

ANNUAL REPORT

Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center



2024-2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The 2024–2025 academic year has been a year of distinct growth and achievement for the Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center. Building on our mission to advance research and dialogue on state and local governance, we expanded our fellowship programs and welcomed eight new fellows whose diverse research interests span the many public policy issues related to New York City and New York State. Their work reflects the energy, curiosity, and public commitment that define our Center's growing community of scholars and practitioners. This year, the Center also organized several major events that deepened engagement with critical public policy issues. We hosted the *Northeastern Public Finance and Budgeting Workshop* that brought together academics, practitioners, and students to discuss important research on public financial management. Also, the *Immigration in Urban Communities* conference sparked vital conversations about how urban centers around the country are dealing with immigration challenges in a changing federal policy landscape.



The achievements of the past year were made possible through the support of Marx School and the Samuels family. Their partnership has been vital in sustaining our programs, broadening our reach, and deepening our impact across the policy landscape. As we look to the year ahead, we are eager to build on this momentum with new initiatives that further our mission. We look forward to another year of growth, collaboration, and meaningful contributions to public policy in New York and beyond.


Rahul Pathak

Director Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center

ABOUT THE CENTER

Housed within the Austin W. Marxe School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, City University of New York, the Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center is one of a few research centers with a focus on state and local governments. The Samuels Center sponsors research on state and local policies in New York, provides a forum for the thoughtful discussion of state-level public issues, and serves as an information source on politics and public policy in the Empire State. The work of the Samuels Center is grounded in local policies and events, but nationally relevant. In recent decades, policy development and implementation in state and local governments have become increasingly important as power is devolved away from the federal government. As a result, the need for applied research on state and city level policies and politics has never been greater. New York City and State offer critical laboratories for innovation on a range of public policies, and the Marxe School faculty have deep practical experience and scholarly expertise on such policies.

The mission of the Samuels Center is to fund and present comprehensive research on policies and practices central to New York policy making and administration. The Center's research reports are intended to inform elected officials, as well as to advise public sector and nonprofit managers, political advocates, media professionals, and academic scholars, and facilitate informed political and policy analysis in New York City and State. Since the Samuels Center relocated to the Marxe School in 2017, it has increased and expanded Marxe's visibility in the City and State.



2024 - 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Research

The center expanded its research programs in a range of policy areas and welcomed eight fellows comprising of doctoral students and senior faculty.

Community engagement

The center organized several events that engaged with salient public policy issues and brought together policymakers, academics, and students.

Strategic initiatives

During the 2024-2025 academic year, the center engaged in several initiatives to enhance the partnerships of the center with other regional institutions and streamlined marketing and communication initiatives.

FELLOW PROGRAMS

Every year since its relocation to the Marx School, the Samuels Center has issued an RFP requesting research proposals focused on state and local policy, with New York as the frame of reference. The RFP invites applications that propose to study a range of areas. The center accepted applications for two fellowship programs during the 2024-2025 academic year: The Samuels Doctoral Fellows Program and Samuels Public Affairs Fellowship. The former is for PhD students who have defended their dissertation proposals, and the latter is for academics, researchers, and community leaders who work in the field of public affairs. The centers received widespread interest in the fellowship applications. For both the programs, the center received about a dozen applications each and the fellows were selected by an expert committee on the basis on the merit of the proposal, the profile of applicants, the alignment of the proposal with the center's mission and strategic goals.

