



MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION

2017 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

FELLOW PROJECTS & REFLECTIONS



OVERVIEW

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The annual HPC Summer Fellowship Program has the dual purpose of helping to achieve the Commonwealth's goal of health care cost containment while simultaneously providing hands-on educational opportunities to the next generation of health policy leaders. Each year, the Fellowship Program affords students the opportunity to engage in a ten-week, stand-alone policy or research project with one of the HPC's six departments (see page 2). Treated as regular employees, Fellows manage their own time to ensure they meet outlined project benchmarks and deliverable deadlines, and to design and give key presentations.

PEOPLE

Applicants are required to be enrolled in a full-time bachelor's, master's, PhD, law, or medical program. Undergraduate applicants are required to have completed at least three years of their bachelor's degree. For the 2017 Fellowship Program, the HPC received over 200 applications from over 65 different universities across the world. After reviewing applications, HPC staff conduct interviews with dozens of top applicants. Interviews require applicants to describe their skills as well as propose a project of interest to them based on outlined workstreams.

STIPEND

In 2017, Fellows were paid \$15 per hour for up to ten weeks (375 hours). To enhance their time with the HPC, Fellows were included in various activities and meetings and given access to some of the Commonwealth's most cutting edge and forward-thinking policy making processes.

PROGRAMMING

On a day-to-day basis, Fellows worked in conjunction with their teams to see a project from creation to completion, while also exploring the intersection of HPC goals and their own academic interests. In addition to their main projects, Fellows were also offered a host of programming and networking opportunities to allow them to better understand the varied facets of the HPC's work. Examples included:

- Joining policy meetings with HPC staff and key stakeholders
- Completing "speed networking" and career advice events with HPC staff
- Attending HPC public Board and Committee meetings
- Participating in small, interactive meetings on health policy with the HPC's Board Chair, Executive Director, and Commissioners
- Engaging in meetings with the HPC's Leadership Team

HPC TEAMS

ACCOUNTABLE CARE

The Accountable Care (AC) Team is responsible for fulfilling the HPC's statutory charge (1) to develop and implement state certification programs for Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) and Accountable Care Organizations (ACO), (2) to promote the integration of behavioral health with primary care, and (3) to enable policy reforms to support these care delivery models. The team works to advance accountable care through other avenues, such as enhancing data transparency, convening key stakeholders to better align models, and identifying key barriers and accelerators of reform.

RESEARCH AND COST TRENDS

The Research and Cost Trends (RCT) Team is responsible for developing an annual cost trends report to measure progress in key areas and examine performance against the health care cost growth benchmark, established to curb health care spending in the Commonwealth. This team is also responsible for building the HPC's evidence-base and supporting policy development and recommendations through the use of innovative data sources.

MARKET PERFORMANCE

The Market Performance (MP) Team performs a variety of market oversight functions including the comprehensive and evidence-based reviews of the impact of significant provider transactions on health care costs, quality, and access through the Notice of Material Change and Cost & Market Impact Review processes. The team also manages and analyzes the first-of-its-kind Registry of Provider Organizations (RPO) Program.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

The Strategic Investment (SI) Team is responsible for administering the HPC's Community Hospital Acceleration, Revitalization, and Transformation (CHART) and Health Care Innovation Investment (HCII) programs, two competitive grant programs that combine investment and consulting services in order to improve performance of the health care system.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) is responsible for building and maintaining compliance infrastructure and developing the agency's regulatory program. The OGC's legal counsel advises on a wide range of strategic, policy, and operational issues.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

The Office of the Chief of Staff (OCS) manages the agency's day-to-day operations, strategic planning, and external affairs, including all media, public, legislative, inter-governmental, and stakeholder relations. Administration oversight of the HPC includes office operations, personnel and human resources, fiscal management, special projects, public events, and the Summer Fellowship Program.

HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION
SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

REFLECTIONS





Yvonne Chow
Tufts University
School of Medicine

YVONNE CHOW

As an Australian doctor, it has truly been an exciting time to be working in health policy in the United States. While no health care system in the world is perfect, policymakers have been forthright with the challenges in the U.S. system. In response, there is an inimitable determination to innovate and improve health care delivery. I have witnessed this resolve firsthand at the HPC, where exciting and dynamic work is carried out.

