

# Policy Writing

*getting to know Capstone 03 and Exercise 5*

EC137 {12-02}

22 April 2021

# Agenda

**11:40 – 11:50**

**Announcements/admin**

**11:50 – 12:20**

**Small groups**

Reverse outlining example policy brief

**12:20 – 12:55**

**Full group**

Generate integrated outline

Discuss assignments

# Week(s) ahead

<b>25 Sunday</b>	Capstone 2 due
<b>27 Tuesday</b>	PC: Returns to Education
<b>29 Thursday</b>	PC: Education and income mobility
<b>02 Sunday</b>	Exercise 05 due (Capstone 03 pre-work)
...	
<b>11 Tuesday</b>	Capstone 3 project showcase

# Deliverables

1. Slide deck as a PDF
2. Slide deck as .pptx
3. Knit output file (pdf/html/docx) that contains:
  - All code for all analysis
  - Capstone reflection with bibliography
  - Link to your video presentation
4. Data
  - Using a package: Skip this step, as you will call the data in your code!
  - Using `atlas.dta`: Skip this step
  - Importing data: Include the raw .xlsx or .csv file
    - If it is fairly big - zip it first, is it better?
    - If it is massive – use [UVM FileTransfer](#) and/or e-mail me

**Any questions?**

# Dissecting two examples



## Hot Topics in Higher Education

### Student Loan Debt

BY DUSTIN WEEDEN

OCTOBER 2015

By several measures, student loan debt increased rapidly in the last 10 years, leading to concerns that the United States is facing a student debt crisis. During this time period, the federal government has implemented several policy changes designed to assist borrowers—becoming the direct lender of federal loans, expanding income-driven repayment options and changing the way interest rates are set. States—concerned about the adverse effects of student debt—have also taken action. This brief reviews recent trends in student borrowing and highlights several policy options states have taken to address the growing loan burden of college students.

#### Trends in Student Borrowing

Student loan debt has received more attention in recent years as the number of borrowers, balance per borrower and total amount of outstanding debt increased rapidly. Total student loan debt has increased from \$350 billion to approximately \$1.2 trillion since 2004.<sup>1</sup> During this time period, outstanding student debt surpassed the amount households owe on auto loans, home equity loans and credit cards. The amount Americans owe on their student loans is surpassed only by home mortgages as the largest form of household credit. Part of the reason for this rapid increase is that more students and parents are borrowing to pay for educational opportunities. In 2004, 22.5 million people had student loans, now 43.3 million people do—an increase of 92 percent.<sup>2</sup> Not only has the number of borrowers increased but the average amount each person is borrowing has increased as well, from \$15,300 in 2004 to \$26,700 today.<sup>3</sup>



Even though the average balance per borrower has grown 74 percent in the last decade, the very large loan balances often featured in news stories are still rare. More than two-thirds of students owe \$25,000 or less.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of student loan balances at the end of 2014. Only about 4 percent of borrowers owe balances of \$100,000 or more, and most of these students are graduate and professional students.<sup>5</sup> Only .03 percent of undergraduate students borrow more than \$100,000.<sup>6</sup>

## Policy Brief

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.  
INSTITUTE

### Student Loan Debt: Addressing Disparities in Who Bears the Burden

October 2020

American families carry more than \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt. This debt provided many with the opportunity to pursue higher education, but remains for others a large, potentially crippling, financial burden. Additionally, the economic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to exacerbate the burden of student loan debt, particularly for those already most financially vulnerable. JPMC Institute research explores how people of different socioeconomic groups are managing their student debt. We do this by linking administrative banking data, credit bureau records, and public records on race and ethnicity to create a unique data asset that includes the income, demographics, debt balances, and student loan payments of 301,583 individuals.

While most student loan borrowers are not unreasonably burdened by student loan payments, a large number of borrowers are struggling to keep up, and those borrowers are already economically vulnerable: lower-income, older, and especially Black borrowers. Significant disparities exist across racial groups in managing student debt, with Black student loan borrowers having higher student loan balances and repayment burdens and less likely to be making progress on their loans compared to White and Hispanic borrowers. Additionally, the economic impacts of student debt extend to a broader portion of the population than previously thought: almost 40 percent of student loan payers are helping someone else pay off their student loan debt, with most helpers holding no student loan debt themselves. The current de facto repayment system reliant on a network of helpers likely disadvantages those families who were prevented from accumulating wealth by discriminatory practices and policies.

