Urban Innovation Fund Final Report: Understanding Equity through One Camden's Universal School Enrollment

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Round: 1

Team Members:

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- Steve Silvasy, Chief Operating Officer, One Camden

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Project Details:

- **Name of Project:** Understanding Equity through One Camden's Universal School Enrollment

- **Coordinating Principal Investigator/PI:** Stephen Danley

- **Amount Awarded:** $66,572

- **Amount Spent: $51,781**

- **Final Report Due Date:** July 31, 2024

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Background:

In 2017, One Camden was founded expressly to ensure that Camden's school enrollment process was equitable. One Camden assimilated household preferences to ensure students attend a high-quality school. In the five years since, One Camden has emerged as a national leader in supporting equitable choice of schools. However, little is understood about the preferences of families using this innovative system—information needed to assess effectiveness and equity of the choice process.

Our collaboration tackles that question. Using 5 years of household school preference data, our study considers the following inquiries by a) analyzing existing household school choice data and b) designing a survey to receive additional input from families about their choices.

1.2 Research Project Priority Population:

The research examines applications by Camden households in the universal enrollment system choosing children's K-12 schools.

1.3 Research Project Location/Organization:

The research uses existing application data with One Camden that is shared through a data sharing agreement.

1.4 Project Objectives:

- Create a data sharing agreement and analytical data set capable of analyzing equity in Camden's Universal Enrollment Process.

- Use that data set to analyze the equity of the universal enrollment process.

- Share findings with relevant communities with goals of improving equity in the universal enrollment system.

2. Methodology:

2.1 Research Questions:

List the specific research questions for your project.

- **1) How do core school attributes such as geography, quality of facilities, type of school (traditional public, charter, renaissance), and household demographics (such as neighborhood, race, IEPs) impact household preference of school? [from application]**

- 2) What are the characteristics of families who choose? Why do parents participate in school choice? To what extent do parents choose among different types of public schools in an urban context? [updated once we had data]

2.2 Research Design:

Describe the methods used to answer each research question (e.g., quantitative survey, interviews, focus groups). Provide a narrative description and complete the table below. You can edit the table to fit your research project design and methods.

2.3 Narrative Description of Methods:

The study uses logistic regression to test equity. The dependent model in the variable is "guarantee school", which shows whether an applicant to the universal enrollment process chose the traditional public school where they had a guaranteed seat. We use controls such as household characteristics, school characteristics, community characteristics, and distance to relevant schools.

2.4 Instruments:

Describe the specific instruments used for each method (e.g., surveys, checklists, interview guides). Include names of any validated survey instruments used. Attach a copy of the instruments to the final document if applicable.

n/a

2.5 Collaboration:

Describe your collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. Include any new collaborations not detailed in the initial proposal and explain how all collaborators contributed to the project.

Steve Silvasy, the One Camden Chief Operating Officer, is on our data team. He has worked with us on design, data cleaning, analysis and interpretation.

Tameeka Mason, the One Camden Executive Director, has collaborated on design, our presentation at Urban Affairs Association, and dissemination strategies.

This is in keeping with our application.

2.6 Data Collection:

Explain who collected the data and the methods used.

We did not collect original data. I've attached the data sharing agreement we wrote with One Camden.

2.7 Data Sharing:

Detail the de-identified data your project team can share with Rutgers for further research in the region.

Our data sharing agreement and IRB approval does not allow for sharing of the data because of the sensitive nature of the data (which includes GIS coordinates for households).

We plan to share summaries of our findings as one of our deliverables.

2.8 Data Analysis:

Describe how data was analyzed (e.g., computer software, statistical tests, qualitative analysis).

As described above, the data was analyzed through logistic regression, using type of school chosen as the dependent variable and a number of controls.

2.9 Limitations:

The major limitations are what is included in our data set. We do not know *why* households are choosing certain schools, we only know the patterns and characteristics of the choices. We are addressing this by applying for funds to conduct a survey with One Camden to collect this data.

Similarly, the data set had fewer controls than expected. We've supplemented this by added community census data to our analytical data set, but this is less precise. We also plan to ask for this info in our survey.

3. Budget:

3.1 Percentage of Funds Expended:

Please indicate the percentage of allotted funds that have been expended at the time of submission.

We've expended $51,781 of $66,572. We have several thousand dollars in outstanding expenses (from our community partners going to Urban Affairs Association – this is quite complicated) and costs from the creation of a distance measure through API.

Most of the remaining funds are for dissemination (more on this below) and additional student work as we continue to write up results.

3.2 Final Expended Budget:

Attach your final expended budget to this report.

We've attached the latest full report from Rutgers Sponsored Research.

3.3 Additional Funding:

Describe any additional funding you were able to leverage for your project during this period. Include details such as the amount, funding source, and start/end dates.

We received $41,480 from REACH. Originally the terms were July 1, 2023 to June 30 2024, but we've received a 6 month no-cost extension.

Additional applications to REACH and the WT Grant Foundation for Stage 2 of the project were not funded.

We have an outstanding application with the Spencer Foundation for **$440, 575.**

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4. Results:

4.1 Research Question Results:

Describe the results for each research question, including any relevant charts or tables.