I spent my time working within the **Accountable Care** Team, specifically working on the background research and assisting with the Quality Measurement Alignment Taskforce led by the Undersecretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. This work is grounded in two underlying goals: to reduce undue measurement burden by aligning measures and data collection methods, and to ensure providers are fairly held accountable by valid, clinically appropriate quality measures.

This project has allowed me to approach health policy with my provider perspective and has given me the opportunity to pursue a combination of my health policy and clinical interests. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Accountable Care Team and the HPC as I have learned immensely from their diverse career backgrounds and dedication. The Fellowship Program has been invaluable for my professional development and I highly recommend it to policy students of all backgrounds!

LAUREN COAKLEY



Lauren Coakley
UMASS Amherst for
Public Policy

This summer at the Health Policy Commission was an amazing experience that allowed me to fuse my passions for public service and policy with my interest in the health care field. As a master of public policy student, much of my coursework has revolved around general aspects of the policy process in broad issue areas. My fellowship at the HPC, however, allowed me to independently engage with multiple areas of health care policy at the state level.

As a fellow on the **Research and Cost Trends** Team, I worked on a project preparing for a legislatively mandated study on the topic of “white and brown bagging” of oncology drugs. Through this project, I conducted an extensive literature review on how oncology drugs are priced, the distribution and supply channels for these drugs, and the potential benefits and costs of implementing mandated “white and brown bagging” practices. My work will be used to conduct and finalize the “white and brown bagging” study due in July of 2018. I was also fortunate to work on a collaborative project between the Research and Cost Trends and Market Performance Teams on provider price variation across Massachusetts for injectable chemotherapy drugs. This project allowed me to cultivate my quantitative skills through analysis and data visualization platforms, which I did not have exposure to before this summer. My projects taught me about drug pricing as well as the complexities of the oncology drug market and the growing policy implications of these systems.

The past ten weeks were truly exciting, challenging, and different every day thanks to the fantastic team at the HPC who organized numerous events for us with the Commissioners, senior staff, and other stakeholders in the Commonwealth. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and I will certainly take the amazing skills and knowledge I have learned at the HPC with me in my future health policy career. Thank you so much to Team RCT for helping me to grow and take on different challenges. Fellows, I could not have imagined a better summer with all of you. Thanks for making this a great experience!



Daniel Feldman
Boston University
School of Public Health

DANIEL FELDMAN

The Summer Fellowship at the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC) was an outstanding and unique introduction to the positive impact that can be had in state government. As a fellow on the **Strategic Investment** Team I performed a qualitative analysis to identify the successes and challenges experienced by CHART Investment Program awardees, all of whom are working toward value based care delivery while ensuring continuity for their patients even outside the walls of the hospital. It was very interesting to learn what methods did and did not work in care delivery transformation and population health management initiatives across Massachusetts. To that end, the HPC encouraged me to explore the hospitals in-depth by attending conferences, CHART hospital technical assistance sessions, and regional convenings. These opportunities provided me with a depth of knowledge and understanding that the classroom never could. It is one thing to learn about the positive impact of value based care; it is another to implement it in the most complex of patient populations, as is the case with the CHART Investment Program.

In addition to my project, the HPC also organized meetings with Commissioners and senior staff to learn about what they do and how they got to where they are. It was invaluable being able to engage with the thought leaders that steer healthcare discussions nationally, and get insight into some of the challenges faced in enacting healthcare reform over the years. I would like to thank all of the HPC staff for fostering such an amazing environment to work in over the summer. I especially want to thank my supervisors for providing fantastic mentorship and guidance throughout the Fellowship. I could not think of a better place to have spent my summer!

