unknown, Anzia says. Private equity is not subject to the disclosure requirements of publicly traded firms.

Such opacity spurred Anzia and Spindel to develop a novel data set, one that identifies memberships of governing boards managing state pension funds. Until now, by dint of their complexity and multiple-board structure, it's been difficult to understand who makes investment decisions impacting roughly 15% of the American workforce.

Private equity critics say it's harder to assess performance and risks because of the lack of transparency. Supporters, meantime, say private equity can generate higher returns than more traditional publicly traded stocks and bonds. Anzia's research could provide some clarity.

"We went through every major state pension fund and figured out who is responsible for making investment decisions," she says. What she and Spindel found was a mix of political appointees, ex officio members, private citizens, government employees and retirees.

The researchers plan to "map out and release the whole U.S. public pension governance structure this summer," Anzia says. "We're excited about this project."

In a time of political polarization, Anzia says there is notable uniformity in who is tapping private equity.

"We found that these investments are happening across the board," she notes. "Red states, blue states, strong unions, weak unions — there's a remarkable level of consistency."

The Birth of Public Sector Unions

In her other research, Anzia provides new understandings of the birth of public-sector unions, which are typically reported to have started in the 1960s, and on a separate path from private unions.

In fact, she writes in "The Growth of Public-Sector Unions in Early 20th Century America," hundreds of American cities had organized workers during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, despite passage of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, which explicitly excluded the public sector.

With co-author Jessica Trounstine, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University, Anzia pored over decades of overlooked data from the International City/County Management Association's municipal yearbooks, which revealed hundreds of early public employee organizations. The organizing efforts often occurred in cities also known for strong private sector unions, suggesting cooperation occurred between employee groups.

"We've been taught to view these two labor movements as separate, operating under different timelines," Anzia says. "But in reality, they shared grievances, tactics, and even personnel. Some private sector unions actively helped organize public workers."

Contrary to conventional narratives that place the rise of government employee unions in the 1960s, Anzia and Trounstine show that unionization efforts among city workers — especially firefighters — were already widespread as early as the 1930s and 1940s.

The insight reframes conceptions of modern unionism. Today, public employees constitute about half of all union members in the United States, as private-sector unionism continues to decline.

Anzia's research builds on previous findings with Trounstine, which were published in the *American Political Science Review*.

"Our first finding was that firefighters were some of the best organized and earliest organized city employees in the United States after World War I," Anzia says. "And then by 1940, there were hundreds of organizations in the International Association of Firefighters across the United States, including in cities in Wyoming and Iowa, places that we don't usually think of as these hotbeds of union organizing."

The line between private- and public-sector employment, it turns out, was never as divergent as chronicled.

"Why would city employees not be influenced by this sort of massively energetic private sector labor movement?" Anzia says. "These people were in the same communities sharing the same grievances. That is really a departure from the way we thought about the rise of the labor movement in the United States. And we think that understanding is an important contribution." **G**

"This is one of the most important and least discussed domestic policy issues in the United States today. What we're trying to do is elevate the problem and increase discussion of it. For the most part, people just don't like to talk about it."

– Sarah Anzia

Executive Fellowship in Applied Technology Policy

THE EXECUTIVE FELLOWSHIP IN APPLIED TECHNOLOGY POLICY is a groundbreaking partnership between UC Berkeley's School of Information and the Goldman School of Public Policy. This prestigious eight-month program unites the socio-technical expertise of the School of Information with the policy acumen of the Goldman School to prepare distinguished leaders for the future of technology policy. The non-residential fellowship is structured to provide a dynamic platform for policy leaders to reflect on their experi-

ences, mentor the next generation, and document their contributions to digital transformation in government. Fellows will participate in research, teaching, and high-impact meetings and events.

Our unique collaboration creates an environment where accomplished public sector technology policy leaders engage with academic thought leaders from both schools, mentor rising professionals, and document their pivotal contributions to digital transformation in government.



A subset of the Executive Tech Policy Fellows with organizer Professor Deirdre Mulligan of the Berkeley I School. Photo credit: Emily Liu

2025 Executive Fellows

Judy Brewer

Former Assistant Director for Accessibility, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

Judy Brewer specializes in digital accessibility technology policy. In her work as assistant director for accessibility at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, she focused on strengthening implementation of digital accessibility across federal, state, and local governments, including in education and health care; and promoting accessibility and equity in artificial intelligence.

She served briefly as a digital accessibility expert at the Partnership for Public Service, and previously directed the Web Accessibility Initiative at the World Wide Web Consortium for 25 years where she led development of the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), while also serving as a principal research scientist at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.

Charlotte A. Burrows

Former Chair, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Charlotte A. Burrows was chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Com-

mission (EEOC) from 2021–2025, where she launched EEOC's groundbreaking initiative on AI in employment. She led EEOC's work under President Biden's AI Executive Order, spearheaded public education on AI in employment, and issued key documents explaining AI's impact on workplace civil rights. She also has served as associate deputy attorney general with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ); a Senate Judiciary Committee advisor to the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy; and a litigator with DOJ and in private practice. Burrows graduated from Princeton University, cum laude, and Yale Law School.

Alan Davidson

Former Assistant Secretary for Communications & Information and NTIA Administrator, Dept. of Commerce

Alan Davidson served until January 2025 as the administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Agency. There, Alan led a federal agency with more than 600 employees working to close the digital divide, promote responsible AI innovation, and build a better Internet. Alan has spent the last 25 years working at the intersection of Internet technology, public policy, and the law. He previously held executive roles at Mozilla, Google, New America's Open Technology Institute, and the Center for Democracy and Technology. He is a graduate of MIT and Yale Law School, and a member of the DC Bar.

Marcela Escobar-Alva

Former Chief Information Officer, Social Security Administration

Marcela Escobar-Alva served throughout the Biden-Harris Administration, holding several senior-level positions including deputy director of White House Information Technology, special assistant to the president and chief of enterprise applications for the Office of Administration, and as deputy commissioner and chief information officer (CIO) for the Social Security Administration (SSA). Prior to her federal service, she has held several CIO positions in the private and non-profit sectors including Sony Pictures Entertainment, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and Monarch Companies. She is a transformational CIO/CDO/CTO and has built and led teams in large, global and complex organizations across every aspect of technology. She has a BA from LMU and an MBA from USC.

Eric Hysen

Former Chief Information Officer & Chief AI Officer, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Eric Hysen most recently served as the chief information officer and chief AI officer at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, where he oversaw a \$10 billion IT portfolio and a 10,000+ person IT workforce, advancing critical initiatives

in responsible AI innovation, cybersecurity, and digital transformation. He led the development of the department's first AI roadmap and generative AI pilots, established policies for AI governance, testing, and transparency, and drove efforts to ensure the safe and secure adoption of AI in critical infrastructure. He was a founding member of the U.S. Digital Service in the White House and has worked in Silicon Valley companies, philanthropies, nonprofits, and state government to improve government services through technology. He holds a degree in computer science from Harvard University.

Arati Prabhakar

Former Science and Technology Advisor to President Biden and Director White House Office of Science & Technology Policy

Arati was President Biden's science and technology advisor and led the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy 2022–25. Her four decades of professional contributions span the public and private sectors. She has led DARPA and NIST, been a partner at an early-stage VC firm and a senior corporate executive, and started an innovation nonprofit. Today, Arati advocates for science, technology, and innovation for our future: speaking for publicly supported R&D, encouraging bigger and better ambitions for AI, and developing a project to tell the 1000-hero stories of great American innovations.

Denice W. Ross

Former Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer for Tech Capacity and U.S. Chief Data Scientist, White House Office of Science & Technology Policy

Denice Ross is a seasoned organizer of data colleagues across civil society, academia, tech companies, and all levels of government. She served as the deputy U.S. CTO and U.S. chief data scientist in the Biden-Harris Administration, where she led the data strategy to implement the Biden-Harris equity agenda on issues such as policing, LGBTQI+, disability, military families, Puerto Rico recovery, and gun violence, and established the U.S. Tech Policy

Network as a conduit for federal policy-makers to easily engage with thousands of state, local, tribal, and territorial tech and data leaders.

Jennifer Toomey

Former Founding Director of the Public Interest Technology Catalyst Fund, Ford Foundation

Jennifer Toomey is a philanthropic leader with 17 years at the Ford Foundation, where she managed significant initiatives including a \$50M investment fund that generated \$200M in financing for Public Interest Technology. With deep roots in music and advocacy, Jenny founded the Future of Music Coalition and co-founded Simple Machines Records. Her career spans nonprofit leadership, technology policy, and music. Currently on sabbatical in 2025, she's focusing on writing and music projects in Catskill, NY.

Merici Vinton

Former U.S. Digital Service, White House and Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service

Merici Vinton leads high-stakes, nationwide launches, most recently serving as a senior advisor to IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. While at the US Digital Service and in partnership with the IRS, Merici spearheaded the launch of the IRS' new free and beloved tax filing service, Direct File.

Merici was one of the first employees at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and developed the technology strategy for the agency, steering it towards one of openness from day one, building the agency on foundations of open source, open data, and transparency. Their trailblazing vision set the standard for modern web services in government.

Jenny Yang

Former Deputy Assistant to the President for Racial Justice and Equity, White House Domestic Policy Council

Jenny R. Yang is a partner in Outten & Golden's Washington D.C. office, where she represents employees in individual, class and collective actions and advises

state and local governments in enforcement actions. She served in the White House as deputy assistant to President Biden for racial justice and equity and as the director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in the U.S. Department of Labor. During the Obama Administration, she served as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission where she began her decade-long effort to ensure AI and tech-based screening and hiring systems protect civil rights.

