

Schroeder Center for Health Policy at William & Mary

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**SCHROEDER CENTER
FOR HEALTH POLICY**

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Medicaid Expansion Project Selected for Fall Tribefunding Campaign

Tribefunding, William & Mary's crowdfunding initiative, helps members of the W&M community "dream up big ideas, fund bold projects and make a difference at W&M and far beyond," in the words of University Advancement. As part of the university's fall 2018 Tribefunding portfolio, a project developed by the Schroeder Center for Health Policy was chosen to be one of only six university-sponsored crowdfunding projects.



The Schroeder Center's project seeks to create a "**Virginia Medicaid Expansion Lab**" that will allow students, faculty, and staff to study the impacts of Virginia's Medicaid expansion. The Commonwealth's Medicaid expansion, which goes into effect in January of 2019, will expand Medicaid coverage to as many as 400,000 new adults aged 19 to 64 in Virginia. Other states that have expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) have seen increases in healthcare utilization, decreases in uncompensated care, and improvement in population health after expanding Medicaid. However, Medicaid expansion could also increase expenses related to covering those recipients who were already eligible for coverage but not actually insured. Further complicating the matter, increased utilization of strained healthcare resources could also crowd out those recipients who were already covered prior to expansion.

Tribefunding donations will be used to buy the necessary data to create the **Virginia Medicaid Expansion Lab**, a virtual laboratory where W&M students can analyze the healthcare data using statistical software and rigorous policy evaluation methods. The project will take advantage of several strengths and resources already in place at the Schroeder Center. These include an existing framework for training students to use these types of data in policy analysis and a track record of using Virginia healthcare data in past projects. With access to similar data, students and faculty at the Schroeder Center have studied numerous public health and health policy topics, including opioid overdoses, vehicular accidents, alcoholic liver disease, the ACA's dependent coverage mandate, and Medicare hospital readmission policies.

"The **Virginia Medicaid Expansion Lab** will provide students with the types of hands-on research experiences they need to prepare for consulting and research jobs in public policy and economics," said Jennifer Mellor, director of the Schroeder Center. "By giving to our Tribefunding campaign, donors can help us carry out research that the policy community needs, and they can give students the chance to put their classroom learning into practice." The Tribefunding campaign runs November 1 through December 7.

Schroeder Center Welcomes Rear Admiral Kenneth Bernard, MD for Biosecurity Lecture



(Photo by Stephen Salpukas, William & Mary)

The Schroeder Center for Health Policy hosted a visit by Rear Admiral [Kenneth Bernard](#), MD, DTM&H, USPHS (Ret.) this fall. Dr. Bernard is a specialist in biosecurity, an area that combines public health and national security issues. Dr. Bernard's long list of accomplishments includes serving in the White House under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush; launching Project Bioshield, a \$5.6 billion program for biological defense; and chairing the Whitehouse Biodefense Policy Coordinating Committee. More than 200 W&M students and faculty embraced the opportunity to connect with Dr. Bernard during his two-day visit.

Dr. Bernard met with students in select public policy, government, and sociology classes during his visit. Speaking with graduate students in the [Master of Public Policy program](#), he discussed the role of national security and public health in the policymaking process and emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships and trust in interagency collaboration. He also spoke to the value of building consensus between interested parties, when seeking support for one's policy priorities.

At a lecture open to the campus community entitled "Politics, National Security, and Global Health," Dr. Bernard spoke about the realities of working in Washington and offered some fascinating examples of his experiences in biosecurity. He touched on themes such as the importance of the incentives faced by various stakeholders and the need to understand others' points of view. Dr. Bernard used examples from his career including the passage of the Project Bioshield Act and the national responses to the 2001 anthrax attacks and the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

Fielding questions from an audience of mostly undergraduate students, Dr. Bernard offered advice to aspiring policymakers and discussed strategies for garnering support for important issues. He advised current students and young professionals to search out the most interesting work with the best people, arguing that these factors, rather than pay or future career prospects, truly influence success and job satisfaction. Dr. Bernard again emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships and trust in generating support for initiatives. Inquiring about the goals and incorporating the values of multiple stakeholders creates rapport with collaborators and helps to build consensus around issues, he said.

During his lecture and class visits, Dr. Bernard also discussed a number of challenges facing biosecurity in the U.S. and abroad. In particular, he highlighted the tensions between the two areas of national security and public health, and described the necessity of accepting budgetary realities. Dr. Bernard also discussed the decision-making process on selected biosecurity issues, and he encouraged W&M students to consider pursuing careers in the biosecurity field.