STEPHEN GAMBOA

My time as a summer fellow has been both informative and rewarding. While working on the **Research and Cost Trends** Team, I had the opportunity to learn from the knowledgeable staff, hone my technical skills, and collaborate on meaningful and thorough health policy research. As someone neither from nor studying in Massachusetts, it has been an enlightening experience to learn about a new and unique state health system. Additionally, it has been exciting to work in a state agency that has the ability to transform research into practical policy recommendations in an effort to increase quality and decrease costs associated with health care in the Commonwealth.

I worked on the low-value care (LVC) project this summer using the All-Payer Claims Database (APCD), which is comprised of health insurance claims data for the three largest commercial payers in Massachusetts. This project started in 2016 in an effort to identify the amount of LVC being offered in the Commonwealth. Building off of the 2016 Cost Trends Report, my project included two main components: (1) measuring the costs that are associated with LVC provided in 2013 and 2014, and (2) analyzing the amount of high-value care provided in the Commonwealth in 2014 and comparing those findings to rates of LVC.

I am certain that my time at the HPC has assisted me in improving my research skills and has provided me with new knowledge that is crucial for my professional growth. I am thankful for the Research and Cost Trends Team, the Fellows, and the rest of the HPC staff for providing a meaningful and memorable summer experience.



Stephen Gamboa
Columbia University
Mailman School of
Public Health



Jackie Goldbach
Yale School of Public
Health

JACKIE GOLDBACH

During my fellowship at the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission I worked as part of the **Accountable Care** Team to develop a survey assessing treatment availability for individuals with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder. I combined recommendations from evidence-based research to help build a survey tool and report outlines tailored to the provider landscape in Massachusetts. It was rewarding to utilize concepts and methodologies from my Master in Public Health coursework to implement a legislative mandate. Working to assess a complex network of providers, the fellowship allowed me to think creatively about questionnaire development, data limitations, and incorporating provider feedback.

Improving patient outcomes through holistic care requires a multifaceted approach. Having previously worked in public health and psychiatric research, I was thrilled to join a team dedicated to behavioral health integration, access, and quality. Fellows were regularly included in strategic planning, internal presentations, and interagency meetings. These interactions provided me with valuable insights into both the diverse challenges as well as the opportunities that arise when building a health care system that is truly accountable to population health outcomes.

The Health Policy Commission encouraged fellows to engage across the organization's multidisciplinary teams, allowing us to see how the HPC's wide array of initiatives work together toward a common goal. Every week seemed to bring a new presentation, discussion, or meeting that deepened my understanding of health policy. I am extremely grateful to have spent my summer working in such a collaborative and mission-driven environment.

FRAN HODGINS

Reflecting on my summer as an HPC fellow, I am struck by how much this experience has expanded my professional horizons. While I had hoped to gain some exposure to state government and policy research, I am coming away with much more. With encouragement from my team, I was able to take ownership of my research project, gain valuable hands-on experience, and connect with people across the healthcare landscape in Massachusetts. Not only that, I am coming away with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the intersection of research, policy and care delivery.

As a fellow on the **Strategic Investment** Team, I worked to develop two qualitative case studies of programs at CHART Phase 2 hospitals. The team provided regular guidance and support, and valued my input as we developed our focus and carried out the research process. One project focused on a program that coordinated outpatient care for pregnant women with opioid use disorder. The other examined the collaboration between two drug courts and community hospital treatment providers. I was able to dive deeply into both subjects and build on my qualitative research skills as we developed research questions, conducted interviews, analyzed qualitative data, and drafted an academic paper.

Being a health policy student, it has been rewarding to see the connection between my academic and professional work, and the direct impact that the HPC has on care delivery in Massachusetts. I particularly valued the opportunity to meet with staff across the HPC and members of the Board who shared a wealth of experience and expertise. I also learned from the other students in my cohort, whether we were sharing about our projects, discussing relevant policy issues, or debating the best place to get a cookie. Thank you to the knowledgeable and collaborative HPC staff for such a great experience!



Fran Hodgins
Brandeis University's
Heller School for Social
Policy and Management



Shahd Husein

Tufts University School
of Medicine

SHAHD HUSEIN

Working with the Health Policy Commission was a truly invaluable experience. Fellows were given the opportunity to be involved with a state agency and to engage in health policy initiatives. As a fellow with the **Office of the Chief of Staff**, I worked on a number of communications projects and also supported the day-to-day operational needs of the team.