Vera Zakem

State Chief Technology Innovation Officer, State of California;
Former Chief Digital Democracy and Rights Officer, USAID

Vera Zakem serves as the first woman Chief Technology Innovation Officer for the state of California. Appointed by Governor

Newsom, she leads on AI and emerging technologies, innovation, partnerships across California, the nation, and globally on technologies, and ways that technology can be used to serve all Californians. She previously served in the Biden-Harris Administration as USAID's first-ever chief digital democracy and rights officer, leading a rights-respecting technology and innovation agenda, including on AI in 100 lower and middle-income countries. Previously, she led a public interest technology practice, led strategy and research in the private sector, and the intersection between technology policy, society, and U.S. foreign policy and national security. Vera has also served on the Bipartisan Task Force to Support Democracy. Vera has an M.A. in government from Johns Hopkins University and a B.A. in politics from the University of San Francisco. **G**

FLOURISH Continued from page 5

The framework is not a checklist or a contract. Instead, it is an offering — shared principles and practices passed from one cohort to the next. It reflects our collective effort to name what we value, engage our differences, and imagine the community we want to grow.

Like any framework, FLOURISH also contains tensions. Take emotion in dialogue: Some contend emotion should be contained so that everyone can express their thoughts without the conversation being short-circuited by strong reactions. Others argue that calls for civility can feel detached from the real harms policies create. Our framework recognizes both perspectives and holds the tension between them.

Another example lies in values. In polarized times, some students — particularly those whose views diverge from the majority — report feeling silenced. These dynamics do not necessarily follow demographic lines; values

often cut across race, gender, and background. FLOURISH helps surface these differences and bring them into open con-



“...dialogue skills are not peripheral to policy work — they are essential to sustaining trust, building community, and strengthening our collective capacity to govern.”

held, and both deserve consideration in the dialogue.

This parallels Bardach's Step 4: *Select the Criteria*, where analysts name the values that will guide the evaluation of alternatives. Holding different values is like choosing evaluative criteria in policy analysis. It is not about the inherent superiority of one value or criterion over another, but about recognizing that different stakeholders — or dialogue partners — may prioritize different things. Done well, FLOURISH creates conditions to discuss these tensions openly, without name-calling or shutting each other down.

FLOURISH will not resolve every conflict, but it equips us to stay in dialogue when it matters most. It reflects a commitment to dialogue that honors difference while pursuing the common good — because the same skills that repair relationships are the ones that strengthen democracy. **G**

versation. It allows us to say, for example, “I see we are disagreeing because your highest value is accountability while mine is forgiveness.” Both may be deeply

FACULTY NOTES

Andrew W. Reddie continues to grow BRSL as well as contributing to the School's research and teaching at the intersection of technology and security. His research has recently been published in the *Oxford Handbook of Geoeconomics and Economic Statecraft* and new articles have been accepted in *Business and Politics and International Interactions* (the latter his most recent wargaming methods paper). He was recently named a Non-Resident Fellow at both Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories. Andrew has also shared his expertise widely over the summer months, speaking at the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation's Public Policy and Nuclear Threats Bootcamp, the Carnegie-Maxwell Policy Planning Laboratory, and serving as a nuclear expert for the Nobel Laureate Assembly on the Prevention of Nuclear War in June on the 80th anniversary of the Trinity Test. He has also contributed analysis to various news media outlets covering the recent Israel-Iran crisis as well as the recent talks between Trump and Putin in Alaska. At Berkeley, the Risk and Security Laboratory continues to grow under his leadership, with new members joining the team and additional funds raised to support research and teaching at the intersection of technology and security. Looking ahead, Andrew will travel to Seoul to speak at the World Emerging Security Forum in September before taking part in Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues across East Asia in November, continuing to expand the Lab's global engagement and partnerships.

Noam Schimmel joined the editorial board of the journal *World Affairs*. He co-edited and contributed an article to a special issue of the journal *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* devoted to reparative justice in Africa. He was awarded a 2024 Human Rights Champion Award by the Genocide Survivors Foundation and the Million Lives Genocide Relief Fund in recognition of his work advancing reparative justice for survivors of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi and his efforts to collect and publish testimonies of Rwandan genocide survivors. In the spring of 2025 Noam shared his research and addressed the Bay Area commemoration event hosted by UC Berkeley to honor the memory of the victims of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi and to stand in solidarity with survivors. His most recent publications in *World Affairs* explore the place of power and politics in the functioning of human rights NGOs and how to improve their ethical accountability and human rights practices and examine the place of self-determination in international human rights law, global politics and policy, and historical and contemporary conceptions of global justice.

Margaretta Lin, along with DCRP Professor Charisma Acey, was recently selected by the State of California Governor's Office on Land Use & Climate Innovation to lead the State's Fifth Assessment on Climate Change report on Racial Equity and Climate Justice. They have organized a statewide research team with leading academic researchers and community frontline leaders, focusing on climate impacts and public policy solutions for Californians most impacted by climate change, especially incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, unhoused, undocumented and immigrant, farmworker, and low income Black communities. Their report will be issued in Spring 2026.

Caitlin Patler was awarded the 2025 Public Sociology award from the American Sociological Association International Migration section. This award recognizes researchers who “address immigration and related issues in ways that apply scholarly knowledge directly in public work, generate such knowledge for public use, or otherwise contribute to improving the lives of migrants or refugees.” Professor Patler led efforts to protect birthright citizenship, including drafting expert declarations and organizing a brief summarizing empirical research on birthright citizenship, which was signed by nearly 200 social scientists. Professor Patler served as a national expert on US immigration detention at a convening of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)'s Committee on Population. She published several papers in peer-reviewed journals, including analyses of the health harms of prolonged immigration detention (in *JAMA Network Open*, with Altaf Saadi and Paola Langer) and racialized disparities in health-related quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic (in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, with Konrad Franco and Whitney N. Laster Pirtle), among others. She continued to support mentorship programs that expand the pipeline to the professoriate, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Health Policy Research Scholars program and the UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.

Daniel Sargent was appointed the Alexander F. and May T. Morrison Chair in American History & Citizenship in the Department of History. He published several pieces of policy-oriented writing, including “World Order — Improvised by Design” (*Engelsberg Ideas*) and “Remaking the World Order Requires Thinking Outside the Box” (*Internationale Politik Quarterly*). He also drafted historical analysis for the British Cabinet Office and participated in several conferences on the practical application of history — two at Stanford's Hoover Institution and one at the University of Texas, Austin. He continued, in his spare time, to toil on his forthcoming book project on the rise and fall of the American world order.

Hilary Hoynes was awarded the Daniel M. Holland Medal from the National Tax Association. She was elected vice-president of the Society of Labor Economists and appointed to the advisory board of *Fiscal Studies*, a policy journal based in the UK. Hoynes delivered the Birger Lecture at Tufts University, and gave the keynote lecture celebrating the inauguration of the Stone Center for Inequality at the University of British Columbia. She also participated in an event at the Brookings Institution celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

David C. Wilson published “The January 6th Insurrection and the Triggering of African Americans' Racial Resentment,” in the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*. Accepted Jan. 20, 2025. He also released a research report on the Political Psychology of American Democracy, which can be found at <https://democracypolicylab.berkeley.edu/research/political-psychology-of-american-democracy/>

Public lectures and keynotes include: “The Desire for Division: A Political Psychology Framework for the 2024 Election,” at the McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture, Holy Cross, and “Democracy Policy: The Public Value of Investing in ‘We’ [the People]” at Notre Dame's Keeping the Republic Conference.

Event Highlights



Board of Advisors Members Address GSPP

Three extraordinary members of GSPP’s Board of Advisors, Nancy Wong, Carla Javits (MPP ’85), and Steve Silberstein spoke to the GSPP community during the annual Big Give about their experience strengthening U.S. homeland security through cybersecurity infrastructure policy, fighting poverty through social welfare policy, and advocating for voting/election innovations through democracy policy.

GSPP Welcomes Record Number of New Students

This fall, the Goldman School welcomed its largest class to date. Together, the MPP, MPA, MDP, and PhD students number more than 300, with the undergraduate minors numbering several hundred more!



2025 Meyerson Lecture

Professor Henry E. Brady delivered the 2025 Martin Meyerson Berkeley Faculty Research Lecture: Does Democracy Work? The American People and Their Institutions. The video of the lecture can be viewed at <https://goldman.school/meyerson-2025>.



2025 Wildavsky Forum

Jamila Michener, Associate Professor of Government and Public Policy at Cornell University and the inaugural director of the Center for Racial Justice and Equitable Futures spoke on “Power from the Margins and the Promise of Democracy” at the 2025 Wildavsky Forum.

From left: Dean David C. Wilson, with Professors Hilary Hoynes, Jamila Michener, and Jake Grumbach



Alameda County Capstones

The GSPP/Alameda County Capstone Program connects the expertise of Goldman School graduate students with the real-world challenges facing Alameda County. This powerful partnership empowers county departments to amplify their impact by collaborating with Goldman School students on urgent, high-stakes issues that directly affect the lives of county residents. This year, 12 capstone projects were completed by Goldman School students who conducted rigorous research and analysis to generate data-driven, actionable policy recommendations for County departments to consider for implementation.



