

UC Berkeley's Youth & Inequalities Initiative

Transforming Berkeley's Role in Improving the Lives of Adolescents

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The Issue

Adolescents globally are facing a crisis in health and wellbeing driven by stark and rising inequalities. In the San Francisco Bay Area, youth experience some of the greatest inequalities in education, health, and economic opportunity in the nation. In the richest country in the history of the world, in a region rife with talent and innovation, this is unacceptable.

Why Now? Why Berkeley?

Stemming and reversing these inequalities will yield a triple dividend in the wellbeing of youth today, adults tomorrow, and the generations that follow.

Many Berkeley faculty and researchers – from backgrounds in economics, education, medicine, neuroscience, psychology, public health, sociology, and social work – are renowned for studying social, educational, and economic inequalities. Too often, however, our scholarship is not sufficiently relevant to the challenges faced in our surrounding communities. Now is the time to ensure that our research answers the most relevant questions for informing policy and practice.

With pilot funding from the Vice Chancellor for Research Office, faculty leaders are currently creating the “connective tissue” to work collaboratively across disciplines to address key challenges in promoting adolescent wellbeing, establishing Berkeley as the hub for community-engaged science to reduce inequalities.

Concept & Vision

We are scholars who work closely with practitioners, policy-makers, and young people (both in the U.S. and internationally) on issues such as youth participation, resilience, violence, homelessness, educational inequalities, gender, and health. From this work, we know that real progress requires integrating the best of our research approaches with expertise from community partners.

We are now developing innovative Research Practice Policy Partnerships (RP3s) that include the foremost experts from Berkeley working alongside school districts, teachers, community-based organizations, government agencies, policymakers, and importantly, youth. We are keen to engage in relationships that are mutually beneficial and build the capacity for all parties to engage in high-quality and relevant research, practice, and policy change.

Via community-engaged research to address questions relevant to our community partners, our RP3 model aims to strengthen and broaden Berkeley's long-term institutional partnerships with community organizations, school districts, and government agencies committed to improving the lives of youth and adolescents. In addition, we seek to train a cohort of Berkeley Youth Equity Scholars, undergraduate and graduate students – particularly those with life experiences of economic and social inequalities – to be the next generation of leaders on the forefront of inequality reduction.

Interested in Joining Us?

We are excited to connect with community organizations in the region as we build our RP3s and identify partnerships for ongoing collaboration. Please visit i4Y.berkeley.edu for more information or email i4y@berkeley.edu. We look forward to talking with you and working towards equity in our communities.