

Course Description

The Center for Public Research and Leadership (“CPRL”) is a partnership of top professional schools that prepares a diverse pool of business, education, law, and policy students from multiple professional schools with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to enact organizational learning and change, and does so in part by providing affordable, high quality research and consulting services to organizations committed to improving public education, particularly for children of color, from low-income households, or otherwise traditionally underserved. Through engaging in this work CPRL empowers a broad network of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educators and their stakeholders with ideas, tools, and practices designed to accelerate improvement and spread experiential learning.

CPRL’s program is responsive to the massive restructuring of public-sector service delivery currently underway in the United States. Staffed by broadly interdisciplinary teams of accomplished and motivated professionals, the most successful of these new federal, state and local reforms are replacing outmoded public bureaucracies with “learning organizations” committed to using public problem-solving techniques to enhance the will and capacity of public organizations to improve the life chances of the nation’s most underserved populations. Nowhere are these changes more important and promising, yet also challenging and controversial, than in the governance, management and democratic accountability of the nation’s public schools. CPRL is committed to approaching all contexts, opportunities, and interactions with a learning stance, which yields creative, novel, and ambitious ideas that will drive improvement in education.

Through CPRL, students have the opportunity to work with a cohort of talented and committed upper- level graduate students from Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Michigan, NYU, Penn, Princeton, Stanford, Vanderbilt, Yale and elsewhere. This intensive seminar and practicum (available in fall and spring semesters) immerses students in the theory and practice of managing, governing, and transforming the public systems and social-sector organizations that deliver public education in the U.S. and abroad. Hosted at Columbia Law School, this experiential offering has three components:

- (i) **A comprehensive seminar** in the design, governance, regulation, democratic accountability and transformation of P-12 school systems and allied public- and social-sector organizations.
- (ii) **Skills training** in a range of twenty-first century problem-solving competencies, including working in diverse teams to address multi-dimensional problems; design thinking; collaborative inquiry; quantitative and qualitative analysis and measurement; organizational macro- and micro-design; project and product management; client-centered

and policy-focused information gathering; and the presentation of professional advice to government and social-sector clients.

(iii) **A high-priority, professionally-guided consulting project** on which an interdisciplinary team of graduate students provides research, design, strategic, planning, and/or implementation support on matters that combine management, policy, governance, legal, regulatory, and/or technological issues crucial to the mission of the client organization—typically, a state department of education, school district, charter school organization, school-support or advocacy group, philanthropy, or other non-profit serving children.

The classroom components of the course are front-loaded in the semester to give student teams and their team leaders ample time to conduct client-focused project work, including by visiting clients on site in the New York City area and throughout the U.S. (travel expenses are covered by CPRL). Team assignments are based on student preferences and skills as well as client needs.

The course is taught by an accomplished team of professionals, including Columbia Law Professor and former senior official at the New York City Department of Education Jim Liebman, CPRL Executive Director Dr. Liz Chu, CPRL Senior Director of Research Strategy Dr. Kimberly Austin, and a series of guest speakers. Consulting projects are guided by a team of experienced directors employed full-time by CPRL who bring extensive experience in P-12 education, law, management consulting and other professional endeavors. These managers assure that the project work is both challenging and achievable by the student teams, and they provide students with intensive team and one-on-one feedback and personalized professional development and mentorship.

Applicants are asked to submit a resume, transcript, and written responses to two application prompts via CPRL's online application located on [CPRL's website](#).

A limited number of two types of scholarships are available for exceptional students to apply to their tuition in return for a legally enforceable commitment to spending time after graduation in a public or nonprofit job in the P-12 education sector. Students may apply for up to \$20,000 in CPRL Scholar Award funding in exchange for this commitment in any country, or they may apply for up to \$30,000 in scholarship from the Lemann Foundation with the commitment to this type of work in Brazil three of their first five years after graduation. Both awards are distributed based on need and merit, and as awards of last resort they will always take into consideration any other educational aid which students have already been (or will be) awarded. If you would like to be considered for either of these CPRL Scholar Awards, please submit the optional tuition award application also found on CPRL's website.

After initial review of application materials, CPRL will interview applicants by invitation only. Students will be notified of admissions decisions in accordance with their own school's registration

deadline. If you have any questions about the course or would like to be connected to current students or alumni, please send your request to cprl@law.columbia.edu.