CCDE Showcase 2025

The Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement (CCDE) hosted its annual Research Showcase. As part of GSPP’s larger Democracy Policy Initiative, the event brought together a vibrant community of CCDE Board members from the Cal Class of 1968, Dean David Wilson, GSPP staff and faculty, research partners, and friends and family — all to celebrate the work of the 2025 CCDE Capstone Fellows. This year’s 11 fellows partnered with public agencies, advocacy organizations, and civic institutions to address some of the most pressing challenges facing democracy today.

Bardach and Patashnik at GSPP

Emeritus Professor Eugene Bardach, author of the *Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, joined former student and Brown University Professor Eric M. Patashnik (MPP ’89/PhD Political Science ’96) in a conversation with GSPP faculty and students about the foundations and future of policy analysis. Patashnik co-authored the sixth edition of *Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* with Bardach.



Professors Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik with GSPP faculty

Goldman Greats

Professors Eugene Bardach, David Kirp, Henry Brady, and former president and CEO of the College Futures Foundation Julia Lopez (MPP ’80) spoke in a panel conversation at the Goldman Greats, which brought together alumni, donors, board members, and faculty to celebrate the accomplishments of the Goldman School.



GSPP Board of Advisors Chair Michelle Schwartz (MPP ’88) with Alumni Board Chair Nida Osei (MPA ’22)

VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES EMBODY THE QUALITIES we most need in the leaders shaping our collective futures: leadership, teamwork, resilience, integrity, and a commitment to the public good.

The Service to Service initiative connects U.S. active duty military and veterans (and their spouses) to the Goldman School of Public Policy’s full suite of opportunities, as well as access to the robust offerings throughout UC Berkeley. GSPP was one of twelve schools selected by the Volcker Alliance for this initiative. The inaugural Service-to-Service class boasts seven exceptional fellows, and GSPP is eager to welcome more.

“Veterans and their family members understand the sacrifices that come with public service,” says Dean David C. Wilson, a military veteran with 19 years of service to the US Army Reserves, including combat tours for Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. “We are committed to empowering leaders to engage in meaningful work within local and state communities that need them most.”

If admitted, active military, veterans, and military spouses (or widows/widowers) are eligible for GSPP’s Service to Service Fellowship. This unique opportunity is an innovative partnership between the Goldman School, We The Veterans, and the Volcker Alliance. Service to Service Fellows benefit from resources and programming designed to support their academic and professional success in our master’s degree programs.

“I came to GSPP because I wasn’t done serving,” says Chris Toler (MPA ’26). “After eight years in the Air Force and 23 years in the fire service, I knew leadership and grit. I quickly realized I also needed policy-making tools in my toolbox to break barriers.”

Betsy Davis (MPP ’26) agrees. “I chose to come to GSPP because I knew it was a place where I would be able to take the skills learned in the military and translate them to the policy language to help make an impact,” she says.

“I got to meet people from all over the world who are also driven to build a better future, hear their stories, and learn together,” says Justin Barbulescu (MPP ’26). “As a veteran who separated from active duty only a few months before classes started, GSPP provided a positive environment for me to reintegrate into civilian life and explore my interests.”

“The value of this program is clear,” continues Chris. “I’m learning how to turn lived experiences into real, scalable solutions. GSPP is sharpening my edge so I can fight for equity, justice, and smarter governance with the same urgency I brought to the fireground and my military service career.”

Justin also points out the value of being able to apply his GI Bill benefits. As a public institution, the full cost of tuition is covered by the benefit.

“The program is also giving me the opportunity to pursue my academic and career goals,” says Justin. “More importantly, my experience at GSPP gave me a chance to successfully tackle challenging subjects I struggled with in the past. As an instructor once told me, ‘It’s a great place to learn hard things.’” **G**

Service to Service



Group photo, from left: Dean David Wilson, Cameron Parker, Betsy Davis, LTC Aaron Elliott, Justin Barbulescu, Sean Clark, Luis Hernandez, and Anne Campbell Washington; **Bottom left photo:** Betsy Davis; **Bottom right photo:** Chris Toler

Building Community Through Food

By Vanessa Martini

WHEN THE PANDEMIC THREATENED TO SHUT DOWN one of UC Village’s few food resources, Sadia Khan (MPA ’26), then an undergrad, refused to accept it. What began as an act of frustration quickly turned into the Bear Pantry — a community-run lifeline that has since evolved into a permanent, staffed resource for student families. We sat down with Sadia to learn how it all started, the challenges she faced, and what the Bear Pantry has taught her about resilience, generosity, and leadership.

What was the moment that made you realize UC Village needed the Bear Pantry, and how did you turn that idea into reality?

Sadia: The Bear Pantry technically already existed, but it was extremely limited—open only twice a month, serving maybe 20 students, and scheduled at times that didn’t work for most of us. When COVID hit, the University announced the pantry would shut down altogether. That made me furious, because we were being told there would be no food support at all at a time when grocery stores were empty and 60% of our community was already low-income.

I called the UC Village staff and said, “Why are UC Village students being cut off?” I was told we could get food, but I’d have to figure out the logistics. So I grabbed a couple of tables, rallied friends, and within hours, we had a makeshift pantry in the Village parking lot. Dozens of families showed up, and we ran out of food within an hour. That was the moment I knew it couldn’t be a one-time thing.

From there, we hustled — partnering with local grocers, Berkeley Food Network, and Trader Joe’s and Safeway. We ran the pantry five days a week, three hours a day, out of a parking lot. Eventually, we secured a grant of over \$200,000, advocated for a permanent location, and today the pantry has a physical space and full-time staff.

Was there a turning point when you knew the pantry was going to succeed?

Honestly, failure was not an option. The need was overwhelming; sometimes more than 1,600 people came through in a day. The Village only has about 1,000 units, but many households have multiple family members, so it added up fast.

We leaned on every resource we could: housing staff, the Basic Needs Center, the Wellness Fund, even the Assistant Chancellor. Because people trusted us, they gave us support without a lot of red tape. It was exhausting, but we went in with the mindset that this had to work, and we weren’t going to stop until it became permanent.

Over the years, how have you seen the Bear Pantry change lives?

The impact was immediate and lasting. Even now, I get messages from students, many of them single parents, saying the pantry helped them survive some of their hardest moments. One classmate’s partner even started volunteering after learning about it.

For me, the most powerful part is hearing from people years later who say the pantry gave them stability when everything felt uncertain. That tells me it wasn’t just about food — it was about dignity and community.

How did you make sure the pantry reflected the cultural needs of such a diverse community?

At first we focused on basics — bread, milk, oil, eggs — but we quickly realized that wasn’t enough. Partnering with the Berkeley Food Network and Trader Joe’s gave us access to fresh produce and culturally specific foods. We also worked with groups that provided Halal and Kosher meats.

Another big step was translating materials into multiple languages and recruiting multilingual volunteers, since so many residents are international students. We even created simple recipes based on whatever food was available that week, to help people cook with ingredients they might not be used to. Those small efforts made the pantry more welcoming and accessible.

What has this work taught you about community resilience and generosity?

That it’s easy to panic — but it’s just as easy to step up. None of us knew how to run a pantry during a pandemic, but we weren’t afraid to ask for help. Each small call, each borrowed table, each volunteer added up to something bigger.

What I’ve learned is that leadership isn’t about holding on — it’s about training others to carry the work forward. I knew the pantry needed to exist beyond my tenure, so it was built to last. That’s what resilience looks like: making sure your community has what it needs, even after you’re gone. **G**



Sadia Khan

MPA Sacramento

The Goldman School of Public Policy is expanding its presence in California's capital.

This fall, GSPP hosted classes and events at the UC Student and Policy Center in Sacramento, with an eye toward launching a Sacramento-based Master of Public Affairs (MPA) program in 2026 for mid-career professionals focused on advancing agile government.

Tailored to the needs of working professionals, GSPP's fall offerings in Executive Education focused on agile approaches to addressing changing societal needs, emerging technological advancements, and organizational effectiveness while building public trust. The classes focused on enhancing students' leadership skills, connecting them with experts, and providing a taste of an immersive, world-class public policy education in the dynamic epicenter of the nation's most populous state.

Visit <https://goldman.school/agile-sacramento> to learn more.



Remembering Dr. Joseph I. Castro

The Goldman School of Public Policy mourns the passing of Joseph Castro (MPP '90).

IN 1984, JOSEPH CASTRO ARRIVED AT UC Berkeley as an undergraduate student, the first in his family to attend a university. With the help of the Sloan Fellowship (now PPIA), he came to the Goldman School in 1988 with a strong interest in education policy.

"This opportunity completely transformed my life," he said in a 2013 interview. "The entire GSPP tool kit has been essential throughout my career. I have used virtually every part of it in every job."

Joe's Advanced Policy Analysis project (APA) was about the launching of UC Merced: "The Nonprofit Corporation as Land Developer: A Strategy to Manage Growth Surrounding a Tenth University of California Campus in Visalia."


After graduation, Joe held leadership positions throughout the University of California, including GSPP, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Merced, UC Santa Barbara, and UCSF. In 2013, he was appointed President of Fresno State University, the first Latino and San Joaquin Valley native to serve in that position. Under his leadership, enrollment at Fresno State climbed to a record number. Graduation rates increased and the student body became more diverse. In 2020, he was named Chancellor of the California State University system.

