



## Health Care Policy

Focused on the intersection of health care delivery and policy

### Program highlights:

- Demography
- Economics and health policy
- Health management
- Regulation

### Overview

Health care spending in the United States was \$4.1 trillion in 2020, which was \$12,530 per person, and accounted for nearly 20% of the nation's economy. The U.S. health care system spans the public and private sectors and is regulated by policy decisions that impact individuals, families, and communities. Students drawn to understanding the complexities and potential of the health care industry—its advancements, cost, delivery, equity, and management—will find the Health Care Policy (HCP) major, offered by the Cornell Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy, especially compelling.



Students receive a foundation in demography, economics, econometrics, mathematics, social sciences, statistics, and writing, and have the opportunity to acquire depth in the natural sciences. The major integrates analytical thinking and research skills with quantitative data analysis skills. Students choose a standard track or a science-intensive track. Students on both tracks pursue similar requirements in structural principles, a curriculum concentration, and additional public policy courses. The science-intensive track, which includes preparatory coursework for medical school and other health professional graduate programs, is recommended for students who intend to pursue a career in clinical health care.

HCP provides in-depth study in health policy analysis, systems management, and health care administration. The curriculum examines health care from behavioral, cross-cultural, policy, and social perspectives. Students apply theories to understand and explain the development of government policies addressing health care, social determinants of health, and they learn how the private health care system interacts with the public sector. As professionals and practitioners, leaders and managers, students will be able to navigate the economic, political, and social landscape of the industry and make smart policy decisions to improve people's health using science and data.

### **Sample Courses**

**Economics of Risky Health Behaviors (PAM 4280)** uses an economic approach to study risky health behaviors such as cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse,

drug use, poor diet, physical inactivity, and self-harm. This course has recently been offered as part of our Cornell in Washington program.

**Health Disparities (PAM 3180)** examines how health disparities are defined and measured, sources of health disparities, and strategies to reduce health disparities. Students learn the complex factors that influence patterns of disease and health at multiple levels by analyzing studies of health outcomes, the social conditions that are related to the health of populations, and some of the mechanisms through which these patterns are produced.

**Pharmaceutical Management and Policy (PAM 3110)** provides an overview of the management and policy issues facing the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. This course perspective is global, with an emphasis on the U.S. as the largest and most profitable market.

**The US Health Care System (PAM 2350)** studies the stakeholders of the US health care system and how they interact. The course examines the role of medical care in improving health and the costs and benefits of new medical technologies. Also addressed: the objectives and behavior of key stakeholders: patients, employers, and taxpayers who pay for health care; private and public (i.e., Medicare and Medicaid) health insurers who manage the funds; hospitals, physicians, and other health care professionals who provide medical care; and pharmaceutical and medical device firms that supply products used by providers.



## Research

Undergraduate research opportunities abound for students interested in working closely with faculty members on specific topics.

Faculty research spans health policy and management and includes issues such as the access to, and quality of, health care services (managed care enrollment choice, long-term care, mental health services); economics of the health care system (Medicare, Medicaid, the structure of health care delivery systems, rural health networks); human behavioral aspects of health (risky behaviors and related health outcomes, policies and programs promoting health and disease prevention, reproductive health and human sexuality); and women's health (promoting women's health, alternative medicine, and medical ethics).

## Research examples

- Causes and consequences of health disparities
- Economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Effect of prescription drug monitoring programs on opioid utilization in Medicare
- Effect of hospital queues on medical quality
- Health care demand among ACA exchange enrollees
- Impact of pharmaceutical marketing on physicians' prescribing behavior
- Impact of policies requiring emergency rooms to discharge patients within 4 hours
- Impact of price transparency on patients' decision making
- Long-term health insurance and welfare effects

## Honors Program

Students can pursue a research honors program, which gives official recognition to those who have demonstrated excellence in their academic work and their capacity for independent research. In addition to fulfilling the requirements for the major, students in the honors program will participate in an honors seminar and prepare an empirically based honors thesis. Honors students work with a research mentor in preparing for their thesis. Students apply to the Honors Program during the first semester of their junior year.

## Experiential Opportunities

Beyond the required course work, students may take advantage of other educational opportunities. Most involve working with Cornell faculty members or other professionals.

- The Capital Semester in Albany, NY, New York State's capital, allows students to work as paid interns in the New York State Legislature and examine challenges inherent in state health policy.
- Cornell in Washington, allows students to live, intern and learn in Washington, D.C. while studying health care policy.
- Studying abroad allows students to compare the U.S. health care system with those of other countries. In addition to full semester programs, short abroad field studies are offered including the 10-day Copenhagen trip as part of the Population and Public Policy course, and the three week Cornell in Turin Population Controversies in Europe course.

### **Internship examples**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- New York-Presbyterian Hospital
- Novartis' Ethics, Risk, and Compliance Policy Internship Program
- Planned Parenthood
- Weill Cornell Medicine COVID-19 Education and Empowerment Internship Program

### **Professional Pathways**

The major prepares students to lead in careers in health policy analysis that require a strong foundation in the natural sciences and in careers that combine clinical health care with involvement in the broader health care system and public policy. Early-career paths have included:

- Clinical Administration Analyst, University of California, San Francisco
- Clinical Research Coordinator, Mount Sinai Health System
- Finance and Operations Management Associate, Northwell Health
- Fulbright Researcher in Lusaka Zambia
- Health Care Consultant, Booz Allen Hamilton
- Research Assistant, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission

### **Graduate/Professional school:**

Students who pursue the standard track will be well-prepared for a variety of graduate programs, including MHA and MPH programs.

### **Medical School and other Health programs:**

Students who pursue the science-intensive track will also complete the coursework required for medical school and other health-related professional graduate programs.