Schroeder Center Hosts Healthcare Policy Expert and W&M Alumna, Amanda Smith Cassidy

In October, the Schroeder Center hosted a visit by [Amanda Smith Cassidy](#), an alumna of W&M's Master of Public Policy (MPP) program and an expert in the field of healthcare policy. Over a working lunch, Cassidy met with current students and faculty to speak about her professional career and to answer questions about her experiences in healthcare policy.

Cassidy began the meeting with an overview of her employment in healthcare policy. Following her graduation from W&M's MPP program in 1998, Cassidy joined [Mathematica Policy Research](#) (MPR), focusing mostly on Medicare managed care and the impacts of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. She then

Healthcare Policy Expert and W&M Alumna, Amanda Smith Cassidy (continued)

moved to the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) Office of Legislation, where she helped translate technical language and used analytical skills to study the impacts of various healthcare policies. Later, Cassidy moved to Richmond and started a private healthcare consulting practice, where she worked until joining her current employer, [Arnold & Porter](#), as a Health Policy Advisor. She advises clients, primarily drug and device companies, about complex healthcare payment channels and helps them interact with CMS to clarify issues.



W&M students in the audience were especially interested in how Cassidy's time in the MPP program affected her career. Cassidy emphasized the value of using and interpreting data, and she urged students to focus on developing their skills through applied projects, such as those offered through the program's Policy Research Seminar. She also encouraged students to pursue opportunities through coursework that explain the regulatory and rulemaking process in order to understand the connections between statutes and their resulting policies. To those students seeking internships and jobs, Cassidy emphasized the value of flexibility in choosing a career path and adapting to the changing nature of your work.

Cassidy also spoke on the nature of healthcare policy today. She emphasized the widespread impacts of healthcare, both for patients and policymakers – all of whom represent constituents who are affected by healthcare policy. Cassidy also commented on the availability of healthcare jobs, as an increasing number of employers – from consulting firms, to the public sector, to device manufacturers – need professionals with quantitative skills and knowledge of healthcare policy.

More broadly, Cassidy described the differences between public and private sector employment and touched on, among other things, the changing nature of the workplace and the challenges of simultaneously finding new projects and completing current work as a private consultant.

Researchers Receive Grant to Study Nursing Home Quality and Services

Medicare spends more than \$30 billion a year on nursing home care services for program beneficiaries. While these services can be valuable to Medicare beneficiaries and their families, concerns about spending growth and facility overpayment have led program officials to look for ways to cut costs. Researchers at W&M's Schroeder Center for Health Policy have partnered with Swarthmore College to study what happens when Medicare cuts the rates it pays to nursing homes. This year, the group was awarded a grant from the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) to conduct empirical research using data on nearly 15,000 nursing facilities around the U.S.

The researchers on the project include W&M professors [Peter McHenry](#) and [Jennifer Mellor](#) and Professor [Daifeng He](#) of Swarthmore College. The team will study the impact of reductions in Medicare payments on patients – both those who enroll in Medicare and those who pay through other means, such as Medicaid or private insurance. “Our project has three primary goals,” explained Mellor. “We want to look at the impacts on payment changes on first, the amount of care patients receive, and second, the quality of the care they receive. If payment cuts led to reductions in staffing, for example, patients might experience increases in pressure sores, or infections.” The third goal of the researchers is to look at whether the effects vary depending on market and policy conditions. For example, are nursing homes hit harder by payment cuts in highly competitive markets, or when Medicaid payment rates are relatively low?

Researchers Receive Grant to Study Nursing Home Quality and Services (continued)

The team will complete their research by summer 2019 and plans to present their findings at a national conference. Since the payment changes studied in the project are similar to provisions in the ACA, their findings have the potential to impact policy under the current healthcare law.

Summer Student Fellows Complete Research on Key Health Policy Issues



This summer, in collaboration with Eastern Virginia Medical School's [Brock Institute for Community and Global Health](#), the Schroeder Center welcomed four student researchers as [Schroeder Center – Brock Institute \(SCBI\) Fellows](#). The Schroeder Center's summer research program promotes and funds health policy research at W&M, with an emphasis on developing students' skills in analyzing data, writing, and presenting results.

