Experiential learning is central to the pedagogical vision of President Hanlon ’77. Public Policy 85: Global Policy Leadership (PBPL 85) perfectly translates that vision into reality for our public policy students every year.

The course begins in the classroom during the fall term, where a select group of students study the history and context of a public policy challenge in a particular country or region. Students are introduced to the process of assessing problems and developing solutions to the challenge, practices important to cultivating civically engaged, global leaders.

The class then travels to the country or region during Dartmouth’s winter interim to conduct field research. Students meet with local policy leaders: politicians, academics, civil society leaders, journalists, business leaders, diplomats, and other in-country experts who help inform their analyses.

“The importance of travel is twofold,” explains Professor Charles Wheelan ’88, who taught the first three iterations of the course. “First is this marriage of learning in the classroom and talking to people on the ground. The second is testing your hypotheses and listening to people who have very conflicting points of view.”

As a 2013 course participant, Don Casler ’14 found the true value of the course was the “before and after effect” the trip had on his perspective about the topic. “To learn about all the issues for ten weeks, to fully grapple with them and to think you understand them,” he explains, “and then travel to that country and find out that some things are exactly as you expected them to be, and some things are not what you expected them to be at all.”

By the end of the course, students are completely invested in the topic—it is now personal, nuanced, and tangible.

For a final project, the students jointly write and distribute a detailed memo with specific policy recommendations, as targeted and actionable as possible. This requirement helps to synthesize the lessons learned from ten weeks of study on campus with their field work.

The final project also gives students the chance to learn and practice transferable workplace skills such as conducting interviews, project management, teamwork, negotiation, and problem solving.

The topics undertaken during the first three years of the course include: economic reform in India (2013), the peace process in Northern Ireland (2014), and the U.S. role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (2015). In 2016, the class conducted an evaluation of civil society in Ukraine utilizing USAID assessment methodologies with Professor Ronald Shaiko.
The Rockefeller Global Leadership Program (RGLP) was first piloted in the 2012 spring term to develop the leadership competencies of students during intercultural experiences, both academic and professional, while at Dartmouth and beyond. RGLP begins each term on campus with weekly sessions. There is a culminating fieldwork excursion during its seventh week that helps students experience cultural diversity firsthand.

During the 2016 Winter term, 24 RGLP participants, along with the Center’s Deputy Director Sadhana Hall and Program Officer Vincent Mack, traveled to New York City for the off-campus portion of the program, organized in large part with the hands-on involvement of two Center Board of Visitors, Robert Tichio ’99 and Maya Wiley ’86, who work in the city.

“We have a unique opportunity to engage this generation of up-and-coming leaders to make a difference in the communities where they work and serve,” said Robert Tichio, Partner and Managing Director of Riverstone Holdings, who moderated a panel discussion of three fellow alumni on “Diversity in the Public and Private Workplace: Advancing Understandings of Race, Gender and LGBT Identities.”

In addition to the opening panel discussion, students visited the Bowery Mission to receive a firsthand perspective of NYC poverty and its policy implications. They toured Chinatown to catalyze discussion around immigrant communities. They spent time at the Whitney Museum, exploring the intersection of culture and art. Finally, students visited the Islamic Society of Mid-Manhattan, which initiated discourse surrounding the Muslim American cultural experience and the contentious nature of Park 51, otherwise known as the Ground Zero mosque.

“The experience was challenging and meaningful, and included some of the best hours of education I’ve had during my four years at Dartmouth,” recalled RGLP Participant Mary Decker ’16.

Students frequently comment that the program fosters some of the most honest and open conversation with peers that they have had while at Dartmouth.

“In our troubled world, a program like this becomes all the more crucial,” says Sadhana Hall. “Students need to graduate with a deep understanding of what it means to show respect to cultural backgrounds different from their own, what it means to have a ‘leadership presence,’ and how to use words that engage others and build community, harmony, and peace.”

To date, RGLP has impacted more than 200 students in this way. Even more will be able to participate in coming years due to the recent expansion of being offered all three terms—fall, winter, and spring.
This past July, political scientist, *New York Times* contributor, and Dartmouth Professor of Government Brendan Nyhan organized the 2016 Dartmouth Experiments Conference. This two-day event brought together researchers who use quantitative data to investigate phenomena surrounding elections, voter behavior, and public opinion. As an intensive quantitative research workshop, the conference featured presentations of new findings and study designs by graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and junior faculty who study American politics.

Scholars from various backgrounds took advantage of this opportunity to collaborate and discuss the latest findings in their field, pooling together their own expertise with quantitative data.

“The academic goal of the conference was to give promising graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty a chance to get detailed feedback on their work prior to submitting for publication,” said Professor Nyhan. “Each presenter was matched with a senior faculty discussant who led the discussion of the work among attendees and helped identify areas for improvement and future research. The feedback was (I hope) especially valuable because everyone at the conference uses experiments to study political science.”

Participants came from Georgetown University, the University of Exeter, the University of Colorado, Iowa State University, Arizona State University, and Dartmouth College itself.

“The Dartmouth Experiments Conference gave me the opportunity to present my research to a group of leading experimental political scientists from around the country,” said D.J. Flynn, a Postdoctoral Fellow from the Dartmouth College Program in Quantitative Social Sciences. “Their comments greatly improved the paper and helped identify interesting lingering questions to pursue in future experiments.”

Nate Cohn, *New York Times* political correspondent for “The Upshot” blog delivered the conference’s keynote address. Untangling the complexities of polling data to reveal a bigger message, Cohn’s talk, “Will Obama’s America Vote for Trump?” compared Obama’s past demographic sweep to win two consecutive elections to Trump’s less diverse attempt at the presidency.

“The conference was a great gathering of political scientists presenting cutting-edge, in-progress experimental work,” said Herschel Nachlis, Department of Government Research Assistant Professor and Postdoctoral Fellow at the Rockefeller Center. “Conferences this productive, interesting, and collegial are indeed quite rare.”

The conference was sponsored by the Rockefeller Center, the Department of Government, the Program in Quantitative Social Science, and the Politics and Law Program.
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"At the Rockefeller Center, we believe that the formula for creating citizen leaders is to provide students a home, with mentors and peers, for their academic and extracurricular pursuits. Our program of study supports students as they seek knowledge and engagement in public policy as well as the leadership skills they will need to translate that experience into socially beneficial outcomes in the world beyond Dartmouth. Look anywhere in the world today and you will find challenges and opportunities that can only be addressed through this unique combination – knowledge, engagement, and leadership."

~ Andrew Samwick

Director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences,

Sandra L. and Arthur L. Irving ’72a, P’10 Professor of Economics