

## Public Policy Specialist

**Position Description:** This position will be filled by a social scientist with training in public policy and a specific emphasis on translational research. Scholars in the field of translational research study how scientific research is acquired, interpreted, and used (or not used) by policy makers and practitioners. For example, they study the relative roles of written products and personal relationships in determining how likely it is that research is used, or what types of intermediary organizations gain the trust of policy makers. Candidates should have a doctoral degree in public policy, political science, public administration, planning, geography, or related fields. In addition to their expertise in the translation of science into policy, the ideal candidate will have substantive expertise in one or more ANR-related policy areas, such as climate change, sustainable development, land use and regionally planning, farmland protection, youth well-being, or related issues. Experience with research which translates the concerns of traditionally underrepresented groups and engages them in policy decision making is desired. The Specialist would be located in the UC Davis Human and Community Development department.

**Justification:** This position will pursue research and extension designed to make ANR scholarship more effective in shaping policy decisions. Through its strategic initiatives, ANR is seeking to foster policy relevant research that demonstrates its public value. Investing in this Specialist will help ANR craft and refine an integrated approach to becoming more policy relevant, insuring that the work of AES scientists, Specialists, and Advisors influences key policy choices. This seemingly simple goal is actually quite complicated. As one translational scholar puts it: “Scientific findings do not fall on blank minds that get made up as a result. Science engages with busy minds that have strong views about how things are and ought to be.” The broad extension goal is to insure that relevant research informs democratic deliberation at all levels of government and for all Californians.

**Extension:** The Specialist will build an effective training program that helps ANR personnel and state policy makers do a better job of translating science into policy. Internally, the training will help researchers craft projects that engage key state policy issues and translate research findings in a manner that informs California decision makers. Externally, the training might engage a wide range of state and local officials, supporting their access to and comprehension of ANR research. Examples might include state and local elected officials, legislative staff, regional planning staff (e.g. SACOG, ABAG), agricultural commissioners, federal, state and local public managers (including California Department of Food and Agriculture, Regional Air Quality Boards, etc.), tribes, nonprofit community based organizations and grassroots groups. For example, the Specialist might collaborate with county advisors to provide vital information on natural and human resources, increasing the ability of local elected officials to use science in making land use decisions.

**Research:** Taking into account different policy contexts and using multiple methods to acquire and interpret information, the Specialist will address the following key questions:

1. Who are the major consumers of UC ANR research? What are their informational needs? How well are existing research products meeting those needs?
2. What types of written products, intermediary institutions (e.g. think tanks), personal relationships, or other mechanisms are associated with the successful transfer of research evidence into policy?
3. What specific data, including readily available economic, social, and environmental indicators, are needed to inform public policy decisions?
4. What can be learned from existing and past efforts to make research policy relevant (e.g., comparative case study research on past efforts)?

5. How can ANR research engage California's diverse populations in meaningful and productive roles in policy decision making? What processes for science literacy, social learning, public participation, or community mapping can foster more constructive policy engagement of grassroots and institutional actors?

Publication outlets would include academic journals in public policy, public administration, political science, planning, geography, and related fields; working papers and reports; *California Agriculture* and other extension journals; as well as issue briefs designed for dissemination through policy and planning networks.

**ANR Continuum:** Building on existing Human and Community Development department specialist expertise in youth, families, and community governance, this Specialist would be at the center of an extensive network of AES scientists, Specialists, and County Advisors. In collaboration with strategic initiative leaders, he or she will target priority policy issues where translational research can yield short-term policy impacts. For example, he or she might work with program teams like California Communities and Healthy Behaviors for Obesity Prevention, and with campus centers such as the Center for Weight and Health at UCB, and the Center for Nutrition and Schools at UCD, along with appropriate county advisors, to hone strategies that maximize the impact of UC research on state obesity prevention policy. Or he or she will study how to best deploy UC mapping data in local policy processes, working with county directors and building on the experience of existing mapping centers such as the UC Davis Center for Regional Change's Community and Regional Mapping Laboratory (London), the Geospatial Innovation Facility at Berkeley (Kelly), the Center for Conservation Biology at UC Riverside (Allen), and the GIS facility at Kearny Ag Center.

**Support:** The Human and Community Development Department will provide basic administrative support for the position (e.g., office space, supplies, internet, phone).

**Other support:** Major foundations such as the William T. Grant foundation are investing in translational research. The Specialist can also collaborate on funding proposals with department faculty and affiliates of the Center for Regional Change, which supports translational research as part of its core mission. In partnership with the Center, the Specialist will be able to draw as needed and appropriate on Center administrative, IT, grants development and management, communications and administrative support.

**Location:** Close access to the state capitol in Sacramento is a key benefit of locating the position on the Davis campus. The Human and Community Development department has a strong tradition of research on the linkages between science, technology and public policy, including strong applied social science program in areas such as university-industry relationships, venture capital, regional planning, civic engagement, youth development, sustainable food systems, community design, transnationalism, and environmental justice.