Throughout the summer, I assisted with content identification and prioritization for the HPC's website redesign. As the state prepared to migrate Mass.gov onto a new content management system, I mapped all pages on the HPC's website to fit new content types set by the state. Understanding the agency's services and initiatives was important for this project. With the help of the team, I thought critically about organizing pages and content to create a more constituent-facing, service-oriented experience. Additionally, I worked with the Press Secretary on drafting HPC-related event advances and sending out daily news blurbs to staff. On the operational side, I provided logistical support for the agency's public meetings including extensive transcription of minutes for Board and Committee meetings.

The HPC is filled with brilliant, energized people who continuously make an impact in Massachusetts. Learning about the agency's ongoing health policy and research projects was especially rewarding as an MPH candidate. I enjoyed meeting with various Board and staff members who offered insight into their involvement with the agency. I want to thank the Chief of Staff Team, the entire HPC staff, and the awesome Fellows for making this such a wonderful summer!

MEGHA KAMRA

The HPC provides a very unique learning environment for its summer fellows. As a fellow on the **Accountable Care** Team I supported the PCMH PRIME Certification Program by conducting a behavioral health integration literature review and assisting with program operations. My literature review examined the evidence supporting the integration of behavioral health into primary care, with a focus on measuring quality, cost, and utilization outcomes. My findings will assist the team in drafting future program materials and demonstrating the value of PCMH PRIME Certification to stakeholders. In addition to this research project, I assisted with program operations through participation in regular meetings to strategize approaches for marketing the PCMH PRIME Program to primary care practices and drafting PCMH PRIME communications.

I also worked on analyzing the Community Benefits Reports collected by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) from Massachusetts nonprofit hospitals and HMOs. More specifically, I examined key trends among the community benefits programs of hospitals across the state and highlighted implications for the HPC's ACO Certification Program. My research of the AGO report enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the care delivery landscape in Massachusetts and learn about how the Community Benefits Reports align with the HPC's efforts to encourage hospitals to reduce health disparities by focusing on vulnerable and high-need populations.

Additionally, I was able to engage in many unique initiatives across the agency, including sitting in on meetings with HPC Commissioners, attending meetings on quality alignment measurement efforts across the state, networking with staff across departments within the agency, and touring the State House. Overall, I learned a great deal about various health policy initiatives in Massachusetts. On top of gaining more policy-related knowledge, the HPC provided a wonderful environment through its enthusiastic and engaging culture. It has been an honor to be a summer fellow at the HPC and I would strongly encourage anyone interested in gaining more experience in the health policy realm to apply for this terrific opportunity.



Megha Kamra

Boston University
Questrom School of
Business



Maggie McIntee
Yale School of Public
Health

MAGGIE MCINTEE

It was refreshing to spend this summer working at the HPC, a truly independent, nonpartisan organization solely driven by facts. The bright and enthusiastic staff’s ability to come together from diverse professional backgrounds to make an efficient and effective agency is inspiring.

As a fellow on the **Market Performance** Team, I had the opportunity to work on the first-in-the-nation Massachusetts Registration of Provider Organizations (RPO) Program. This program gave me an in-depth understanding of the structure of the Massachusetts provider market. My main project this summer focused on elements for expansion for the 2018 filing. I researched advanced practice providers and developed data elements to add to the current physician roster to better understand the role they play in the provider landscape. I also researched facility fees and created data elements to add to the facilities file to better understand the practice of facility fee billing. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to assist on the performance improvement plans (PIPs). I populated fact sheets and learned about the analysis process of an entity’s performance to determine if it necessitated a PIP.

In addition to the projects the fellows worked on, we were invited to attend Board and Committee meetings to learn about the diverse policy research and projects implemented by the HPC. We met with Commissioners and other staff members to learn about their roles and the paths that led them to their positions. Hearing about their experience, in combination with my own experience here, has helped to illuminate the path I would like for my own career. I greatly enjoyed working with the entire Market Performance Team and I would highly recommend the HPC Fellowship Program.