"Joe was an extraordinary person who, by dint of hard work and intelligence, rose from very humble beginnings to being a leader at Fresno State and then for the CSU system," says Professor and former GSPP Dean Henry E. Brady. "Early in his career, he was a major contributor to GSPP as part of our administration, and he contributed enormously to improving every institution with which he was associated. His initiatives at Fresno State made that school stronger, and they were accentuated by his path-breaking role as a Mexican American who had grown up in the Fresno area. Personally, Joe was thoughtful, decent, caring,

and committed to higher education, especially for those, like himself, for whom it provided a ladder for upward mobility. He serves as a model of what one person can do — with the help of our California educational system. His passing fills me with sadness. It is a great loss."

"Joe was a fantastic assistant dean when Geno Smolensky was dean and I was associate dean," says Professor Lee Friedman. "When I was acting dean, it was Joe's idea to apply for the state grant that paid for the earthquake renovation of 2607 Hearst and allowed us to create some new offices as well. He was a hugely positive force for GSPP, and a delight to work with."

"Joe was my very first boss at GSPP back in 1996, and has been my mentor and friend ever since," says Cecille Cabacungan, Executive Director of Career and Alumni Services. "He always had a way of seeing the best in people and lifting them up. Joe was such a positive force at GSPP and in the field of higher education. He cared so deeply about the work, the mission, and everyone around him. He'll be missed by so many, but the impact he made will carry on."

"His North Star was always whether the policy in question would improve the lives of students and the surrounding communities," says his classmate, Jai Sookprasert (MPP '90). "I will miss him dearly as a friend and as a leader in higher education." 

Joe is survived by his wife, Mary, of 33 years; his sons, Isaac and Jess; his daughter, Lauren; and his daughter-in-law, Marilyn. The family welcomes friends to reach out by letter at P.O. Box 689, Long Beach, CA 90815. Learn more at <https://joseph-castro.com>.





A Steady Hand Behind the Scenes: Honoring Sandi Rollins Ketchpel

By Vanessa Martini

IF YOU’VE EVER WORKED AT THE GOLDMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, chances are your path has crossed with Sandi Rollins Ketchpel. And if it hasn’t, you’ve still likely benefited from her work. After more than three decades at UC Berkeley — and 25 years as the Chief Administrative Officer at GSPP — Sandi retired this past June.

Sandi’s fingerprints are on nearly every aspect of the School’s operations. From HR and IT to finance, facilities, and academic personnel, she’s built the systems and structures that have enabled GSPP to grow and thrive. She oversaw the design and construction of the School’s first major building expansion in 2002, and again in 2015–16, helping to modernize GSPP’s physical footprint while keeping a close eye on budgets and timelines.

But Sandi’s influence goes far beyond infrastructure. She has been a trusted advisor to faculty, a mentor to generations of staff, and a university-wide leader known for her deep knowledge of policy, process, and people. Over the course of her career,

she’s received some of Berkeley’s highest staff honors, including two Chancellor’s Outstanding Staff Awards and an incredible four Excellence in Management Awards from the Berkeley Staff Assembly.

A skilled navigator of UC bureaucracy, Sandi has long been GSPP’s go-to expert for academic personnel matters, guiding faculty recruitment, appointments, and advancement with clarity and care. Her encyclopedic knowledge of UC policy — and her ability to translate it into plain language — has made her an indispensable resource to deans and department heads alike.

The impact of Sandi’s leadership was on full display at her retirement celebration at GSPP in May, which drew an impressive group of colleagues and campus leaders. Among the many who came to honor her were Eugene Whitlock, UC Berkeley’s Chief People & Culture Officer and Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources; Heather Archer, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Personnel; Chris Stanich, Associate Vice Chancellor for Financial Planning & Analysis; and Karie Frasch, Director of the Office for Faculty Equity & Welfare. Their presence underscored the deep respect Sandi has earned across the university — not just for her institutional knowledge, but for the way she’s led with generosity and professionalism.

The celebration also included reflections from several campus leaders whom Sandi mentored over the years. Dana Kowalski, Chief Administrative Officer of the School of Social Welfare; Laura Slakey, CAO of the UC Berkeley Library; Heidi Wagner, Assistant Dean for Finance & Administration, L&S Division of Biological Sciences; and Maya Woodson Turman, CFO and Assistant Dean of Finance and Planning, all shared personal stories of how Sandi’s guidance helped shape their leadership paths. Their remarks highlighted a central part of Sandi’s legacy: her commitment to lifting others up and building a more collaborative, supportive environment for staff across campus.

“Sandi’s impact on the Goldman School and UC Berkeley is profound and far-reaching. Her strategic mindset and policy expertise helped to shape every aspect of our operations and academic mission. There is no doubt that her legacy will be exemplary love for the work we undertake, belief in the vibrancy of our GSPP community, and a commitment to the Berkeley campus and those who experience it. On a personal note, I’m especially grateful for the guidance she offered during my transition to GSPP — every single element of my vision was made possible by Sandi’s unwavering support. She will be missed but not forgotten.”

David C. Wilson, Dean, Goldman School of Public Policy

Though her work was often behind the scenes, Sandi’s warmth, humor, and steady presence made a lasting impression on those around her. She’s been the kind of colleague people turn to not just for answers, but for perspective, reassurance, and a sense of calm in moments of change.

As we mark the end of Sandi’s remarkable career, we celebrate a legacy built not only on operational excellence but on trust, dedication, and quiet leadership. She leaves GSPP stronger, more grounded, and better prepared for the future. **G**

“For decades, Sandi has been the Goldman School’s pathfinder, financial wizard, and moral compass. No one knows more about the byways and pathways of Berkeley’s bureaucracy than she does, and time after time she led GSPP through its bureaucratic thickets. By keeping us solvent during hard times and developing creative ways to organize our budgets, she made it possible for us to innovate and become a powerhouse public policy school. And no one surpasses her in working with staff to ensure that GSPP operates effectively and compassionately. She is one of Berkeley’s great administrators who exemplifies kindness, integrity, and competence, and working with her taught me a great deal and made it possible for GSPP to achieve success.”

Professor Henry E. Brady, former dean of the Goldman School

From the Alumni Board Chair

I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY to continue serving as Chair of the Goldman School Alumni Association Board, and I’m excited to share reflections on the work we’ve accomplished together and the vision ahead.

Over the past year, our board has been hard at work strengthening connections between alumni and students. From networking and mentorship to collaborative programming, we’ve focused on building bridges across our community that enrich both current students and graduates. We also developed our first-ever budget and introduced a refreshed brand identity to help carry this work forward with clarity and purpose.

This fall, we’re especially thrilled to welcome two new board members, whose experience and passion will further ener-

gize our efforts. With their leadership and the continued dedication of our full board, we are committed to creating more avenues for alumni to engage meaningfully with one another and with the next generation of policy leaders.

The Goldman School community is full of talent, wisdom, and drive. As ambassadors, advocates, and partners, we will keep working to elevate our shared mission: advancing policy solutions that meet today’s challenges and shaping a future rooted in equity, innovation, and public service. **G**



Warmly,
Nida Atshan Osei
MPA ’22
Chair, GSPP Alumni
Association Board



Goldman School of Public Policy
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
UC Berkeley

Alumni Board 2025–26

- Avi Black (MPP ’85)
- Claire Callahan (MPA ’23)
- Eden Chan (MPA ’25)
- Carolyn Chu (MPP ’12)
- Michael Colvin (MPP ’07)
- AJ Johnson (MPP ’13)
- Rosemary Jordan (MPP/MPH ’00)
- Darius Kemp (MPA ’25)
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- Karely Ordaz Salto (MPA ’22)
- Nida Osei (MPA ’22) — Chair
- Daniel Payares Montoya (MDP ’20)
- Fatima Tariq (MDP ’21)
- Nousheen Wani (MPA ’22)

2025 Alumni of the Year

THE ALUMNI OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECOGNIZE Goldman School alumni who reflect the values of GSPP and excel in their respective fields. The honorees were celebrated at a dinner in their honor at the Goldman School's Annual Conference and Alumni Gathering.



Khadija Shahper Bhaktiar (MPP '10)
MPP Alumna of the Year



Khadija Shahper Backstair is the founder and CEO of Teach For Pakistan, a national nonprofit that has become a beacon of leadership and educational equity. The idea first took shape while Khadija was studying at GSPP. Inspired by Teach For America alumni she met in Berkeley, she returned to Pakistan in 2010 to launch a similar program. With conviction and perseverance, she guided Teach For Pakistan through a four-year incubation period, recruiting and mentoring over 100 Fellows who went on to lead systemic change nationwide. In 2017, she relaunched Teach For Pakistan as an independent organization, which now supports 76 Fellows teaching over 3,000 children in underserved schools outside Islamabad.

Khadija's leadership extends well beyond Pakistan. She has advised teacher development initiatives across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa through Teach For All. She has worked with UN-Women in New York and grassroots organizations in Pakistan, and she continues to serve on influential boards, advisory groups, and task forces. A Fulbright Scholar, Khadija embodies the global reach of Goldman alumni, combining rigorous policy training with local knowledge and a fierce commitment to equity.



Mary Ann Bates (MPP '10)
Outstanding Service in Policy Innovation and Leadership

Mary Ann Bates is the Executive Director of the California Cradle-to-Career Data System (C2C). This statewide longitudinal data system provides tools to help students reach their goals and delivers infor-

mation on education and workforce outcomes. Its vision is to foster evidence-based decision-making to help Californians build more equitable futures and empower individuals to reach their full potential.

