

Andrew Saintsing: Hi, you're tuned in to 90.7 FM KALX Berkeley. I'm Andrew Saintsing, and this is The Graduates, the interview talk show where we speak to UC Berkeley graduate students about their work here on campus and around the world. Today, I'm joined by Rachel Hammond, from the School of Public Policy. Welcome to the show, Rachel.

Rachel Hammond: Thanks, Andrew. Thanks for having me.

Saintsing: It's so great to have you here. So, Rachel you're in the School of Public Policy. Why don't you start by telling us like a little bit about what public policy is, what it means to you, and what it entails?

Hammond: Sure, public policy is a lot of different things, which I kind of learned once I got here. But the Goldman School kind of treats public policy as two-fold. One: it's quantitative analysis and using data to inform decision making. And then two: it's really the qualitative side of understanding what people need and what governments can do to help meet people's needs and how we can make better decisions to help our country and the world kind of continue to improve and help people at the best that we can.

Saintsing: Okay, so you're figuring out, yeah, like how the government and people interact and then backing that up with like statistical data essentially? Or figuring out like how best to apply the help that you can using like sound statistical data essentially?

Hammond: Yes, and the Goldman School is famous for what they call the Eightfold Path. So, one of our old deans came up with this method for policy analysis where there are kind of eight steps you take. So, it starts with defining the problem, and you kind of figure out what it is that you're trying to address. You get very specific and then you gather some evidence to figure out why is this problem happening, what's kind of driving it, and where are the intervention points that maybe we can address some of the problems. And then it's a lot of analysis of coming up with different options and then kind of trying to evaluate different policies and project how you how we think they'll perform if they're actually implemented and what the actual outcomes will be. And then kind of figuring out how do we... the final step is telling your story. So, how do you actually communicate this with other people who have the power to make changes and how do we get these things put into action?

Saintsing: So, when you say communicate this to people who have the power to make changes, I guess when you operate in the capacity that the school is training you for, you're kind of like more in like think tank areas, and like areas where you're just kind of doing research on problems and not so much actual policy makers, the people who actually are implementing the things that you think would be helpful for the government to do?

Hammond: I think it's a mix of both. You know, in the classroom setting you kind of feel more like you're in the think tank world, but then in reality for projects that folks do throughout the time they're in the school and then the internships people do and what we do after we graduate, a lot of people work as advisors to folks who are actually

making, who are actual policy makers. There are people who work on the ground and are kind of implementing different programs or ideas, so it's a wide variety of things, and it kind of depends what you're most interested in what people end up doing.

Saintsing: So, like what kinds of things are people working on in the program?

Hammond: Oh my gosh. So many things. It's amazing how much. So, being Berkeley, there's a huge push for social justice, racial equity that a lot of my classmates spend their time on. One example is we have a faculty member who runs an organization called One Fair Wage, and she fights for a minimum wage for tipped workers that's equal to minimum wage for every other worker. So, not the \$2.13 that they get paid in a lot of other, in most states. And she has a lot of students who work with her and she teaches an undergraduate class that a lot of folks GSI for. So, that's one thing that some of my classmates are interested in. There's a pretty strong international presence in our program, so a lot of my classmates, there are a good number of them who are from India, and they've been working to organize COVID relief over the past few months, and kind of applying some of the skills they learned in class to help spread the word and organize and reach out to people who can actually help. and then there's the People Lab is part of Goldman, and that is what I would say is like a really applicable example. And people work with local governments trying to improve various aspects of their operations. So, they've done a lot of work for example with the city of Denver and some of their equity work within local government. So, folks are kind of out there doing all sorts of things.

Saintsing: So, I was struck by, you know, you're talking about all different levels of government and like different areas, different localities. Does it matter that you're working in different areas? And do you get trained differently depending on where you plan to go, or are these just like you get... there are fundamental principles that you're learning that are applicable across all of these different levels of government areas and then you just kind of, have to once you get into a professional setting learn the area that you're in?