DOCTORAL FELLOWS

Viktor Bensus

PhD Student, Sociology
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

Project Title: *Rezoning New York: Class and Racial Inequalities in the Struggle for Space*



Miyeun Jung

PhD Student, Public Administration
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
University at Albany, SUNY

Project Title: *Advancing Educational Equity Through State-Level Health and Behavioral Interventions: Policy Evaluation Using Quasi-Experiment in New York State*



Aditya Srinivasan

PhD Student, Social Science
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Project Title: *Imagining Infrastructure: The Rise & Fall of Interstate 81*



PUBLIC AFFAIRS FELLOWS

Samantha MacBride

Adjunct Assistant Professor

Marxe School of Public and International Affairs,
Baruch College CUNY

Project Title: *Development of New York City's Waste
Data Portal*



Thomas Main

Professor

Marxe School of Public and International Affairs,
Baruch College, CUNY

Project Title: *Antecedents and Impact of New York
City's 1989 Charter Revision*



Michael Leo Owens

Professor of Political Science

Emory University

Atlanta, Georgia

Project Title: *Fair Chance Housing Act in New York
City*



PUBLIC AFFAIRS FELLOWS

Jackie Vimo

Assistant Professor,
Department of Political Science and Law
Montclair State University, New Jersey
Project Title: *NYC's reception policies for New Arrivals*



Pengju Zhang

Associate Professor
School of Public Affairs and Administration
Rutgers University, Newark
Project Title: *Reflecting on a Decade of New York's Property Tax Cap*



EVENTS

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center significantly expanded its programming, hosting two major conferences and a doctoral student colloquium that advanced dialogue on critical issues facing New York and the region. Both events were held in collaboration with the Marxe School of Public and International Affairs and underscored the Center's growing role as a hub for applied policy research, knowledge exchange, and cross-sector engagement.



CONFERENCES

During the 2024-2025 academic, the center organized two major conferences.

In March 2025, the Center organized *Immigration in Urban Communities: Policy and Pathways*, a full-day forum that brought together government officials, scholars, and practitioners to examine the challenges and policy responses surrounding recent migrant arrivals in New York City. The conference featured keynote remarks by Manuel Castro, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and explored the social, fiscal, and governance implications of immigration for urban communities. The conference was attended by over eighty participants.

In May 2025, the Center convened the *Northeastern Public Finance and Budgeting Workshop*, drawing scholars and policy professionals to discuss municipal fiscal health, debt management, intergovernmental finance, and equity in budgeting. The workshop was attended by over thirty participants.



MARCH 2025

"IMMIGRATION IN URBAN COMMUNITIES: POLICY AND PATHWAYS"

Program Schedule

9:30 – 10:00 am Breakfast and Registration

10:00 – 10:15 am Opening and Welcome Remarks

Rahul Pathak, Director,
Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center

Linda Essig, Provost, Baruch College, CUNY

Sherry Ryan, Dean, Marxe School of Public and
International Affairs, Baruch College

10:15 – 11:15 am Keynote Address and Q&A

Manuel Castro, Commissioner,
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Moderator: Robert Smith, Professor, Marxe School
of Public and International Affairs, Baruch College

11:15 – 11:30 am Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:30 pm Panel: "Supporting & Engaging Students on
Immigration Issues at Baruch and Beyond"

Andrea Gabor, Bloomberg Professor of
Business Journalism, Baruch College

Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana, Assistant Professor,
Black and Latino Studies, Baruch College

Yohaly Navarrete, Interim Director, College Now &
Collaborative Programs | Immigrant Student
Success Initiative

Moderator: Felicia Arriaga, Assistant Professor,
Marxe School of Public and International Affairs

12:30 – 1:00 pm Lunch

1:00 – 2:15 pm

Panel 1: Local Immigration Policy and Public Opinion

"Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers in New York City"

Phil Kasinitz, Presidential Professor of Sociology at the
CUNY Graduate Center

Liza Steele, Associate Professor of Sociology at
John Jay College of Criminal Justice and CUNY
Graduate Center

"NYC Migration Policy Updates and Perspectives"

Felicia Arriaga, Assistant Professor, Marxe School of Public
and International Affairs, Baruch College

Edwin Grimsley, Assistant Professor, Marxe School of Public
and International Affairs, Baruch College

*"Location, Location, Location! How Place Affected the
Activation of Legal Status and Impacts of the Pandemic for
Immigrant Families in New York City and Upstate NY"*

