



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

# Robert Wood Johnson Foundation **Scholars in Health Policy Research**



**2009–2010 Call for Applications**

**Application Deadline**

October 21, 2009

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## Program Overview

(Please refer to specific sections for complete detail.)

### Purpose

The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program helps to develop a new generation of creative health policy thinkers and researchers within the disciplines of economics, political science and sociology. Each year the program selects up to nine highly qualified individuals for two-year fellowships at one of three nationally prominent universities with the expectation that they will make important research contributions to future health policy in the United States.

### Eligibility Criteria (page 13)

We invite recent graduates of doctoral programs in economics, political science and sociology, including junior faculty, to apply. We will give preference to applicants who have not previously worked extensively in health or health policy research.

- Applicants must have received a doctoral degree after January 1, 2005, but no later than July 2010. For those expecting to receive degrees in 2010, all degree requirements must be completed by July 15, 2010.
- All applicants must be citizens of the United States or its territories or have permanent residency status at the time of application.
- We embrace racial, ethnic and gender diversity, and encourage applications from candidates who come from groups that historically have been underrepresented in the three disciplines.

### Selection Criteria (page 14)

Proposals will be evaluated using the selection criteria on page 14.

### Total Awards

- Up to nine fellowships will be awarded in this grant cycle.
- Scholars will receive stipends from their university of \$89,000 each year.

### Key Dates and Deadlines

- **October 21, 2009**—Deadline for receipt of applications.
- **January 6–30, 2010**—Finalist interviews.
- **Late February 2010**—Notification of acceptance.
- **August 2010**—Fellowships begin.

### How to Apply (page 15)

*This program only accepts applications submitted online.*

The online application may be accessed on the program Web site. For assistance, please contact the national program office by phone at (617) 353-9220 or by e-mail at [rwjf@bu.edu](mailto:rwjf@bu.edu).

[www.healthpolicyscholars.org](http://www.healthpolicyscholars.org)

## Background

Public interest in health policy has intensified dramatically in recent years, as concerns about the nation's health and the health care system have grown, and as calls for system reform have multiplied. Compared with other industrialized nations, the United States continues to perform poorly on numerous indicators of health status. In addition, health care expenditures continue to rise, and increasing numbers of Americans are either uninsured or underinsured and lack adequate access to care. Further, health care delivery systems are subject to increasing competitive pressures in the marketplace and are struggling with the need to improve patient safety and quality of care. Efforts to reform health care financing and delivery at national and state levels are being intensely debated and face serious challenges in terms of policy formulation and implementation. Moreover, problems with deep economic, political and social roots—such as childhood obesity, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, depression, racial and ethnic disparities in care, some infectious diseases and conditions associated with unhealthy lifestyles—continue to burden the health care system and public health agencies with challenges that lie beyond their traditional missions.

Today, as our nation struggles with the question of how to reform our health care system in ways that promote the health of our people, improve access to health care and increase the quality, equity and efficiency of care delivery, the field of health policy research offers exciting challenges and opportunities. Clearly, any sector of the economy that is expanding to consume almost one-fifth of the gross domestic

### About the Cover

Megan Andrew (Sociology, University of Michigan), Trevon Logan (Economics, University of Michigan) and Hahrie Han (Political Science, Harvard University) at the 2009 annual meeting of the *RWJF Scholars in Health Policy Research* program.

*Photo: Mary Sue Bonetti*

product deserves the attention of the most gifted scholars. As the health sector has grown in size and complexity over the past three decades, so too has the need for research and analysis to guide development of health policy at the national, state and local levels.

The social science disciplines of economics, political science and sociology have made important contributions to health policy research, providing useful and insightful frameworks for understanding and analyzing the health sector and its problems.

In the current environment—marked by an aging population, the increased prevalence of chronic illness and of conditions associated with culture and lifestyle, an overburdened public health system and a health care system badly in need of reform—the U.S. urgently needs social scientists who will apply their disciplinary perspectives to the study of complex policy questions.