Hammond: Yeah, it's a very generalist program. So, everyone kind of gets the same training, and I think a lot of the skills they would use at the more local level, for example, like the city of Oakland, would also apply if you're working for the state of California or if you were interested more in the federal level of government. It's just a lot bigger scope and that changes, but a lot of the things that they teach you in class will apply everywhere, I would say.

Saintsing: What about like internationally? Is it at all... Do people have to think differently in different countries?

Hammond: Yeah, I think that's one thing the school is working to improve because we do have a good number of international students every year and I think the strengths of the program are certainly domestic policy, but that's not to say that like the US is the only

place working to improve the way the government works for its people. So, we do have i mean a really strong group of students who are interested in how can we make this more applicable to people outside the US and how can the school continue to kind of teach about policy making on the international scale compared to more domestic policies. But it's a hard thing to do because you know the us government is so complicated in itself, and there's so many intricacies just to, you know, making policy here in the states, so there are a lot of different you know cultural things to consider if you're making policy say. You know, I have a classmate from Hong Kong. Hong Kong is really different from the US, so I think it's you know something that the school is working to improve on, and it's really great to get to hear from people who are from outside the US.

Saintsing: Yeah, I guess that's like really helpful to have that different cultural perspective and even if it's not as directly applicable to some of the policies, that can help you reframe how you're thinking about the policies that you're thinking about.

Hammond: Yeah, exactly. And again, since the school is generalist, they do try to like teach you frameworks that will apply in any situation. But most of, you know, the examples and applications that we get to do as students are more domestically focused.

Saintsing: Okay, so you've told us different examples of things your classmates are doing. What exactly are you doing? You've done some internships, and you've done a capstone project. You're actually done now with your program, right? So, congratulations on getting your degree.

Hammond: Thank you.

Saintsing: Yeah, what were your projects that you worked on to complete your degree?

Hammond: Yeah, so when I came into school I was really interested in policies that impact families with young children and how the social safety net, so programs like SNAP, which is food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, housing vouchers, how those impact families. So, the first kind of project that I got to work on, it was actually a real life application of some of what we were learning in school. I worked with three classmates to analyze SNAP expansion or Calfresh in the state of California to a new population of eligible people. So, prior to 2019, if you received SSI in California, you weren't eligible to receive Calfresh benefits, and then they changed this rule. SSI, Supplemental Security Income, so that applies to a lot of older folks or people with disabilities who are receiving these benefits and weren't able to also get food stamp benefits that they're eligible for based on their income. And the client we worked for was the California Association of Food Banks, and Calfresh is administered at a county level. So, they wanted to see how different counties across the state were reaching out to this newly eligible population of people and making sure that they enrolled and received benefits that they were eligible for. And you know, there are a lot of barriers that come up when people are enrolling in social safety net programs. There's, you know, an information barrier. Online

applications are very new, and when you're talking about supplemental security income it's a lot of elderly folks who maybe aren't as comfortable signing up for something online. So, really trying to figure out how do we reach these populations. So, my classmates and I spoke to people who work at the different county social service departments. And then we also analyzed some data that we had looking at what the actual take-up rates were. So, we were able to kind of see: here are the counties that had really high take-up rates and here's what these counties were doing to help make sure that they reached all these people. That was kind of my first foray into policy work.

Saintsing: Did you put together a report on all of that?

Hammond: Yeah, so we wrote up some recommendations about what other counties can kind of try to do to continue to increase their take-up rates because at that point at the time we were doing the project people have been eligible for about nine months but not everybody who is eligible have been enrolled. So, it was kind of putting together recommendations for the California Association of Food Banks, so they could kind of bring out the counties and say, "Here are some other ideas for you as you try to continue to enroll people in Calfresh."

Saintsing: You were looking you said at Alameda County?

Hammond: The entire state.

Saintsing: Okay, were you looking at like success stories or like you were seeing like where things had gone wrong or like what yeah like we were looking at?

