Potential CRF Projects

Please reach out to Stacie Dow at SMD164@pitt.edu if you are interested in any of these projects and are not yet involved.

1. Supporting the Education of Youth in Foster Care During the Pandemic: Foster Parent and Agency Perspectives OR Dog Acquisition in Low-Income Communities: An exploratory study.

Dr. Mary Rauktis: My research spans the human animal divide, looking at how human welfare impacts animal welfare and vice versa. This is a broad research area including how pet food in human food pantries helps seniors to interventions to research in hoarding disorders to intervention studies in how animal assisted therapies. I also do intergenerational research with older adults and young persons, focusing on kinship care. As I said, rather a broad agenda.

If you are interested in bench science, this is not the project area for you. However, if you wish to interact with humans, learn how to systematically search data bases and interview or do groups, enter and analyze quantitative data, then you may be interested in my research agenda.

https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/people/mary-rauktis

2. Supporting Equity in Education for Youth in Pittsburgh

This summer fellowship will support the research and evaluation efforts of the Justice Scholars Institute (JSI). JSI is a partnership between the University of Pittsburgh School of Education and Pittsburgh Public Schools. In collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh’s College in High School (CHS) program, JSI supports college preparation opportunities for students at three local high schools: University Preparatory Academy at Milliones, Perry Traditional Academy, and Westinghouse Academy. We aim to support educational equity through access to dual enrollment and college preparatory experiences for students in underserved communities in Pittsburgh. A primary program component is the opportunity for students to earn college credit through CHS courses. In addition to the courses, we offer a series of college readiness workshops, social justice informed out-of-school time opportunities, and various resources and services to make a successful college transition more achievable.

3. Pittsburgh Data Jam

Dr. Judy Cameron: The 2021-22 academic year will bring new opportunities for developing and testing new strategies for increasing equity and engagement of high
school students in the Pittsburgh DataJam. The DataJam is an annual competition focused on familiarizing high school students with data science. Teams from high schools across the Pittsburgh region develop projects that investigate issues relevant to their local communities by analyzing open-source dataset. Teams are guided in this process by Pitt students who serve as Data Jam mentors, who teach them about how to ask a research question, find a dataset, analyze data, draw conclusions, and how to make a poster and give an effective presentation. Pitt mentors come from a wide variety of departments and backgrounds and mentors have different strengths from data analysis, to data visualization to making effective posters and presentations. We are always looking for students who would like to serve as DataJam mentors to assist DataJam teams with their projects and their presentation of their projects.

In 2020-21 the Pittsburgh DataJam was named a Partnership of Distinction at Pitt and received a Community Engagement Award and these funds allowed Pitt to collaborate with curriculum developers and high school teachers to develop a modular curriculum that allows the DataJam to be incorporated into high school classes. This year we are collaborating with a number of high schools throughout the NorthEast to test out the new curriculum and are looking for Pitt students to get involved to facilitate testing and further development of this curriculum.

4. Building A Civic Knowledge Repository to Facilitate Gamified Civic Learning

Ron Idoko: This fellowship opportunity entails students researching and cataloging core civic knowledge, across academic & professional disciplines, for incorporation into a multimodal civic learning mobile game designed to foster and assess student civic competency. Civic knowledge refers to a body of key concepts and familiarity with the diverse forces (e.g., cultural, historical, economic, religious, sociological) that shape political systems and civic life. This knowledge prepares a person for well-informed and effective participation with others in civic and democratic life to address local, national, or global issues (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009).

The gamified civic learning application is being developed in partnership by the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, the School of Education, and the Honors College.

5. Modeling An Antiracist Institution

Ron Idoko: The Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, in coalition with our University and community partners, is committed to advancing antiracism—the active dismantling of structures, norms, and policies that generate or perpetuate racial group inequity—to foster an equitable and just community for all. This fellowship opportunity entails students researching and cataloging distinct practices, programs, and policies aimed at fostering antiracism across an institution and community.
6. **CAASI Grief to Action: Allegheny County Policing Project**