This year's fellows consisted of four W&M undergraduates. Each paired with a faculty mentor to conduct research on a pertinent health policy topic.

Brittany Young (Economics, '20) studied whether Uber decreased the risks of drunk driving in Virginia. Specifically, she analyzed how Uber's introduction affected the rates of hospitalizations related to car accidents and the odds that fatal vehicular collisions involved alcohol. Young's work constitutes the first case study of this type in Virginia and focused specifically on young adults (the most common victims of drunk driving accidents). Though Young found evidence that hospitalization rates decreased over time, this effect was not limited to localities where Uber began offering services. Despite Uber's claims to the contrary, Young found no support for the claim that ride-sharing apps reduce the risk of vehicular accidents in Virginia. Young concluded that the lack of a causal relationship may be due to intoxicated drivers lacking the rational thought process to call an Uber rather than risk driving home, or drivers thinking that ridesharing is too expensive.

Conducting work on another prominent public health issue in Virginia, Tori Reese (Economics and Applied Math-Statistics, '20) investigated the impact of cigarette taxes on smoking rates in the state. She used data to search for links between smoking rates, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) hospitalizations, and hospitalizations due to asthma, in an effort to determine whether local cigarette taxation decreases smoking prevalence. As she expected, Reese found a positive relationship between smoking prevalence and smoking-related hospitalizations. In particular, she discovered that female daily smoking prevalence correlates very strongly with asthma hospitalization rates. Reese also discovered that female smokers are roughly three times as sensitive to cigarette tax increases as male smokers. However, she found that local taxation of cigarettes may not be an effective strategy to reduce smoking rates; Reese posits this may be due to sellers in neighboring localities escaping the impacts of cigarette taxation and therefore attracting smokers to buy in a nearby town.

Meanwhile, Carmen Lehnigk (Economics, '19) studied the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) insurance coverage expansions, which targeted working-age adults, and was interested in whether they had effects that "spilled over" onto Medicare beneficiaries in Virginia. Lehnigk found that elderly Medicare recipients undergoing elective procedures had longer hospital stays after the ACA expansion in counties where that expansion reached more previously-uninsured non-elderly adults. Lehnigk hypothesized that this outcome may be the result of increased demand taking advantage of previously-underutilized healthcare resources. Alternatively, she believes the ACA's provisions that accommodated increased demand on the healthcare system may have actually overcompensated for the change. Either way, Lehnigk proposed more research to clarify the

Summer Student Fellows Complete Research on Key Health Policy Issues (continued)

potential positive spillover effects seen in elective elderly Medicare hospitalization duration.

Finally, McKinley Saunders' (Economics, '19) project, "Need Based Donor Response in Nigeria," analyzed an important health issue using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis and tools. Motivated by alarmingly-high child mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa, Saunders researched the impacts of geographic distributions of humanitarian aid in high-risk areas of Nigeria. Working together with her faculty mentor, [Professor Carrie Dolan](#), Saunders incorporated a large amount of health-related data into her analysis, including figures on the prevalence of common illnesses, prenatal and postnatal care, access to anti-malaria medication and bed nets, and a host of other variables.

The W&M summer fellows, along with three fellows from Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS), presented their findings in a videoconference in late July. Attendees included faculty from W&M and EVMS as well as many parents, grandparents, and other family and friends who joined in to view the presentations in real time. After the conference, Jim Ducibella from W&M's media relations team wrote [a piece featuring Young's project](#), which was picked up by various media outlets.

New Schroeder Center Faculty Publications

- Dr. [Louis Rossiter](#) recently published an article comparing expenditures per patient between physicians in private practices to physicians in hospital and health systems.

Rossiter, Louis. (2018). "OPEN: Expenditures and Quality: Hospital- and Health System-Affiliated Versus Independent Physicians in Virginia." [Southern Medical Journal](#). 111(10):597-600.

- [Michael Daly](#) and Dr. [Jennifer Mellor](#) published an article using new geospatial methods to study the variation in the share of accessible primary care physicians accepting Medicaid.

Daly, Michael R., and Mellor, Jennifer M. (2018). "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Medicaid Acceptance by Primary Care Physicians: A Geospatial Analysis." [Medical Care Research and Review](#). DOI: 10.1177/1077558718772165.

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Earlier this fall, the Schroeder Center launched its new [Facebook page](#). We invite you to follow us to see what William & Mary is doing in the field of health policy!