Mary Ann previously served as a senior fellow at the White House Office of Management and Budget and as the Executive Director of J-PAL North America at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She began her life in Ohio's Amish community and started her college experience via dual enrollment at Kent State Tuscarawas.

David Weimer (MPP '75, PhD '78)
PhD Alumnus of the Year



David Weimer is the Edwin E. Witte Professor of Political Economy at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He earned his doctorate at UC Berkeley and went on to become a leading authority in policy analysis and benefit-cost evaluation. He has authored or co-authored more than a dozen books, including *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice* and *Cost-Benefit Analysis: Concepts and Practice* — texts that have become cornerstones for students and practitioners alike. His work spans health policy, organ transplantation, political economy, and even the economics of our relationships with dogs, reflecting both rigor and intellectual curiosity.

Beyond his scholarship, David has provided extraordinary professional service. He has served as president of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, president of the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis, and was elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. His peers recognized him with the inaugural Policy Field Distinguished Contribution Award and the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis.

Gladys Onyango (MDP '17)
MDP Alumna of the Year



Gladys is the Associate Director of Programs, Africa Co-Impact. She supports Co-Impact's partner sourcing, grant making, and partner support efforts in Africa as Associate Director, Programs. She brings over 15 years of experience in supporting visionary African leaders and organizations to access the funding, capacity, and connections needed to serve their communities impactfully.



Prior to joining Co-Impact, Gladys worked at Segal Family Foundation (SFF) where she helped to oversee and support a portfolio of 300+ partners working across six countries in East and Southern Africa. Gladys also laid the foundations for SFF's learning, measurement, and safeguarding practice and oversaw various capacity-strengthening and learning initiatives to support partners to build strong organizations and ecosystems in their areas of work. The fuel that drives her is the vision of a just society in which everyone is respected and has an opportunity to live a dignified life and realize their full potential.

Nidhi Hegde (MPA '19)
MPA Alumna of the Year

Nidhi Hegde serves as Executive Director of the American Economic Liberties Project, where she has helped grow the organization into a leading voice in the antimonopoly movement since its founding in 2020. With extensive experience in business strategy, social entrepreneurship, and impact investing, she brings a multidisciplinary approach to advancing the group's mission and shaping the national debate on monopoly power and economic fairness.



Nidhi's career spans organizational strategy, social business development, and nonprofit leadership across the United States and South Asia. She previously served as COO and Senior Advisor at the Open Markets Institute and strategy consultant for major philanthropic foundations and development agencies. Her work at Monitor's Inclusive Markets unit and FSG India involved scaling social business models and managing complex, multi-stakeholder projects. Prior to Open Markets, Nidhi was at the Omidyar Network where she explored the intersection of tech platforms, regulation, and society, deepening her expertise on market concentration and its broader implications. This led her to her current focus on policy that broadly distributes economic power and addresses systemic corporate concentration.

Nidhi holds a Master's in Public Affairs from the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley and a Bachelor's degree in business from the University of Virginia.

Caitlin Quinn
Public Policy Minor, Alumna of the Year



Caitlin currently works as a Government Relations Associate for Planned Parenthood Northern California. She recently joined coworkers from San Francisco to Eureka in creating PPNorCal Workers United, a chapter of SEIU 1021 representing approximately 350



healthcare and administrative workers, before they bargained for and ratified their first-ever contract.

Caitlin ran for the position of School Board Trustee for Petaluma City Schools in 2018, when she won a seat by defeating three incumbents and earning over 12,700 votes. She is currently on her second term in elected office and serves as the Board Vice President. She has previously served on the City of Petaluma's Animal Advisory Committee, the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, the Board of Petaluma Pride, and the Board of the UC Student Association.

Ignacio "Natch" Valverde
Public Policy Minor, Alumnus of the Year

Natch grew up in a low-income community where he learned early the importance of speaking up for himself, his family, and others. As a student leader in community college, he became a strong advocate for immigrant students, leading campaigns to expand civic engagement. After transferring to UC Berkeley, Natch continued this work, supporting LGBTQ+ communities and migrants across the Bay Area.



He has served on the board of the Immigration Institute of the Bay Area, the region's largest provider of immigrant legal services, and as Diversity and Advocacy Co-Chair for UC Berkeley's Alianza Latinx Staff Organization. In his current role with Berkeley Law's Pro Bono Program, he helps students advance social justice through hands-on work in immigration, asylum, and other critical areas.

Natch is also an artist and creator, using film and photography to lift up immigrant voices. His honors thesis explored the representation of undocumented immigrants in visual media, bridging policy and culture. As he prepares for law school, his aspiration is clear: to combine lawyering and policy expertise to advocate for underserved communities. **G**

Joe Radding (MPP '82) is finally fully retired, 43 years after earning his MPP degree in 1982! He has been fortunate to have traversed multiple rewarding careers, thanks in large part to his GSPP training and his UC Berkeley undergraduate education. In mid-career, he had the wonderful opportunity to earn an Ed.D. degree at the UC Davis School of Education. He writes, "I am pleased with the continuing growth and development of GSPP, and I am hopeful that this continues. More than ever, I believe that 'speaking truth to power' is needed at all levels of public policy and government." Learn more about his professional journey via his LinkedIn page.

Maria H. McKee (MPP '08) is a 2025 SPUR Good Government Award Winner. She was honored for her work at the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department, spearheading the Justice Services Care Coordinator model, which seeks to ensure that 100% of justice-involved youth are connected to community support.

Kevin McNellis' (MPP '14) recent research on congressional tax cut rhetoric was featured in the *New York Times*. The full research paper analyzes tax cut rhetoric from debates over the 1981, 2001, 2003, and 2017 tax cuts and is available at <https://www.co-equal.org>

After sixteen years of doing international work for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) starting immediately after graduating from GSPP, **Dan Milstein** (MPP '08) resigned from the civil service in 2024 and relocated to Spain's Canary Islands, where he is now an independent advisor helping select clients with clean energy project origination internationally.

Sandra Lupien (MPP '18) has received a Fulbright Scholarship through the "Seeking Solutions to Global Challenges" program of the Fulbright Finland Foundation. She will spend six months this fall and spring at the University of Eastern Finland working on a project to catalog, analyze, and recommend policies in the EU and US to advance mass timber construction and production. The project builds upon Lupien's ongoing work as Director, MassTimber@MSU at Michigan State University and on relationships with Finnish academic, industry, and policy stakeholders developed through this work. Lupien began her work on mass timber — a family of large, engineered wood building materials that can be used like steel or concrete in large buildings — during her time at GSPP. Her APA project recommended ways California could advance a mass timber economy in order to use wood from forest health management activities as a scalable construction material that stores large volumes of carbon for many decades.

After consulting with the federal Administration for Children and Families during the Biden Administration, **Doug Steiger** (MPP '91) is now a senior contributor to the Child Welfare Wonk newsletter.

Claire Michaels (MPP '08) and her family are making plans to move to Sacramento in the next year. She'll be looking for professional opportunities in workforce and talent development and business engagement.

In June, **Christian Arana** (MPP '17) published an op-ed in USA Today on the importance of defending California's immigrant communities in light of increased immigration and customs enforcement (ICE) in the state.

After working at UCLA for a few years, **Kate Glassman** (MPP '16) recently relocated to Berkeley with her family and returned to the UC Office of the President (where she had previously worked from 2016 through 2021) to take on the role of Director in the systemwide budget office. She is honored to serve in this role and help protect vital funding for the University.

Emery Roe's (PhD '88) latest publication on policy analysis and public management is "When Complex is as Simple as it Gets: Guide for Recasting Policy and Management in the Anthropocene." (DOI: 10.19088/IDS.2023.025)

In June 2025, **Michael Colvin** (MPP '07) got married to the love of his life, Jessica Gordon, in a beautiful outdoor ceremony in the Redwood trees in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Michael and Jessica live in San Francisco.

Debbie Gordon (MPP '89) recently published the paperback edition of her book, *No Standard Oil: Managing Abundant Petroleum in a Warming World* (Oxford University Press), with a new afterword about growing climate challenges from methane.

The documentary film team of Shizumi and **Andrew Manale** (MPP '81) saw their documentary, *Pictures from a Hiroshima Schoolyard*, shown nationally on PBS stations the week of August 1 to August 9. Though it had been shown in certain local markets previously, this was the first time that it was shown across all markets during the same time period. The film deals with a subject often neglected in the West, the rebuilding of a society after the atomic bomb, and a new, unlikely friendship between a school at the epicenter of the bomb and a church in Washington, DC. This is the only film dealing with Hiroshima that has been shown at the American embassy in Tokyo.

Martha Ture (MPP '85) has been writing her climate and politics substack <https://substack.com/@marthature> and working on her photography career. The writing keeps her public policy chops keen and sharp. Her photography has gained her a state grant, group and juried shows, and placement in private collections. She continues her quest to hike every trail in Marin County.

After 30+ years of working on education, labor, and budget issues in Sacramento, **Jai Sookprasert** (MPP '90) has decided to retire, but he's staying busy. He's helping a foundation to support students and employees in the School Meals for All program in California. The Speaker of the Assembly has also appointed him to the CA Organized Investment Network within the CA Department of Insurance to look at housing investments in underserved communities and green investments that yield environmental benefits to our state. He looks forward to catching up with old friends and classmates in his travels and to connecting to GSPP, which was so instrumental in shaping his life's work.