The California Innocence Project defines police misconduct as “illegal or unethical actions or the violation of individuals’ constitutional rights by police officers in the conduct of their duties”. Despite this being an issue that community activists have been focused on for decades, and made more salient by the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020, there is still a lack of transparency around the process of reporting, investigating, and recording misconduct. The lack of transparency is not just an issue for researchers, but it also makes it difficult for the police to do their job properly. We focus on the prevalence of this issue in Allegheny County, the second-largest county in Pennsylvania and home to the city of Pittsburgh. Allegheny County is highly fragmented with 130 different municipalities and 108 different law enforcement departments. While many counties have one large city that dominates the area, someone traveling through Allegheny County is likely to cross through many different municipalities, and thus areas under the control of multiple different law enforcement agencies. These background issues led to the creation of the Allegheny County Policing Project (ACPP). ACPP is a group—largely consisting of volunteers—working to increase transparency in policing. To this end, we have recently launched an online tool that includes:

1) A map of the 130 police departments in Allegheny County
2) A searchable/downloadable police contract library with over 100 Allegheny County contracts
3) Keyword search suggestions relating to areas identified by Campaign Zero as being problematic for police accountability
4) A Pittsburgh misconduct complaint FAQ that walks citizens from the initial interaction with the police, to the process of filing the complaint, all the way to the possible results of the investigation.

We also presented the tool at the Year of Data and Society talk in November (launch video here).

For the current semester, we are looking for ways to take our tool into the future. Current priorities for ACPP include dissemination of the tool and local outreach, connecting to research, and exploring possibilities for making the tool available for use in other cities and regions.

This online tool is developed by the Center for Analytical Approaches to Social Innovation (CAASI) in partnership School of Computing and Information, School of Law,
Take Action Mon Valley, Alliance for Police Accountability, University Human Rights Working Group, and Campaign Zero.

7. **CAASI: 412Connect**

[http://www.412Connect.org](http://www.412Connect.org) is an online platform that bridges university students with underrepresented communities. 412Connect aims to expose students to assets within a community through virtual scavenger hunts. The site generates customized organization recommendations based on a survey of the student’s interests. The student can earn badges on the platform by participating in activities aimed at raising awareness and visibility for participating businesses. Learn more about the project’s unique collaborative development by watching this [412Connect Year of Data and Society presentation](http://www.412Connect.org)

This semester, we will be working towards the second launch of the 412Connect platform with our curator, the Homewood CEC, and community consultant, Cocoapreneur. This next launch will feature 15-20 organizations that are assets to the Homewood community, and we are looking for a fellow to collaborate with partners and featured organizations, code the platform, track social media statistics, create trivia questions, perform data analysis, create data reports, and more.

This online tool is developed by the Center for Analytical Approaches to Social Innovation (CAASI) in partnership School of Computing and Information, Katz School of Business, Homewood CEC, Cocoapreneur, Data for Black Lives, and more.

8. **The Pittsburgh Study 3Rs: Reading, Racial Equity, and Relationships – Improving literacy outcomes for children in grades K-3**

The Pittsburgh Study (TPS) is a community-driven intervention study to enhance youth thriving in Allegheny County. The Office of Child Development (OCD) is leading the Early School Age Cohort 3Rs Initiative, which has a core tenet that high-quality literacy experiences are inextricably linked to living in an equitable society and having strong relationships between children, adults, and organizations.

Students will be part of the Evaluation and Research Team (ERT), mentored by Dr. Amanda Cross, Dr. Sharon Labao, and Dr. Shannon Wanless. While the 3Rs is currently our largest project, students may have the opportunity to work on projects for other community partners as well as learn about OCD’s broader social justice and equity mission across several direct-service and research teams.
Student research tasks may include:

- Conducting literature reviews on best practices in support of the 3Rs for teachers, school administrators, families, or community leaders.
- Cleaning, organizing, and analyzing quantitative data collected as part of a longitudinal community-engaged research initiative.
- Coding and analyzing qualitative data such as interview and focus-group transcripts.
- Preparing data for use in technical reports, community-based decision making, and program development.
- Collecting data and coordinating in-person events at schools and community events.
- Developing your own research projects related to 3Rs/ERT programs.

Experience in research methods or using statistical software (Excel/SPSS) would be helpful. Students will receive specialized training and should be organized and feel comfortable working independently. In alignment with the mission and goals of the Office of Child Development, this placement also requires a commitment to social justice, cultural humility and to working in genuine partnership with community-based agencies that promote wellness and learning in marginalized populations.

[Link to Program Page](https://www.ocd.pitt.edu/programs-services/pittsburgh-study-early-school-age-cohort)
[Link to ERT Student Opportunities](https://www.ocd.pitt.edu/programs-services/evaluation-and-research/ert-student-opportunities)

For questions, contact Abby Chen, ERT Coordinator, [apc60@pitt.edu](mailto:apc60@pitt.edu).