Robert Smith, Professor, Marxe School of Public and
International Affairs, Baruch College

Moderator: Achilles Kallergis, Assistant Professor at the
New School of Social Research and Director of the
Project on Cities and Migration at the Zolberg Institute

2:15 – 3:00 pm

Book Talk

Advancing Immigrant Rights in Houston

Els de Graauw, Professor, Department of Political Science,
Baruch College, CUNY

Shannon Gleeson, Professor, Cornell University

Moderator: Rahul Pathak, Director, Howard J. Samuels State
and City Policy Center

3:00 – 3:15 pm

Coffee Break

3:15 – 4:10 pm

Panel 2: Immigration, Institutions, and Justice

*"Urban Informality and Immigrant Integration: Advancing
a Research Agenda"*

Andres Sebastian Besserer Rayas, PhD Candidate, The
Graduate Center & Doctoral Fellow, The Samuels Center

*"Intergovernmental Criminal History Information Sharing:
Justice on Paper, Violence in Practice for Forced Migrants"*

Sarah Bishop, Professor, Department of Communication
Studies, Baruch College, CUNY

Moderator: Robin Harper, Professor, York College
and The Graduate Center, CUNY

4:10 – 4:15 pm

Closing and Announcements

MAY 2025

NORTHEASTERN PUBLIC FINANCE AND BUDGETING WORKSHOP

9:00 – 9:30 am | Breakfast and Registration

9:30 – 9:45 am | Opening and Welcome Remarks

Rahul Pathak, Director, Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center
Sherry Ryan, Dean, Marx School of Public and International Affairs,
Baruch College, CUNY

9:45 – 11:15 am | Panel 1: Education Finance and Municipal Debt

Brick by Brick: The Uneven Road to Funding School Infrastructure in Washington State

Sharon Kioko, Associate Professor, University of Washington, Seattle
Claire McMorris, Budget Advisor, Seattle Public Schools
Pengju Zhang, Associate Professor, Rutgers University, Newark

Financial Myopia in Closed Systems: How State Financial Monitoring Systems can Ignore Local Constraints

Eric Brunner, Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Connecticut
Jinhal Yu, Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Connecticut
David Schwegman, Assistant Professor, American University

The Impact of Moody's Bond Rating Recalibration on School District Financing and Outcomes

Jinhal Yu, Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Connecticut
J Cameron Anglum, Assistant Professor, Lehigh University, Pennsylvania
Eric Brunner, Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Connecticut

The Intrigue of Municipal Debt Analytics: The Case of Tax-Exempt Tender/Refunding Transactions

Andrew Kalotay, President, Kalotay Advisors
Martin Luby, Associate Professor, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, Austin

Moderator: **Carolyn Abbott**, Assistant Professor, Dpt. of Political Science, Baruch College

11:15 – 11:30 am | Coffee Break

11:30 am – 12:30 pm | Panel 2: Local Government Politics

Electoral Cycles and Municipal Fines: Political Manipulation of Local Revenue Instruments in Chile

Tomas Soto Jara, PhD Student, Rutgers University, Newark

Decoding the Role of Parent-Teacher Associations in New York City School Budgets

Carolyn Abbott, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Baruch College

Electing CEOs, Business Owners, and Executives in Local Politics

Patricia Kirkland, Assistant Professor, SIPA, Columbia University

Moderator: **Eric Brunner**, Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Connecticut

12:30 – 1:30 pm | Lunch and Networking

1:30 – 3:00 pm | Panel 3: Municipal Finance and Intergovernmental Grants

Independent Municipal Fiscal Councils: A Survey of their Architecture, Scope and Efficacy

Rahul Pathak, Baruch College, City University of New York
Marco Cangiano, Overseas Development Institute

The Missing Middle in Fiscal Federalism: Municipal Wealth and Local Revenue Responses to State Aid Retrenchment