Charles Melton (MPA '25) was named Alumni Regent on the University of California Board of Regents and will serve a two-year term starting July 1, 2025. He will also serve as President of the Alumni Associations of the University of California in 2026.

Cristian Crespo (MPP '12) is now the Executive Director of the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Latin America and the Caribbean (CLEAR-LAC). From this position, he leads the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and evidence use, training in M&E for decision-makers, and knowledge exchange in M&E and evidence use. Cristian and his team currently engage with the governments of Guatemala, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. Additionally, they collaborate with global and regional organizations, such as UNICEF and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as with philanthropic institutions, including the BHP Foundation.

Besides celebrating 10 years as General Manager of the Alameda County Mosquito Abatement District, **Ryan Clausnitzer** (MPA '18) is also Chair of the California CLASS local government investment pool, and sits on the Boards of the California Special District Association, East Bay Economic Development Alliance, and the Rotary Club of Alameda.

Patricio Domínguez (MPP '14/PhD '18) was promoted to associate professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica-Chile.

Dana Butow (MPA '25) has been appointed to the school board of Soulsbyville Elementary, where she once attended, and will run for election in November 2026. She works as a senior specialist in the California Department of Housing and Community Development's Policy Division and serves as a member of the Tuolumne County Democratic Central Committee and a delegate to the California Democratic Party.

Mel Moyce (MPP '25) has recently moved to Sacramento to start a new position as an Energy Policy Specialist with the Governor's Strategic Growth Council. She is excited to be settling in and contributing to the state's efforts on sustainable growth and energy policy.

Handri Harris Handoyo (MPP '25) is pursuing his dream in energy democracy. As a Policy Research Analyst at Local Power LLC, he's helping launch the next generation of electrical utilities to make electricity more renewable, more democratic, more distributed, and unmistakably cheaper. Through CCA3.0, Handri is pushing for a holistic municipal approach to meeting the 2030 climate IPCC goals by focusing on universal-income access to customer-owned energy resources (rooftop solar, EVs, etc.) and interdepartmental, multi-sectoral decarbonization with the town and city of Ithaca in New York.

Chander Shekhar Khare (MDP '24) is the Chief Administrator of the Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA), the state's primary urban land-owning agency managing nearly 300,000 residential units across Haryana, India. He also serves as Managing Director of Gurugram Metro Rail Ltd. (GMRL) and Haryana Mass Rapid Transport Corporation Ltd. (HMRTC). In this capacity, he is leading the Gurugram Metro Extension Project — a 28.5 km, ₹5,452 crore (USD 650 million) initiative that will significantly improve urban mobility in one of India's fastest-growing cities.

The project, with Systra as the Detailed Design Consultant and Deutsche Bahn as the General Consultant, has already commenced civil works in its first phase. Once complete, it will offer an economical, eco-friendly, and time-saving solution to the city's growing congestion and pollution. In addition, he oversees metro operations in Gurugram, Faridabad, Bahadurgarh, and Ballabhgarh. Through these roles, Khare continues to advance sustainable urban infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for millions of residents.

Eric Patashnik (MPP '89/PhD PoliSci '96) has been appointed the Director of the Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy at Brown University.

Joel C. Saldana, Jr. (MPA '19) has left the non-profit sector in DC and returned to California to prepare for teaching agricultural education for middle and high school students. He is currently in his initial student teaching at Mendota High School, where he will teach Basic Fabrication and Construction, Agriculture Biology, and Sheltered Ag. Biology. Mendota is a majority Latino community with over 97 percent socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 28 percent Multilingual Learner students (2024, SARC).



Betsy Baum Block (left) and Jamie Allison (right) at the 2025 PEAK Grantmaking Conference in New Orleans

The City of Davis City Council appointed **Daryel R. Dunston** (MPA '18) as City Manager. He began serving in September, after serving as Assistant City Manager in Santa Rosa for three years.

After a 25-year career in federal service as a budget analyst for Social Security, health care, and low-income programs, **Diana Meredith** (MPP '97) retired in January 2023. She began her post-GSPP career in the U.S. Senate as a Javits Fellow, and she remains eternally grateful to the Javits Foundation for providing such an amazing opportunity. After a four-year stint at OMB, she returned to the Hill and spent the next 20 years working for the U.S. House Committee on the Budget, starting as an analyst and retiring as committee staff director. She is proud to have contributed to the creation of the Affordable Care Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. These

days, she works part-time as a videographer and lives in Alexandria, VA, with her partner Ralph and their ridiculously cute dog Louie.

Jamie Allison (MPP '06) and **Betsy Baum Block** (MPP '06) delivered a presentation at PEAK Grantmaking's 2025 conference in New Orleans titled "Spark Change with a Little Fire: Busting Myths About Conflict." Jamie and Betsy got their start working together by partnering on their IPA and have been collaborating ever since.

On the professional front, **Susan (Shosh) Blachman** (MPP '79) consults with the City & County of San Francisco, helping implement the food recovery regulations of SB1383, a California law focused on reducing short-lived climate pollutants, particularly methane, by mandating the reduction of organic waste disposal and increasing edible food recovery. Since 1989, when she gave birth to her first child, she has been working part-time. In her free time, she co-chairs the Northern California Recycling Association's Zero Food Waste Committee, organizing webinars on food waste prevention. On the personal front, Susan helped with the weddings of her two daughters — one in Berkeley in 2024 and the other in the DMV (DC/Maryland/Virginia) in 2025, and became a grandmother in April 2025.

After six years of working with the State of Colorado, **Ashley Clark** (MPP/MA-IAS '14) moved onto her new position as Vice President of Finance and Administration for the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

Helena Benozadleyo Jacobs (MPP '09), Koyukon Athabascan, was born into Ruby, AK, and raised among seven different Alaska communities. Growing up throughout rural Alaska shaped her worldview and connected her with Indigenous ways of knowing and being from many different statewide cultures. Helena uses this knowledge and experience, along with training from Indigenous families, birthworkers, and ceremony keepers, to serve her community as the co-creator/director of the Alaska Native Birthworkers Community (ANBC).

The Alaska Native Birthworkers Community's mission is to serve Native birthing families to feel supported, well cared for, and full of the information they need to make confident choices around reproductive health, birthing, and parenthood. They approach their work through a three sisters model: 1st Sister provides free direct services to Native birthing families; 2nd Sister grows a cohort of trained Indigenous birthworkers to serve Native birthing families; 3rd Sister supports systemic change for improved maternal health outcomes and positive birthing experiences for Native birthing families.

Helena has been organizing since 2017 alongside her co-creators to meet a crucial need of Native families from rural Alaska who have to leave their home communities to give birth, often alone, away from their families, cultures, lands, traditional foods, and support systems. They are filling a gap in perinatal care with non-clinical, culturally matched peer support. Since its founding, they have supported hundreds of pregnant people from more than 90 communities across Alaska with free direct services throughout their pregnancy, birth, and postpartum period. Upon the completion of the fifth free Indigenous-led birthworker training they've hosted since 2021, they now have almost 80 trained Native birthworkers in their network from across Alaska to support families statewide.

She shares this about their work: "Our reclamation work, grounded in ceremony and a deep sense of responsibility to our community, is healing our ancestors, ourselves, and future generations who may have been harmed through the colonization of our bodies, healthcare, and birthing practices."

Her UC Berkeley Master of Public Policy degree, small business ownership, and nonprofit executive management experience support her organizational leadership for ANBC.

She is a mother currently living and working in Anchorage on Dena'ina land, where she and her husband are raising their children.

Public Policy Undergraduate Minor

As the Director of Organizing and Training for Reproductive Freedom For All, a national organization that works to protect and expand access to abortion and elect reproductive freedom champions to office, **Kat Lockwood** (Political Science, Society and Environment '12) uses her policy background to connect grassroots organizing to real policy change.

Sonya Salimy (Society & Environment '14) has spent the past 6 years working for Accenture as a Strategy Consultant supporting their Health & Public Service practice. She used her public policy minor daily to analyze state and federal legislation, synthesize proponents in those bills that may be relevant to her clients, and leverage her memo-writing skills to clearly communicate findings. She writes, "the minor has opened doors to a career in the public sector, and it's given me a strong foundation to meaningfully contribute to executive levels of government. Now I've returned to UC Berkeley, pursuing my MBA at the Haas School of Business, to build the tools I wish I had while serving the public sector."

As Assistant Deputy Director of Health Care Financing at the California Department of Health Care Services, **Alek Klimek** (Economics '17) draws on what he learned at Cal every day to design and implement policies that expand access and improve quality for the Medi-Cal program. The economics major gave him the quantitative foundation, while the public policy minor sharpened his ability to analyze problems, weigh tradeoffs, and navigate the politics of policymaking. He still keeps a copy of Bardach's *Eightfold Path* on his desk — and he makes sure every member of my team gets one, too.

Megan Nguyen (Political Economy '21) writes, "My public policy minor degree was invaluable to me stepping into affordable housing policy here in the East Bay after graduating. As Policy Associate and later Policy Manager, I was able

to lead community-based and partnered work across affordable housing production, preservation, and tenant protections in Alameda County and Concord. I worked at the role for 4 years, before returning to campus to begin my Master of City Planning this fall — Go Bears! I am a better policy advocate and analyst because of what I learned at Goldman."