#### What should be done?

1. **Address the problem at its root: curb the rise in tuition costs and student loan debt borne by students and their families.** Additionally, reducing racial gaps in income and wealth would boost families' ability to pay for tuition and repay student loan debt among segments of the population most burdened by student loan debt.
2. **Improve access to and reduce paperwork burden associated with existing payment assistance programs, including income-driven repayment (IDR) programs, such as making annual income recertification easier and increasing efforts to make sure borrowers are aware of their IDR options.** We observe that at least 10 percent of people are making payments that represent more than 10 percent of take-home income, which is above the threshold for IDR programs.
3. **Consider whether loan limits should be increased in order to enable students to officially take on more of the debt, giving them access to lower interest rates and current payment assistance programs, or the possibility for more payment assistance avenues designed for parents.** Current student loan debt policies and assistance programs may not adequately consider the network of people the borrower may rely on to make their payments and loan origination programs currently make a clear distinction between borrowers and their parents.
4. **Allow for restructuring or forgiveness of student debt through a bankruptcy-like workout process specific to student debt, as a complement to repayment relief programs.** Targeting discharge—for example to those with limited assets who have been in default for several years—could mitigate potential impact to cost of borrowing.
5. **Expand efforts to provide targeted debt forgiveness to those most burdened.** Although debt relief is available for graduates entering certain careers and for those who remain in an IDR program for twenty years, targeted student loan debt forgiveness could be a means of rebalancing our investments in public goods like education across communities and insuring against the risk that Black and Hispanic borrowers disproportionately find themselves in a debt trap.

# Dissecting two examples

## **Individually**

Read the briefs linked in the shared doc.

## **In groups**

Work through the template in shared doc

- Summarize articles
- Answer short questions

We'll discuss as a group

# Quick demo on finding/citing academic articles

*I suspect this will would research librarians cry*

1. Identifying what a peer-reviewed academic article is.
2. Where do we find peer-reviewed academic articles?
3. How do we know if an article is “relevant”?
4. How do we know if an article is “legit”?
5. How do we do this faster?



# Recommended workflow

1. Pick a topic
2. Do some light reading
3. Refine into a one sentence topic/research question
4. What does policy literature say about this?
  - Use this to dig for academic articles
5. What does academic literature say about this?
6. Outline by section
7. Think about what data you would want to fill in, start hunting
8. Fill in all the bits
9. Kill all your darlings

# Alternative workflow

1. Pick a cool dataset, play w/ it
2. What topic could you use this for? Can you narrow it?
3. Narrow it
4. What does policy literature say about this?
  - Use this to dig for academic articles
5. What does academic literature say about this?
6. Outline by section
7. Think about what data you would want to fill in, start hunting
8. Fill in all the bits
9. Kill all your darlings

# Writing principles for policy writing

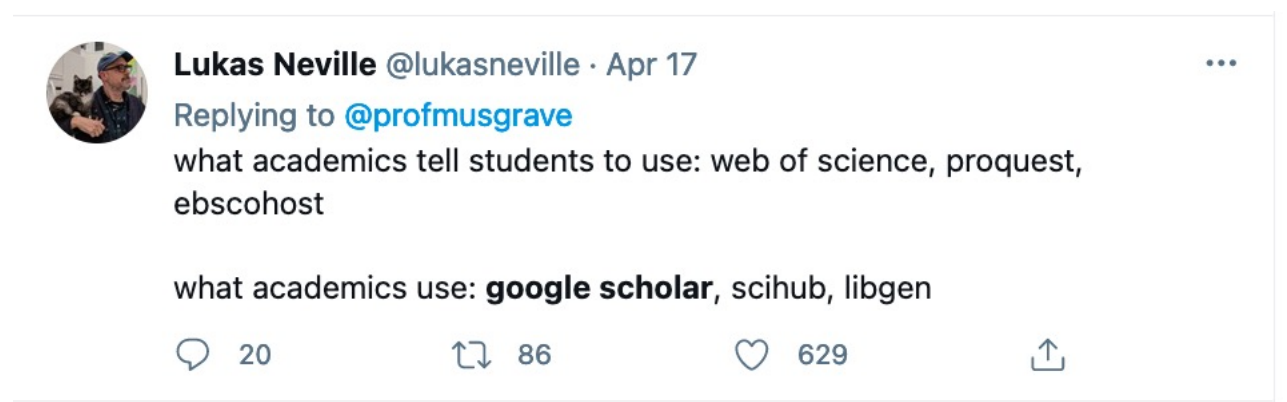
- Minimize passive voice
- 1<sup>st</sup> person is okay if necessary
- Concise, concise, concise
- Ask yourself: could it be a list? How can I make it clearer?

Writing center can help!

# Sources

Library databases!

Google scholar!



# Not on campus? PROXY SERVER O'CLOCK