Hammond: We were looking at both. Part of it, so we we're doing this project right as COVID hit, you know. So, originally, we had aspirations of talking to a lot of different counties, and it wound up being kind of who we could get in touch with. But for example, San Francisco County was a huge success story. They had enrolled 95% of the people who were eligible, whereas some other counties were only around 30%. So, we talked to folks from San Francisco, and they told us about different outreach methods they had done in the city. They actually had kind of enrollment sites just out on street corners and areas where they knew a lot of people lived who were probably eligible, so we were trying to talk to people, yeah, about what they thought maybe their success stories were and how they had planned for the expansion and kind of try to tie together some common themes that we heard from different counties.

Saintsing: And then you actually like provided actionable steps in this report for the other counties?

Hammond: Yeah.

Saintsing: And do you know what's happened with that report?

Hammond: I don't. I know that we prepared it for the California Association of Food Banks, and I know that they used it in advocacy efforts and an outreach to various counties across the state to kind of share information. And they posted it on their website for people to read. Yeah, that's all I know.

Saintsing: So, you just gotta make the report and hope it gets into the right hands I guess?

Hammond: Yeah, I think that's one of the limitations of, you know, we were doing it for a class, and you know, in the real world I would have tried to do more follow-up and kind of see how things were going. I think that's a challenge with policy making, too, you know. You kind of can either be on the high in the sky kind of thinking and analyzing things and then you can also be on the ground trying to do the implementation. And I think it's rare to find a role or a job where you're doing both, and so sometimes it's difficult to kind of bridge that gap and, you know, be both. Have the ideas and kind of do the analysis, and actually handle the implementation.

Saintsing: Do you have a sense of which side you want to be on?

Hammond: I go back and forth every day, you know. I came to policy school because I was volunteering at a shelter for families experiencing homelessness and I felt like I wasn't doing anything to, you know, solve some of the situations those families were in, and so I wanted to be more on the academic side and figuring out how can we improve services for families. And then I came to school and I kind of learned more about that, and then I was like, "Wow, now I want to be back on the ground and like actually try to you know implement some of these things." But it's hard. So, like I've been interning for First Five Alameda County for the past year, and First Five is funded by tobacco taxes in the state of California, and each county has their own office, and they run programs for families with children ages 0 through 5. So, the first five years of a kid's life. And they do a lot of things to promote, you know, kindergarten readiness and health for children and supporting families in kind of any way they need. And part of my job since I started was COVID relief efforts, and it was really, you know, getting on the ground and just like doing things as fast as you can. Trying to respond to immediate needs. And there hasn't been the time to kind of sit back and reflect on, you know. I want to be able to think more about what kind of impact are we having, how can we improve, you know, the relief effort, like our relief efforts and the services we're providing for families. And I kind of wish I had, I could step back and, you know, kind of think more deeply about things, but the need is so great. So, we kind of just have to keep moving forward. And so, it's really hard to find that balance. So, I go back and forth between what I want to do every day.

Saintsing: Yeah, that's tough. That's what you're doing now, that's what you said? You're doing COVID relief for families is that uh something you're continuing now like at this point after you've graduated from school?

Hammond: Yeah, I'm continuing to do this for a little bit, and what it kind of is and what we're trying to do at First Five is, you know, families have a lot of tangible needs that they just

maybe can't provide for themselves. So, for example there's a huge need for diapers. Diapers are expensive, and a lot of the families we serve are maybe people who have lost their jobs or frontline workers who are at higher risk or have been impacted by COVID. So, we're trying to provide things for them like diapers and, you know, gloves and disinfectant wipes and masks. We've even had hundreds of thousands of masks to families, and so I've been working with 10 distribution hubs we have set up across Alameda County who are really ingrained in the community, and so I'm going to continue to work on that going forward. We work with the broader First Five California organization, and then again with a lot of organizations at the county level. So, continuing to communicate with them and work to keep getting supplies out as COVID continues to linger around.