*Economists* may inform the policy discussion by:

- assessing the effects of continued health spending growth on federal and state budgets, as well as alternative policy options for controlling such growth;
- analyzing the implications and effects of different tax policies on the health and well-being of populations and of individuals;
- analyzing the effects of organizational changes on the cost and quality of care and on the willingness of competing organizations to serve diverse population groups;
- studying the economic burden of disease on different populations caused by disparities in access to care; and
- evaluating the impact of health care workforce policy changes on patients' health outcomes and on the entry of new professionals to the workforce.

*Political scientists* may furnish fresh insights into such areas as:

- the politics of health reform, including the ways in which legislative battles over reform proposals are strategically framed and fought;
- the role of public opinion in shaping policy formulation;
- the balance of power among major players that may shift as a result of changing policies;
- the influence that interest groups and the media exert over health policy decisions; and
- the political and social forces that empower and mobilize communities to address health problems.

*Sociologists* may contribute to the policy analysis and debate by:

- analyzing the social and cultural factors that impede the ability of diverse population subgroups to enroll in public programs and to obtain needed health care;
- increasing our understanding of the effects of changes in the structure and organization of the health care delivery system;
- assessing the impact of the changing roles and functions of health care providers;
- providing a framework for understanding how social movements affect the nation's health; and
- expanding our knowledge of the socioeconomic and cultural determinants of health.

The interplay among all three disciplines, when brought to bear on any single issue, results in a rich, multidisciplinary perspective that enhances problem definition and resolution. To ensure that health policy research continues to benefit from these disciplinary perspectives—and from the interaction among them—the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) established the *Scholars in Health Policy Research*

program in 1992. It is part of RWJF's rich history of programs in its Human Capital Portfolio that seek to build and maintain a strong and diverse leadership and workforce in health and health care, as well as to help develop specific fields.

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## The Program

The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program helps to develop a new generation of creative health policy thinkers and researchers within the disciplines of economics, political science and sociology. Each year, the program enables up to nine highly-qualified individuals to undertake two-year fellowships at one of three nationally prominent universities: the University of California, Berkeley, in collaboration with the University of California, San Francisco (Berkeley/UCSF)—under the direction of John Ellwood, Ph.D.; the University of Michigan—under the direction of Paula Lantz, Ph.D.; and Harvard University—under the direction of Katherine Swartz, Ph.D. All three sites have nationally recognized social science departments and professional schools whose faculty has significant health policy expertise. Scholars in the program have the opportunity to work closely with faculty from the social sciences—as well as from medicine, public health and public policy—in an environment conducive to disciplinary and multidisciplinary learning and collaborative research.

Those selected as scholars will have access to the full range of university resources, including libraries, computers, databases and research support and will receive stipends from their university of \$89,000 each year.

Scholars will be free from teaching, consulting and administrative responsibilities during their participation in the program. We provide support directly to the participating universities which, in turn, provide stipends to the scholars. Some financial support also is available for scholars' research expenses, including travel.

We invite recent graduates of doctoral programs in economics, political science and sociology, including junior faculty, to apply. At each site, the program brings together talented individuals—each rooted in one of the three disciplines—to learn about health, health policy and the perspectives of the other two disciplines. We expect that scholars will pursue careers within their disciplines, making important research contributions to future health policy in the United States.

Curricular activities at the participating universities are designed to be flexible to meet scholars' educational needs and interests. Specific activities vary by institution, but generally include seminars, workshops, tutorials and independent research projects. At each institution, these offerings are intended to accomplish three objectives:

1. Educate scholars about health, health care, the organization and financing of the health care delivery system and the health policy-making process.
2. Expose scholars to a learning environment in which each comes to appreciate the perspectives and methods of other social science disciplines, in addition to medicine and public health.
3. Offer scholars the opportunity to develop a health policy research agenda and to conduct relevant research and analysis under the guidance of and in collaboration with distinguished faculty mentors.