We are still building out some of the controls in our data set, but early analysis tests two key equity factors (gender, language). Findings show:

 - No evidence of a gender difference in the likelihood of selecting the neighborhood guaranteed school.

- On average, Spanish-speaking households are 6 percentage points more likely to select the neighborhood guaranteed school compared to English-speaking households.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
OLS Regressions on Selecting the Neighborhood Guaranteed School			
Female Student	0.006		0.005
	(0.012)		(0.012)
Household Language		0.063***	0.062***
		(0.016)	(0.015)
Adjusted R-squared	0.000	0.003	0.003
Observations	5,500	5,500	5,500

Notes: *Robust standard errors in parentheses. Data comes from One Camden main round and post-main round applications during the 2022-23 school years that were not missing any values for the variables above. "ELL" indicates parent preferred language was Spanish when completing the online application.* * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, and *** $p<0.01$.

5. Discussion:

5.1 Key Issues:

Identify key issues in the results, particularly those that are large or unexpected.

The key finding is really interesting – it is that families that complete the application in Spanish have a different pattern of engaging in school choice, and are significantly more likely to choose their traditional neighborhood school.

We discussed this finding with our community partner, and it is a policy story – to access English as a Second Language resources and programs, households are required by policy to apply to these schools.

This led to a shift in our dissemination strategy – we thought that the primary equity discussion would be about access to the enrollment system, or parental preferences. But thus far, the largest issue is around the ways existing policy mean that certain households navigate a different choice infrastructure. We discuss below the implications for publication and dissemination.

5.2 Challenges Encountered:

Describe any obstacles faced while completing the project and provide a timeline if possible.

There were a lot of challenges here. The largest one was navigating the Rutgers infrastructure to pay community partners. We also encountered significant challenges around the data set – it had different data than we expected and required a lot more data cleaning than we expected.

5.3 Changes in Approach:

A. Explain any changes in approach and the reasons for those changes (e.g., experiences, lessons learned, external factors).

Most of the adjustments are to dissemination (below).

There are some administrative lessons in terms of improved processes through Rutgers.

There are also some more technical adjustments to how we're analyzing the data set, how we interpret the different school choice types, and the use of school variables.

B. Describe any actual or anticipated problems or delays and the actions or plans to resolve them.

The main delays have been in constructing the controls for the analytical data set. We're still in the process of filling in the controls that were missing from the One Camden data set to ensure we have controls necessary for publication.

Rutgers infrastructure

C. Discuss any changes that significantly impacted expenditures.

It is virtually impossible right now to pay community organizations, and there are significant delays in hiring students through HR.

D. Note any significant changes in the use or care of human subjects (if applicable).

n/a

5.4 Learning from the Unexpected:

Reflect on any unexpected events or results. Did you see these as positive (unanticipated benefits) or negative (frustrations or failures)? What did you learn from these experiences?

5.5 Accomplishments:

Discuss the goals you were able to achieve while completing the research project?

I think the goals are ongoing, but we have an early finding with the potential to improve equity through policy change in the city – which is very exciting!

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6. Impact:

6.1 Dissemination:

A. How do you anticipate your findings will be relevant to the communities under study?

The findings are most relevant to households that use Spanish as their language in the home or completing the application.

The primary relevance is in updating the policy to improve the choice process for this set of households. Our dissemination strategy had to shift to address this.

B. Have the results been disseminated to communities of interest? (Yes/No)

No

a. If yes, please describe (e.g., locations, dates).

b. If not, is there a plan for community dissemination? Please describe.

Yes. We canceled our original seminar on these findings (in April) because it was scheduled to take place at La Unique bookstore – an African-American bookstore. Because the findings are largely surrounding Latino communities, we scrapped that idea.

One Camden suggested that we pivot away from a broader dissemination event with parents to a focused meeting with policy makers to discuss the process for these families. We're currently working with One Camden to disseminate first to that community, and to produce deliverables for that meeting as well as parents.

C. Have the results been disseminated in academic forums?

Yes.

a. If yes, please describe (e.g., conference presentations, journal articles).

Urban Affairs Association April, 2024. We've attached that powerpoint to this report. Tameeka Mason, the Executive Director of One Camden attended and presented at the conference. She loved it and is hoping to bring more people from her team next year!

We are working on an article based on those findings for the journal of urban affairs.

b. If not, is there a plan for dissemination in academic forums? Please describe.

6.2 Sustainability:

Is this project sustainable? Will it continue beyond the allotted time?

We have applied to fund the next stage of this research with WT Grant (rejected), REACH (received 1 of 2 grants), and Spencer Foundation. The next stage is a survey as described above.

We also have recruited a pre-doctoral fellow from the MITTENS program at Michigan State to continue working on this as our first round of funding expires.

6.3 Future Funding:

A. Have you applied for future funding for this research project? (Yes/No)

Yes.

a. If yes, please describe (include dates, funding sources, and mechanisms).

We have applied to fund the next stage of this research with WT Grant (rejected), REACH (received 1 of 2 grants), and Spencer Foundation. Spencer is outstanding and we expect to hear in 5-6 months.

We plan to continue to look for funding for stage 2 of the project as we publish and disseminate stage 1.

b. If no, do you have plans to apply for future funding? Please provide details.