Saintsing: As we try to get more people vaccinated, right? As we've moved towards, you know, like the CDC has now issued the no masks outside for people vaccinated, so, you know, in general I guess people are moving towards a head space where it seems like COVID is hopefully becoming less prevalent, have you noticed any changes in your work? Like has it seemed to slow down and like given you some space to breathe at all?

Hammond: Yeah, I think it really hasn't expect I think some of the needs that we're addressing... For example, diapers have been a huge need for families before COVID, during COVID, and will continue to be in need after COVID. So, what we're trying to do, a lot of the funds we've been using are COVID-specific, so maybe we won't have the budget for that going forward, but we're trying right now to think about how can we continue to provide these items to families who need them even if COVID is not in the picture. So, a lot of thinking about what are the items that families are going to continue to need even if they're not you know... Maybe if they are vaccinated, and they don't need to wear a mask outside every day, what are the kind of the type of things that they still need that we can support them with.

Saintsing: Yeah, that's interesting. Like the diapers, that's something that's completely not COVID related, like that's something that people just need, right? Is that... So, is that a case where maybe the driving force was the appearance of the money from COVID relief almost as much as like actually the crisis? Like you suddenly went into overdrive because you suddenly had this opportunity to address these needs that are always there but you had to act quickly to actually get those funds and use them?

Hammond: Yeah, I think that's something we've seen with COVID across the board. It's kind of revealed inequities that we, maybe some people already knew existed in society, but made it really hard to ignore them. You know, a lot of tough things have happened in the past year, but yeah one thing is we have been kind of able to lift the needs of families and say they needed these things all along. Now we had some funding that we could use to support them and here are some ideas for how we can do that forward. So, right now First Five is sponsoring kind of a review of Help Mother Out, which is a diaper bank located in San Francisco, and there we are going to use that to advocate to the state

government to try to kind of create a permanent source of funding to provide diapers to families in need.

Saintsing: I guess since these funds suddenly were there, and so, this is kind of like a program that you've all had to work together to set up on the fly. Do you feel it moving towards something that's like more established and requires less like hands-on constant managing?

Hammond: That's what we're striving for. That's what we we've been kind of, you know, when we originally started these efforts last April, we thought they would be done in June, you know? And it continued to evolve, and once we realized we would be doing it for longer we tried to figure out how what's the best way we can kind of systematize this and make it easy to kind of continue doing it. We kind of do our efforts like every month, so every month we're trying to do the same thing, and then, you know, in the last November, we got a million dollars to continue our supply efforts from the county of Alameda, and so again it was, "Okay, we have this funding. How can we kind of ingrain this into what we're doing and continue it through into 2021?" So, yeah there's been a lot of thought about how we can, you know, make this less reactive to COVID, and kind of more proactive going forward and ingrained into what First Five does.

Saintsing: And so, that's kind of getting at like, you were mentioning this divide between hands-on and like up like looking at broader issues. So, I mean you've kind of got that I feel like. That like making this less reactive and more proactive I guess is kind of getting at that divide, right?

Hammond: Yeah, it's nice to be able to kind of you know think more about what we've been doing and try to be more thoughtful in our efforts. So, yeah, no, you're right. I am able to kind of bridge the divide and do a little bit of both.

Saintsing: Well, you've talked about two projects but this isn't even... Neither of those are the projects that you did your capstone project on, right?

Hammond: Yeah, at Goldman when you're doing your capstone you generally do it for a client. So, last fall I spent time interviewing kind of like a, you know, a job interview, and so I wound up working for the Low Income Investment Fund, which is a CDFI headquartered in San Francisco, but they work across the country, and they are really interested in the idea of co-location, which to them that means, "How can we incorporate child care facilities into affordable housing development to both serve, you know, the families living there if it's a family-oriented development and also the broader community?" Because there is a huge need for child care across the country, which again is something that we kind of knew and has been exacerbated by COVID. But 50% of families don't have access to the care that they need for their children across the country, and so the Low Income Investment Fund thought it would. You know, they do a lot of work in the child care space, and they also do a lot of work in helping build affordable housing, and so they thought, "How can we unite these two to better serve families and make sure

that they're having access to the, you know, the child care they need?" And how access to care and access to housing can kind of both promote economic stability together, so what I was looking at for them is, you know, what are some roadblocks that people run into when they're doing developments where they try to include child care. It's a relatively... I don't wanna say it's a new idea because it's been happening you know for a good while, but no one's ever really sat down and you know really seriously thought about it. And it's work that they're trying to advance in this space. So, my project was kind of a jumping-off point for them to start you know thinking more seriously about this.