The program's goal is to produce scholars who:

- have the commitment and capacity to inform and influence U.S. health policy discussions through their research, publications and active involvement as scholars in the policy-making process;
- bring a fresh perspective to important and perplexing questions facing health policy-makers today;
- understand and appreciate social science disciplines other than their own;

- continue to undertake research in their respective disciplines; and
- infuse their home disciplines with policy research questions related to health and health care.

Current and former scholars have pursued diverse and flexible career paths both during and after completing the program. Some examples:

**Elizabeth Armstrong**, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, has conducted research on the relationship between self-efficacy and health outcomes and the social construction of risk in pregnancy. This work, which she began while in the Michigan program, has resulted in a book, *Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Diagnosis of Moral Disorder* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). In 2004 she received a *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Investigator Award in Health Policy Research* for work on “Fetal Personhood: the Raw Edge of Obstetrical Practice and Ethics.”

**Michael Greenstone** currently serves as chief economist for the President’s Council of Economic Advisers. He is on leave from MIT, where he is 3M Professor of Environmental Economics. His research while in the Berkeley/UCSF program included a project on the association between particulates in air pollution and infant mortality rates. An article, co-authored with Ken Chay of UC Berkeley, reported on this research and received the International Health Economics Association’s 2004 Kenneth J. Arrow Award for the year’s best paper in health economics.

**Cathy Cohen**, David and Mary Winton Green Professor of Political Science and Deputy Provost for Graduate Education at the University of Chicago, was a scholar in the former program at Yale University, where she continued research begun in graduate school on the political response to AIDS in African-

American communities. In 2005 she received a *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Investigator Award in Health Policy Research* for a project, “Race, Politics, and Adolescent Health: Understanding the Health Attitudes and Behaviors of African-American Youth.” She recently completed serving a term on the program’s national advisory committee.

**Dalton Conley**, Dean of the Social Sciences, and University Professor and chair of the Department of Sociology at New York University, has extended his research interests in race and poverty to the areas of social and biological risks in health. Work for his book, *The Starting Gate: Birth Weight and Life Chances*, with Kate W. Strully and Neil G. Bennett (University of California Press, 2003), was begun while he was a scholar in the Berkeley/UCSF program. In 2005 he received the National Science Foundation’s Alan T. Waterman Award, which recognizes an outstanding young researcher in any field of science or engineering. His most recent book is *Elsewhere, U.S.A.: How We Got From the Company Man, Family Dinners and the Affluent Society to the Home Office, BlackBerry Moms and Economic Anxiety* (2009).

**Rucker Johnson**, an assistant professor in the Richard and Rhoda Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, is continuing research begun while in the Michigan program on health dynamics and the evolution of health inequalities over the life course with particular focus on the importance of neighborhood and family background. This work grew out of his award-winning dissertation in labor economics.

**Daniel Carpenter**, Allie S. Freed Professor of Government and director of the Center for American Political Studies at Harvard University, is continuing research begun while he was in the Michigan program in complex administrative organizations that operate in the health policy domain. He is conducting historical, formal

and statistical studies of FDA drug approval, pharmaceutical markets and public attention to disease. Carpenter received a *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Investigator Award in Health Policy Research* in 2004 for a project on “Reputation and Regulation: A Study of Pharmaceutical Policy at the FDA.”

**John Cawley**, an associate professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University, is continuing research initiated at the Michigan program on the economics of obesity, including the effect of body weight on labor market outcomes and on adolescent behavior. He received the 2005 John D. Thompson Prize for Young Investigators from the Association of University Programs in Health Administration for his contributions to the research literature in the field of health economics and the economics of obesity. Cawley also has served on national academic commissions related to the prevention of obesity, convened by the Institute of Medicine, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Jonathan Oberlander**, an associate professor of social medicine in the School of Medicine and an associate professor of health policy and administration in the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, teaches health policy in the School of Medicine and the Department of Political Science. He continues research on Medicare politics, which he began in graduate school and expanded while in the Berkeley/UCSF program. Oberlander is the author of *The Political Life of Medicare* (University of Chicago Press, 2003) and was a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation during the 2008–2009 academic year. Recently, he authored a series of commentaries on the politics of health reform in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