Pornpilas Srithawong (Christy) (Molecular and Cell Biology '17) recently graduated from Medical School and is now a licensed physician in Thailand, with an interest in public health policy and preventative medicine. She writes, "I'm interested in working with the Ministry of Public Health and doing public health policy research alongside clinical medicine, with a special interest in health policy aimed to improve health outcomes of patients with noncommunicable diseases. The courses I took as part of my public policy minor laid the foundation for me to think critically and systematically about the issues I encountered in Thailand's healthcare system, to understand the rationale behind the current healthcare policies and their limitations, to identify possible areas for improvement, as well as systematically brainstorm practical solutions to these problems. The courses taught me to consider the complex nuances and implications of each policy, critically assessing each policy from multiple perspectives in order to find the best solution, eg. a choosing health policy that would uphold equity and fairness for all patients while maintaining the efficiency of the healthcare system. I'm grateful I was able to take my public policy minor courses at GSPP during my undergraduate years."

Michelle Endo (Society & Environment '14) is quickly approaching her fifth year as a California-barred attorney and is currently practicing tenant-side housing law at a small firm in Oakland. Previously, Michelle worked as an attorney for a large grassroots environmental nonprofit. Her public policy minor helps her persuade the courts and other stakeholders that the policy history and context underlying tenant housing law call for broad interpretation and application of protections.

Democracy Policy Fellowship

THE CENTER ON CIVILITY & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT (CCDE) is proud to announce the UC Berkeley Democracy Policy Fellowship, launching in the 2025-26 academic year. This groundbreaking initiative, supported by the Democracy Policy Initiative, brings together eight exceptional community leaders from across California as its inaugural cohort. Each Fellow was nominated for their role as a catalyst for change in fields such as journalism, education, racial justice, and civic innovation — all united by a shared commitment to strengthening democracy.

These fellows will bring deep expertise to UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP). Over the course of the year, they'll partner with faculty, students, and practitioners across the GSPP community to translate their insights into bold, high-impact policy ideas. "We couldn't be more excited to welcome this inspiring group to campus," said CCDE Director Dr. Meredith Sadin. "This fellowship is about bridging the gap between on-the-ground practice and public policy scholarship — it reflects our belief that democracy flourishes when we bring community voices into the heart of public problem-solving."

Meet the Democracy Policy Fellows below and read their full bios at gspp.berkeley.edu/ccde

Saa'un Bell (she/her) is executive vice president at Power California, the nation's largest youth civic engagement organization building political power for young voters of color around economic justice. She leads political, policy, and narrative strategy—expanding the vote, advancing an economic agenda rooted in young people's everyday needs, cultivating the next generation of leaders, and reimagining democracy from the ground up.

Dr. Paulette Brown-Hinds (she/her) is the founder of Voice Media Ventures and a second generation publisher of Black Voice News, where she is transforming the half century old weekly print outlet into a solutions-oriented and justice-focused community news organization. She is leading a community mapping initiative, Mapping Black California, encouraging community collaboration around data and information by bringing together community media, community based organizations, and educational institutions.

Luz Gallegos (she/her) is the Executive Director of TODEC Legal Center. For Luz, TODEC is a family affair. She grew up within the embrace of the TODEC community— an organization her parents started when her family first moved to the Inland Empire. For many years she served as the Community Program

Director of TODEC before stepping into the Executive Director role in 2020. Outside of work, she loves to sing and lives in the community with her husband, children, and dogs.

Jessica González (she/her) is the co-CEO of Free Press and Free Press Action, advocacy organizations fighting to strengthen the media system so it can support a just and multiracial democracy. A public-policy lawyer by training, she regularly appears as an expert witness before Congress and in the media. She sits on the Big Tech Oversight Board and the board of directors of America's Voice and the Latino Media Collaborative.

Timmy Lu (he/him) is the founding executive director of AAPIs for Civic Empowerment (AAPI FORCE) and AAPI FORCE-EF, organizations dedicated to building the political power of Asian

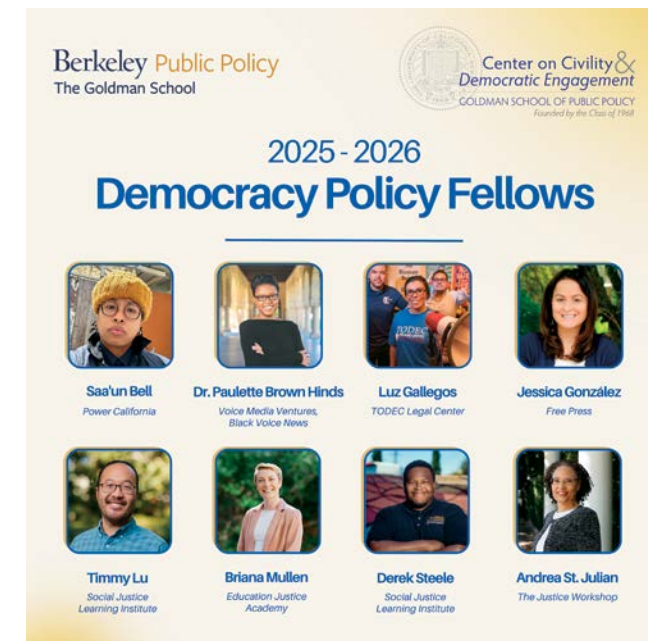
American and Pacific Islander grassroots communities for racial and economic justice. He brings over fifteen years of experience in community organizing, political campaigns, and voter data management. He currently serves as an executive committee member of Million Voters Project.

Briana Mullen (she/they) is co-founder and executive director of the Education Justice Academy, which seeks to support school governance leaders in transformative educational justice initiatives. She has worked as a state policymaker, community organizer, and educational advocate for the past 15 years to ensure the most vulnerable children have access to a library

education and healthy communities. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley where she studied in History, Education and City Planning.

Derek Steele (he/him) serves as the executive director of the Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI), an Inglewood-based nonprofit that advances community well-being through education, health equity, housing justice, and policy advocacy. With a background in electrical engineering and a career rooted in social change, Derek brings a systems-thinking approach to community transformation — centering equity, lived experience, and community leadership.

Andrea Renee St. Julian (she/her) is president and co-founder of The Justice Workshop. She has practiced law for more than 25 years, representing clients in the Federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court, the California Court of Appeal, and the California Supreme Court. She is also the founder and owner of EnoDoc, Inc., a legal technology company offering digital tools for attorneys. Andrea serves on the Board of ACLU San Diego and Imperial Counties. **G**



GSPP Centers Updates

The Center for Studies in Higher Education



CSHE is pleased to welcome Maggie Jones, former economist at the U.S. Census Bureau. Dr. Jones will join the California College Data and Policy Project, where she will work on research relating to California higher education in partnership with UC, CSU, and the California community colleges.

CSHE is also hiring an Executive Director for the Executive Leadership Academy (ELA), in anticipation of the retirement this winter of ELA's founding director

Josefina Baltodano. Over 15 years, ELA has trained 623 fellows who are now shaping the future of higher education. We seek a new visionary servant leader to guide ELA into its next chapter.

In March 2025, the SERU Consortium released a new report, "The Multi-Engagement Model: Understanding Diverse Pathways to Student Success at Research Universities," authored by CSHE's Igor Chirikov, John Aubrey Douglass, and Gregg Thomson. Drawing on over 800,000 student survey responses, the report introduces a novel framework for understanding student engagement beyond academics and highlights how these patterns have changed, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more at cshe.berkeley.edu.



Berkeley Risk-Resilience Lab

The Risk-Resilience Lab advances safety, well-being, and justice for at-risk populations through research that translates directly into policy and practice.

Playing for Change (P4C)

Our flagship videogame-supported afterschool program is designed to prevent aggression and promote wellness among at-risk youth. This year we launched a large-scale field experiment across Bay Area schools to rigorously test P4C's impact on aggression, school engagement, and well-being. We've completed implementation in three schools and are expanding to five more schools this year.

Youth Protective Factors Study

We just completed a three-state study examining how youth strengths can prevent reoffending and inform better service delivery in juvenile justice systems. As policymakers grapple with rising concerns about youth crime, our research sheds light on which risk and protective factors matter most for recidivism reduction across different age groups, and what services are most effective. With Co-Investigators from UMass Medical School and the Council of State Governments, Professor Skeem presented initial findings

through webinars that drew thousands of registrants, demonstrating the field's urgent need for this evidence.

Each project exemplifies our commitment to conducting rigorous research that immediately informs policy and practice. We're excited to share our work through our new website at risk-resilience.berkeley.edu, which showcases how academic research can create meaningful change in real-world settings.

The Center for Environmental Public Policy

Research managed by David Wooley and MPA student, Rachmat Septiadi Malik, completed in August 2025, demonstrates that sustainable biomass produced in California can be converted to low-carbon maritime fuel (bio-methanol). Their research showed that maritime fuel produced from California biomass could supply enough fuel to power a substantial portion of large ships calling at California Ports. Much of this biomass is currently being burned, placed in landfills, applied to agricultural fields, or otherwise thrown away. Using that biomass to produce maritime fuels could avoid or reduce disposal costs for municipal wastewater systems, agriculture, and forest wildfire prevention projects. Bio-methanol used in ships dramatically reduces greenhouse gas and nitrogen oxide emissions from ships.

During Spring and Summer 2025, Graduate Student Researchers, Pooja Agrawal and Brooke Eichenlaub, supported the Center's work to identify regulatory pathways to use solar photovoltaic systems to produce electricity and reduce evaporation from irrigation and water supply canals in California. California has over 4000 miles of irrigation and water supply canals. Solar energy systems applied to only a small portion of water canal mileage would significantly contribute to electric power and water supplies in CA.

