

The Public Policy Analysis Challenge

The Public Policy Analysis Challenge at Lake Forest College welcomes all students into the public policy arena by challenging them to develop an effective, practicable and convincing policy recommendation on an important issue.

Public policy concerns the laws, regulations, and policies set by governments at all levels, and it affects all aspects of society. Bringing about constructive change in the world and governing well requires an ability to analyze issues and policy options rigorously and objectively. At Lake Forest College, analysis is therefore at the core of our public policy programming. We do not approach public policy from a partisan point of view. We recognize that human affairs are extremely complex, that there are no easy answers, and that information, circumstances and priorities are always subject to change. The foundation of our approach is objective, evidence-based, pragmatic analysis of all identifiable costs, benefits and risks. We seek an in-depth understanding of both the issues, including their interrelationships, and our policy options, including their tradeoffs.

The Public Policy Analysis Challenge welcomes entries from current Lake Forest College students working in teams of two to four, with each team mentored by a faculty member. Teams compete for significant cash prizes by researching and analyzing that year's topic, by evaluating policy options for the particular problem or opportunity the team has chosen to address, and by making a specific policy recommendation. Entry requirements include a white paper and a formal presentation by the team to a panel of judges.

The topic for the 2022-2023 academic year is

Challenge topic. Students who want to compete but are not taking PPCY 100 and who are without a teammate taking the class should email Prof. Lemke (lemke@lakeforest.edu)

Entries

An entry for each team comes in three parts – white paper, executive summary, and presentation. Below is a brief description of each.

White Paper Guidelines

A white paper includes a formal statement of either a problem and its root causes, or of an opportunity and its potential benefits, an analysis of the tradeoffs involved with different options available to address the issue (which will usually include the option of doing nothing), and a formal recommendation. In particular:

1. The white paper should typically be 10-15 pages in length, including all tables, graphs, and references but not including the title page or executive summary. White papers cannot be fewer than 8 pages nor more than 25 pages.
2. The white paper includes an unnumbered title page that identifies your issue, all team members, and the team's faculty mentor.
3. The white paper includes a 1- to 2-page executive summary of the team's recommendation and the analytical basis for it.
4. Although the white paper's structure is left to each team's discretion, white papers typically have the following content, in whatever order is most logical.
 - a. Explain clearly the problem/opportunity being addressed, and how it falls within the scope of Privacy and the Internet.
 - b. Describe the nature and dimensions of the problem/opportunity. It is not necessary to identify a problem or opportunity with global or even national reach. Local problems deserve good policy too. Data, tables, and graphs are likely key tools to convey importance and urgency.
 - c. Using research and analysis, identify the root causes of the problem or the opportunity's untapped potential. The aim is to convince the reader that the root causes or potential have been identified and connected to the expected effects of the proposed policy.
 - d. Identify all the plausible options for addressing the problem/opportunity, including the implications of maintaining the status quo. For each, be clear about what the option calls for, provide an analysis of the likely outcomes with emphasis on the tradeoffs involved, and clearly describe any key assumptions and risks, including a sensitivity analysis for each of them.
 - e. Provide a comparison of the tradeoffs across the identified range of options.
 - f. Clearly state and defend a specific policy recommendation, and demonstrate that it is a practicable option.
 - i. Explain clearly how the recommendation will achieve the desired result at an acceptable social cost.
 - ii. Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) against which success will be measured.
 - iii. Make clear how the effects of the recommended policy and any key assumptions, key risks and key success factors should be monitored over time.