**Helen Levy**, an assistant research scientist in the Department of Health Management and Policy, School of Public Health, and a research assistant professor at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, has expanded her research begun while in the Berkeley/UCSF program to include the financial consequences of poor health for households without health insurance and the determinants of men's and women's occupation choices. More recently, she has examined the impact of health insurance on health and the policy implications of employer health insurance mandates.

**David Pellow**, professor and Don A. Martindale Endowed Chair of Sociology at the University of Minnesota, has broadened his research on work, race and health, initiated while in the Berkeley/UCSF program, to include issues of environmental justice and social and health inequalities. Pellow has received several awards for his research publications.

Recent publications by these and other program alumni include:

**Barabas, Jason** (Cohort 11–Harvard). “Not the Next IRA: How Health Savings Accounts Shape Public Opinion.” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 34(2): 181–217, 2009.

**Carpenter, Daniel** (Cohort 5–Michigan), **Moffitt, Susan** (Cohort 13–Harvard), **Moore, Colin** (Cohort 16–Berkeley/UCSF), Rynbrandt, Ryan, Ting, Michael, Yohai, Ian and Zucker, Evan. “Early Entrant Protection in Approval Regulation: Theory and Evidence from FDA Drug Review.” *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 26(2), Advance Access published: April 22, 2009.

**Cawley, John** (Cohort 6–Michigan) and Liu, Feng. “Correlates of State Legislative Action to Prevent Childhood Obesity.” *Obesity*, 6(1): 162–167, 2008.

**Encinosa, William** (Cohort 2–Michigan) and Hellinger, Fred. “The Impact of Medical Errors on Ninety-Day Costs and Outcomes: An Examination of Surgical Patients.” *Health Services Research*, 43(6): 2067–2085, 2008.

**Herd, Pamela** (Cohort 9–Michigan), Schoeni, Robert and House, James. “Upstream Solutions: Does the Supplemental Security Income Program Reduce Disability in the Elderly?” *Milbank Quarterly*, 86(1): 5–45, 2008.

**Kronebusch, Karl** (Cohort 3–Yale). “Assessing Changes in High-Volume Hospital Use: Hospitals, Payers, and Aggregate Volume Trends.” *Medical Care Research and Review*, 66(2): 197–218, 2009.

**Levy, Helen** (Cohort 5–Berkeley/UCSF) and DeLeire, Thomas. “What Do People Buy When They Don’t Buy Health Insurance and What Does That Say About Why They Are Uninsured?” *Inquiry*, 45(4): 365–379, Winter 2008–2009.

**Oberlander, Jonathan** (Cohort 2–Berkeley/UCSF). “Great Expectations—The Obama Administration and Health Care Reform.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 360(4): 321–323, 2009.

**Saguy, Abigail** (Cohort 7–Yale) and **Almeling, Rene** (Cohort 15–Berkeley/UCSF). “Fat in the Fire? Science, the News Media, and the ‘Obesity Epidemic.’” *Sociological Forum*, 23(1): 53–83, 2008.

**Whitford, Andrew** (Cohort 6–Michigan). “The Policy Implications of Economic Reasoning: What We Do Not Know About Moral Hazard in Health Policy.” *Evidence & Policy*, 4(1): 69–73, 2008.

## Eligibility Criteria

The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program embraces diverse racial, ethnic and gender perspectives and encourages applications from candidates who come from groups that historically have been underrepresented in the three disciplines of interest.

- Applicants must have received a doctoral degree in economics, political science or sociology during the time period noted below. We will give preference to applicants who have not previously worked extensively in the areas of health or health policy research.
- Applicants must have received a doctoral degree after January 1, 2005, but not later than July 2010. For those expecting to receive degrees in 2010, all degree requirements must be completed by July 15, 2010.
- All applicants must be citizens of the United States or its territories or have permanent residency status at the time of application to the program.