KENDAHL MELVIN

This summer I had the opportunity to work with both the **Office of the General Counsel** (OGC) and the **Office of the Chief of Staff** (OCS). By working with both teams, I was able to learn about administrative law while experiencing the coordination between OGC and the other teams at the Health Policy Commission (HPC).

As a fellow for the Office of the General Counsel, I had the opportunity to work on data security, compliance, and regulatory issues. I was fortunate to learn about drafting regulations and ensuring statutory compliance. I was able to practice my legal writing and improve my communication abilities. In addition, I worked closely with the Office of Patient Protection (OPP), including reviewing sub regulatory guidance for alignment with current law, examining external review criteria for experimental or investigational treatments, and making recommendations to OPP regarding pertinent Department of Insurance regulations.

While working with the Office of the Chief of Staff, I had the opportunity to learn about administering a state agency. I assisted the Chief of Staff’s team with the pre-filed testimony process for the annual Cost Trends Hearing. I helped edit testimony solicitation documents for payers, providers, and hospitals in preparation for the Hearing. Working with both teams broadened my knowledge of health care in Massachusetts, and inspired me to pursue my interests in health care law. I am grateful to the HPC’s staff for the substantive, challenging work, and for the incredible mentoring I received this summer.



Kendahl Melvin
Boston University
School of Law



Wendy Nicholas

*Boston University
School of Public Health*

WENDY NICHOLAS

Spending this summer working at the HPC was an invaluable experience. I was very eager to learn coming into a state agency, and the HPC did not disappoint.

I spent my time at the HPC with the **Strategic Investment** Team; working on a project related to the Health Care Innovation Investment Program (HCII). My project specifically focused on the Targeted Cost Challenge Investment (TCCI) arm of HCII. After completing a literature review on innovation as it applied to TCCI, I analyzed a number of its components including the design of the program, the letter of intent submissions, and proposal submissions to gain a clearer understanding of the types of organizations the HPC was successfully able to attract to apply to the program. Following these analyses, I conducted stakeholder interviews to gain insight from those who participated in the application process regarding the impact of the program design on the proposals they submitted for consideration. At the end of the project, I was able to make recommendations to the HPC on what the second round of TCCI should look like.

My summer at the HPC has been an experience that I will always look back on fondly. I learned an incredible amount from everyone that I came in contact with. From meetings with the Commissioners to chatting with my co-Fellows, there was never a dull moment. I want to thank Team SI for making me feel like a valued member of the team from day one. I could not have picked a better group of people or agency to spend a summer with.

PHIL TABERNER

This summer I served as a fellow on the **Market Performance** Team at the HPC. With aspirations to work in hospital operations upon the completion of my Healthcare MBA, the Summer Fellowship provided invaluable exposure to a diverse group of passionate health care professionals focused on quality improvement and cost containment. The program organized a number of professional development engagements with HPC Commissioners and senior staff – strengthening my understanding of the HPC's main policy objectives as well as gaining insight into their respective professional backgrounds. Additionally, the opportunity to develop personal relationships with each of the other eleven Fellows pursuing a variety of professional degrees made this ten-week fellowship a truly rewarding and unique experience.

As a fellow on the Market Performance Team, I was tasked with researching both the commercial and public flow of funds between the different entities within the prescription drug distribution process. This required writing several drug pricing narratives, exploring market leaders' SEC files for margin analysis, and drafting drug pricing questions for Massachusetts' three main payers. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to work on a collaborative project with the Research and Cost Trends Team examining provider price variation for oncology drugs within the Commonwealth. The project managers of this assignment provided the perfect balance of autonomy and guidance, leaving me with a sense of ownership and direction over my analysis after each meeting.

Thank you to everyone at the HPC who helped make this Fellowship a fantastic experience!



Phil Taberner

*Vanderbilt University
Owen Graduate School
of Management*

HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION

50 Milk Street, 8th Floor

Boston, MA 02109

www.mass.gov/HPC