In August, the Center received a \$200,000 grant from ClimateWorks Foundation to support its work to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from maritime port and freight operations.

Berkeley Risk and Security Lab

The Berkeley Risk and Security Lab (BRSL) is dedicated to translating academic research at the intersection of defense, technology, and industrial policy into actionable insights, while also serving GSPP and UC Berkeley students interested in these critical topics. Throughout the past academic year, we have continued to expand and grow our research portfolio, academic offerings, and policy engagement. In Fall of 2024, BRSL launched the Graduate Certificate in Technology Policy within GSPP, dedicated to equipping UC Berkeley graduate students to address the policy challenges posed by rapidly advancing technologies. The program blends core, methods, and elective courses that expose students to both the technical realities of emerging technologies like AI and new methods to explore them (e.g., open source analysis). In Summer 2025, BRSL's AI Red Teaming Bootcamp brought together 25 professionals from diverse fields — including nuclear engineering, chemistry, biology, machine learning, and computer

science — to deepen their expertise in AI safety, engaging with experts from the private sector, government, and academia. On the research front, BRSL's AI Frontiers Initiative continues to lead in analyzing AI's evolving landscape, evaluating its performance, limitations, and geopolitical implications. Through these initiatives, BRSL continues to serve as a vital resource for UC Berkeley, bridging rigorous academic research with real-world policy impact across both the public and private sectors.

California Policy Lab

The California Policy Lab (CPL), a nonpartisan research institute at the University of California (UC), launched its new office in Sacramento by hosting an event focused on affordability in California. CPL's new office is at the UC Student and Policy Center in Sacramento, just steps from the Capitol. CPL also has sites at the UC Berkeley and UCLA campuses and works with professors at all 10 UC campuses.

"The California Policy Lab is set to bring world-class research directly to the Capitol, turning data into actionable solutions that improve lives for Californians and their communities," said UC Provost Katherine Newman. "With their new presence in Sacramento, the Policy Lab will ensure that state leaders and policymakers have the best evidence and data at hand as they deliberate over policies and programs designed to solve California's most pressing challenges."

"We were thrilled to receive support from the University of California to open this office, which significantly strengthens our ability to share our research with a much wider audience, including policymakers from across the state," says Jesse Rothstein, Professor of Public Policy and Economics at UC Berkeley and the Faculty Director of the California Policy Lab's UC Berkeley site.

"Through the California Policy Lab, UC researchers partner with local and state agencies to help answer some of the most pressing policy questions they're facing," explains Till von Wachter, a UCLA Economics Professor and the Faculty Director of the California Policy Lab's UCLA site. "This new office will help us to share our research findings more directly with state policymakers, whether it's measuring the impact wildfires have on workers in Los Angeles, or evaluating the effectiveness of the state's job training programs."

August 26th Kick-Off Event

During the event, CPL spotlighted research on one of the most urgent challenges facing Californians today: affordability. From housing to health care to rising everyday costs, California is becoming increasingly unaffordable — and policymakers need timely, credible data and research to respond effectively.



CA State Senator Jesse Arreguin speaks at the opening of the California Policy Lab office opening in Sacramento

Event speakers included:

- Senator Jesse Arreguin
- Kim Johnson, Secretary of the California Health & Human Services Agency
- Prof. Katherine Newman, Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of California
- Nancy Farias, Director, California Employment Development Department
- Catharine Baker, Director, UC Student and Policy Center
- Dr. Walter Schwarm, Chief Demographer, California Department of Finance
- Prof. Jesse Rothstein, CPL Faculty Director
- Prof. Till von Wachter, CPL Faculty Director
- Evan White, CPL Executive Director

Democracy Policy Lab

The Democracy Policy Lab at UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy conducts cutting-edge research on the institutions, policies, and social dynamics that shape American democracy. Professor Jake Grumbach's recent work highlights how democratic representation and accountability are constrained by institutional design and political inequality. His studies explore the political consequences of affirmative action mandates, the democratic implications of campaign finance in sustaining gerontocracy, and the ways local governments historically insulated themselves from Black electoral power during the Great Migration. These projects, together with his ongoing leadership in measuring democratic performance across the states, show how the structure of American governance both enables and limits democratic inclusion.

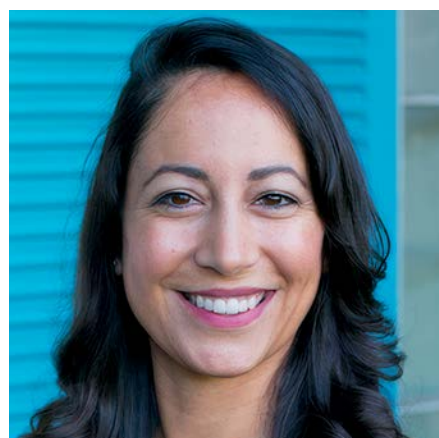
Emerging scholars in the lab extend this focus on democratic access and behavior. Rachel Funk Fordham's research demonstrates how reforms such as automatic voter registration can

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Meet the GSPP Development Team



Sorangi De Leon



Rosa Terrazas

THIS PAST SUMMER, the Goldman School welcomed Sorangi De Leon as its new Chief Development Officer. With over fourteen years of experience advancing development efforts at top public universities through strategic, data-driven fundraising practices, Sorangi will support the School’s mission and drive philanthropic growth during a pivotal time for public policy and democracy.

“As someone deeply committed to the power of public institutions to drive meaningful change, I’m excited to join the nation’s top public policy school and look forward to engaging the Goldman School’s vibrant community of alumni and donors who are passionate about its impact and commitment to creating a more equitable, informed, and thriving democracy,” she says.

Sorangi most recently served as Director of Major Gifts at Berkeley Haas School of Business, where she led development activities for the East Coast region, managed a portfolio of major and principal gift donors, and partnered closely with university leadership, including the dean and chancellor.

“As a first-generation college student and a scholarship recipient, I know firsthand the difference philanthropy can make in the lives of future leaders,” she says. “I’m inspired by this opportunity to work alongside those committed to building a better future for everyone.”

Working closely with Sorangi is Rosa Terrazas, Associate Director of Development. Rosa brings over two decades of experience in fundraising, communications, and marketing across the nonprofit, education, and tech sectors. As Senior Director of External Affairs at Coro Northern California, Rosa led the development team and secured individual and institutional donations. She cultivated strategic alumni and community partnerships, playing a key role in Coro’s rebranding and marketing initiatives.

“Nearly every day, I get to connect with Goldman alumni and friends who care deeply about the next generation of public leaders and critical topics like education, equity, democracy, and climate policy,” says Rosa. “In these challenging times, I’m energized and made more hopeful by my interactions with the incredible GSPP community.”

Rosa and Sorangi will be joined by a third member of the team sometime this fall.

“Like the Goldman School, the GSPP Development Team is small-but-mighty,” says Sorangi. “With Dean Wilson’s visionary leadership, and backed by the dedicated and passionate community of GSPP alumni, donors, students, faculty, and staff, I know GSPP’s best days are definitely ahead.” **G**

policy notes

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CA State Senator Scott Wiener speaks at the Possibility Lab’s “Beyond Scarcity: The Summit to Advance an Abundant California”



A deliberative policy workshop in action



Possibility Lab Director and GSPP Professor Amy Lerman speaks at the “Beyond Scarcity” summit

reduce participation gaps, how partisan segregation shapes Americans’ lived experiences of democracy, and how financial precarity through student loan debt dampens turnout. Postdoctoral fellow Ernesto Tiburcio studies how migration and polarization affect democratic resilience, from U.S. responses to unauthorized Mexican migration to interventions designed to reduce affective polarization in Mexico and other low- and middle-income countries. Predoctoral fellow Michael Garcia examines the democratic and social equity implications of public policy, analyzing how universal free school meals foster equal opportunity and how climate stress in prisons shapes institutional accountability. Together, this body of work underscores the Democracy Policy Lab’s mission: to understand the barriers to political equality and to identify policies that can help build a more inclusive and representative democracy.

The Possibility Lab

Beyond Scarcity: The Summit to Advance an Abundant California

A big thank you to everyone who attended the Possibility Lab’s “Beyond Scarcity: The Summit to Advance an Abundant California.” We appreciated the valuable insight from our keynote speakers Senator Scott Wiener, California Forward CEO Kate Gordon, and former Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. We also thank our Abundance Policy Research Consortium for their thoughtful presentations that sparked important conversations about what an abundance agenda might look like in California.

Regional Catalyst Convenings with the Strategic Growth Council and the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

Deliberative democracy in action! We were proud to partner with the California Strategic Growth Council and the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) for their first two #CatalystConvenings in the San Diego, Los Angeles and Bay Area regions. These convenings brought together representatives from local and regional governments, tribal entities, community-based organizations, foundations, and institutions of higher education to understand the bio-regions and explore specific regional issues, facilitate two-way conversations on climate, land use, and the environment, and enable regions to inform and co-create actionable recommendations.

Our Lab was proud to conduct in-person deliberative workshops at each convening that invited meaningful discussion, sourced policy ideas, and used digital democracy tools to identify consensus ideas based on participation from those in attendance. We look forward to continuing to work with SGC and LCI on the next Catalyst Convenings in the months ahead. **G**

policy notes

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