Saintsing: Great, so what is your, I guess, what were the things that went into your project then?

Hammond: Yeah, so it was a lot of talking to people. So, I spoke with a good number of affordable housing developers, some of whom, you know, had included child care facilities in developments they had built before. And I was really interested in knowing, you know, why they did it, where the idea first came to them, why they were successful, and how they partnered with a child care provider, and where they got the funding for it, and you know also what are some obstacles you ran into along the way that kind of made it hard to complete this development. You know affordable housing developers are really good at building affordable housing, but when you ask them to try to incorporate child care which comes with its own long list of regulations and rules that they have to follow that can sometimes be really complicated. So, I was really interested in learning more about that, and then I also spoke to some developers who you know had thought about doing this and then they ultimately decided not to. And with them I was really interested in learning you know what would it take or what ultimately did you need that you didn't have to make these kind of developments come to life. So, that was one step. I also spoke with people from state housing finance agencies, so these are the people who administer low-income housing tax credit, which funds a majority of the affordable housing built across the country. And so, speaking to them about, you know, what are the kind of rules that developers have when they're building and financing their projects with this tax credit and how does child care fit into that space and how could we maybe unite the two. And then finally I spoke with you know just other people in the space who have been thinking about the same thing and seeing what they had learned and trying to you know tie some common themes between what I heard from developers, what I heard from the state agencies, and what I was hearing from other people who had maybe you know been adjacent to a project and helped find the child care provider or help find some funding to get these things constructed because the biggest problem that folks kind of run into is that it's expensive to build a child care facility. It can cost over a million dollars to build space that will serve about 60 kids, and child care providers, you know child care is historically very underfunded. Child care providers are paid very low wages, and so if you own one of these businesses you might not have the capital that you need to fund the building of a brand new facility, and the housing developers you know don't necessarily want to pay for it out of their own pocket. And so, folks end up trying to you know cobble together different grants and different loans from organizations such as the Low-Income Investment Fund, but you

know it was kind of trying to think through you know what are some ways that we can find maybe some permanent sources of funding or make it easier to kind of finance the build out of these facilities.

Saintsing: Does the report have... You like highlight specific recommendations in your report?

Hammond: Yeah, so I think with something, you know, kind of as complicated as this, I started thinking about what are some federal level policies that we can do, and I wound up coming up with recommendations for every level. So, here are things we can do at the federal level, here are things we can do at the state level, and here are some things we can do at the local level. And my client was very interested in, you know, how can we incentivize developers to want to do this. So, you know, some of the recommendations were, you know, at the local level, if a housing developer wants to include childcare space, can we give them a density bonus or a height bonus so they can build their development maybe taller and you know add some extra units which will give them extra income and make the development more profitable for them? But you know they're adding that extra space for a child care facility you know. I also looked at the state level, how can we make child care providers a more viable business and make developers want to work with them and ensure that they have the funding. So, can we change the way that child care providers are reimbursed for care if they're serving low-income children whose families pay with child care vouchers? One thing that's happened since COVID is states used to reimburse child care providers based on attendance. So, say you had 10 kids enrolled in your program and nine showed up on a given day you would get paid for providing care for those nine children, but you don't get paid for the kids who didn't show up even though you had saved them the space. And since COVID, when a lot of parents were keeping their children home, states kind of changed the rules and would reimburse child care providers based on just how many people were enrolled in the program, so they would have been paid for all 10 even if you know two showed up. And so, one of my recommendations was states should keep this permanent, so that child care providers have a steady source of income that they can rely on and it's not going to go down if the kid just doesn't show up one day for whatever reason. And then, at the federal level one thing that the Low Income Investment Fund has really been advocating for is you know a designated source of funding to build more child care facilities across the country. And we've kind of seen some of this in Biden's infrastructure plan. So, building off of those efforts and talking about you know if we had a designated source of funding for child care facilities we could use this to build them in affordable housing developments and bring those services directly to families. So, those are three of the recommendations that were built into my report.