Timothy Little, PhD Student, Rutgers University

Flooding Exposure Impacts on Municipal Public Finance in NJ

Umer Farooq, Student, The Bloustein School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
Clinton J. Andrews, The Bloustein School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
David Listokin, The Bloustein School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
Marc Pfeiffer, The Bloustein School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Equitable Access to Federal Hazard Mitigation Funding: Exploring the Interaction of Social Vulnerability and Organizational Capacity

Hyoeun Kim, PhD Student, The Rockefeller College, SUNY, Albany

Moderator: **Pengju Zhang**, Associate Professor, Rutgers University, Newark

3:00 – 3:15 pm | Coffee Break

3:15 – 4:15 pm | Panel 4: Fiscal Health and Reporting

Exploring the Dynamics of Fiscal Health Using Machine Learning: Insights from the New York State's Fiscal Monitoring System

Wei-Jie Liao, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
Elaine Yi Lu, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
Hunter Johnson, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
Craig Maher, University of Nebraska, Omaha

The Influence of Governor's Political Party Affiliation on State Fiscal Health, 2003-23

Jason Bennett, Technology Forensic Analyst, City of Rochester, Minnesota
Melissa McShea, Assistant Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY

A Qualitative Case Study of Detroit's ACFR Limitations Post-Bankruptcy

Alisha Sukhram, PhD Student, Rutgers University, Newark

Moderator: **Rahul Pathak**, Baruch College, City University of New York

4:15 – 4:30 pm | Closing, Announcements, Networking

DOCTORAL STUDENT COLLOQUIUM

In October 2024, the Samuels Center organized a virtual colloquium of 2023-2024 doctoral fellows that provided them with an opportunity to share their ongoing dissertation research and get feedback from peers. These kinds of forums reflect the Samuels Center's ongoing commitment to fostering student engagement and supporting emerging scholars.



During the colloquium:

Battaluga Buyannemekh presented his research on understanding *How County Governments in New York State Strategize Information Technology*

Andres Sebastian Besserer Rayas presented his research on *the Comparative Study of Immigration Governance in the U.S. And Colombia*.

Ying Liu presented her research on *Women's Representation and Policy Making in New York*

Oscar Oliver-Didier presented his research on *Fiscal Incentives and Police-Community Developer Partnerships in New York City*

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

During the 2024-2025 academic year, the center engaged in a dialogue with several stakeholders to strengthen the center's functioning and impact. Among these the key initiatives include.

- Establishing an advisory board for strategic planning and program development.
- A staff team primarily comprised of graduate students worked on improving the marketing and communications for the center – including creation a new website.
- The center undertook outreach at regional and national forums such as the American Society of Public Administration Annual Conference in Washington D.C., Northeastern Conference on Public Administration, and Local Government Lab organized by the Rockefeller Institute of Government.
- The center has developed partnerships with several city organizations (examples being Office of Management and Budget and Independent Budget Office) and other academic institutions in the region. The hosting of the Northeastern Public Finance and Budgeting Workshop was a result of this outreach and partnership with Rutgers University.
- The center is strengthening its research profile and fellows will make research contributions that could be published as working papers and policy reports on the center's new website. These initiatives are scheduled to be rolled out during the 2025-2026 academic year.

PEOPLE

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Housed within the Austin W. Marx School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, City University of New York, the Howard J. Samuels State and City Policy Center is dedicated to advancing research and dialogue on public policy issues, with a particular emphasis on state and local governance. Founded in 1984 in honor of Howard J. Samuels, the Center was relocated to Baruch College in 2017 and is supported by a grant from the State of New York and an endowment from the Samuels estate. Serving as a hub for research, policy analysis, and public engagement, the Samuels Center focuses on governance in the New York region and beyond. Through its initiatives, the Center informs policymaking, fosters meaningful discussions, and provides students with opportunities for academic and professional growth in public affairs.

For any questions or queries please contact

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