## Selection Criteria

The following criteria will be considered in the course of the application review process:

- The applicant's potential to contribute creatively as a social scientist to future U.S. health policy thinking—either by identifying emerging health policy issues and problems or by bringing new insight to the examination and analysis of existing issues and problems.
- The applicant's commitment to a career consistent with the program's purpose and goals.
- The quality of the applicant's past research, including dissertation research.
- The capability of the applicant to undertake this challenging program.
- Recommendations by faculty and other individuals with whom the applicant has studied or worked.

The national program office (NPO) screens all applications and forwards them to members of the national advisory committee, the program site directors and RWJF staff for extensive review.

We select approximately 20 finalists for interviews with faculty at one or more of the participating universities. From these interviewed finalists, we will select up to nine scholars to receive fellowships.

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## **Use of Foundation Funds**

We have made grants to the three participating universities in accordance with RWJF's regular funding guidelines. Under the program, the universities provide scholars with their stipends, health insurance, expenses associated with the move to their fellowship site and funds for a computer. Some financial support also is available at each university for expenses associated with scholars' research, including travel.

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## **How to Apply**

We have developed application forms and materials to make the application process as simple and straightforward as possible. Individuals who meet the eligibility requirements may access the online application system on the program Web site. Individuals may contact the NPO at the address listed under Program Direction to discuss any questions about the program, selection criteria or application requirements. We encourage candidates to begin the application process as early as possible.

For assistance, please contact the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program by phone at (617) 353-9220 or by e-mail at [rwjff@bu.edu](mailto:rwjff@bu.edu).

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of applications submitted.

## Program Direction

The Boston University Health Policy Institute, which serves as the NPO, provides direction and technical assistance for the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research

Boston University Health Policy Institute

53 Bay State Road

Boston, MA 02215-2197

Phone: (617) 353-9220

Fax: (617) 353-9227

E-mail: [rwjf@bu.edu](mailto:rwjf@bu.edu)

Web site: [www.healthpolicyscholars.org](http://www.healthpolicyscholars.org)

Responsible staff members at the national program office are:

- Alan B. Cohen, Sc.D., *program director*
- Catherine M. Player, M.A., *deputy director*
- Melissa Manolis, B.A., *program manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Lori A. Melichar, Ph.D., *senior program officer*
- David C. Colby, Ph.D., *vice president, Research and Evaluation*
- John R. Lumpkin, M.D., M.P.H., *senior vice president and director, Health Care Group*
- Linda Wright Moore, M.S., *senior communications officer*
- Christine Phares, *grants administrator*

For more information on the program, please visit [www.healthpolicyscholars.org](http://www.healthpolicyscholars.org).

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## National Advisory Committee

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University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, Pa.

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Science and Africana Studies  
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Notre Dame, Ind.

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Howard Harrison and Gabrielle Snyder Beck Professor  
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Princeton University  
Princeton, N.J.

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University of California, Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, Calif.

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Professor of Economics and Population  
Health Sciences  
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Madison, Wis.

RASHI FEIN, Ph.D., Chair Emeritus  
Professor of the Economics of Medicine,  
Emeritus  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, Mass.

## Timetable

We will make a new solicitation for applicants for the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program each year during the program's life. The schedule for 2009–2010 is:

- **October 21, 2009**

Deadline for receipt of applications.

- **January 6–30, 2010**

Finalist interviews.

- **Late February 2010**

Notification of acceptance.

- **August 2010**

Entry of scholars into the program at participating universities.

## About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change.

For more than 35 years we've brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime.

For more information visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

Sign up to receive e-mail alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at [www.rwjf.org/services](http://www.rwjf.org/services).



Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation

Route 1 and College Road East  
P.O. Box 2316  
Princeton, NJ 08543-2316

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