Saintsing: It's wild to me that attendance... attendance had to be a certain number of days in a week? Or like you know I mean like what if some of the kids like missing a couple days a week or...

Hammond: Yeah, I know, they get paid per day of care. So, if someone shows up, if someone has their child enrolled you know in a program, that's five days a week being you know they drop them off every day for work and they show up all five days and the provider gets paid for all five days. But if they only show up three days one week, you know maybe they're sick and their parent keeps them home or you know something else comes up, then the provider only gets paid for three days of care that the kid, the child was actually there. And so that really kind of limits what they can plan on doing in the daycare because they don't know necessarily how much funding they'll get. Exactly, and you know it's where you send your child to care is very a very personal decision for families, so you know you kind of find your place that you feel comfortable sending your child and you stick there, so it's not like you know one day, one child doesn't show up, so they can just go find somebody else who wants to send their child to that provider. So, it's really difficult for people to you know kind of plan for financial stability and know how much money they're going to make on a given week.

Saintsing: So, throughout this discussion of your capstone project you've referred to a client. I'm wondering like, is it like a company or...

Hammond: So, it's the Low-Income Investment Fund, and they're a community development financial institution, or a CDFI, so they provide two of their main focus areas are child care and affordable housing, but they you know help provide grants and financing to folks working in the space and they work with affordable housing developers. They work with child care providers, and so this project unites a lot of the work that they're doing. They also chair an organization called the National Children's Facilities Network, so it's a group of over 30 CDFIs, like the Low-Income Investment Fund and other entities who are really interested in building out the infrastructure for child care across the country. So, this report, you know, they used it internally at the Low-Income Investment Fund, but they also want to, they are also sharing it with the National Children's Facilities Network so that other organizations who are interested in the same thing can kind of read the report and use it in the work that they're doing as well.

Saintsing: Are these the kinds of bodies that are generally funding this type of public policy research?

Hammond: I would say this is kind of unique. The policy team at the Low-Income Investment Fund is actually quite small, and so I think that they were interested in having you know someone come on and do this project for them because they didn't necessarily always have you know the staffing capabilities to look at this. I was grateful that they were interested in having you know a graduate student come look at this for them. I learned so much from you know working with them and speaking to people who work there. You know I was able to interact with maybe like 15 people who work for them, and you know it really depends who's funding the work you know. There's a think tank called the Bipartisan Policy Center, and I spoke with three women who work there, and they are also funding a lot of work in the childcare space. So, it's a team effort.

Saintsing: Well, unfortunately it looks like we're running out of time on the interview. Is there anything you'd like to leave the audience with before we go?

Hammond: Yeah, you know, we talked a lot, a good bit about childcare, and I think that's just one point I wanted to emphasize is that the pandemic has made it very clear how important it is that families have access to childcare they need. We've seen a lot of people you know come out of the workforce, especially women, who instead of like you know working, they've had to spend a lot of more time dedicated to taking care of their children. And I think this has highlighted how important that sector is. Childcare has been severely underfunded throughout the United States' history, and I think the last thing I'll push for is you know there's a lot of great work being done in the childcare space right now. I just want to emphasize how important it is, and I really hope that we continue to see attention being paid in this space.

Saintsing: Today I've been speaking with Rachel Hammond from the School of Public Policy. Thanks so much for being on the show, Rachel.

Hammond: Thanks for having me, Andrew.

Saintsing: Tune in in two weeks for the next episode of The Graduates.