CU School of Public Affairs
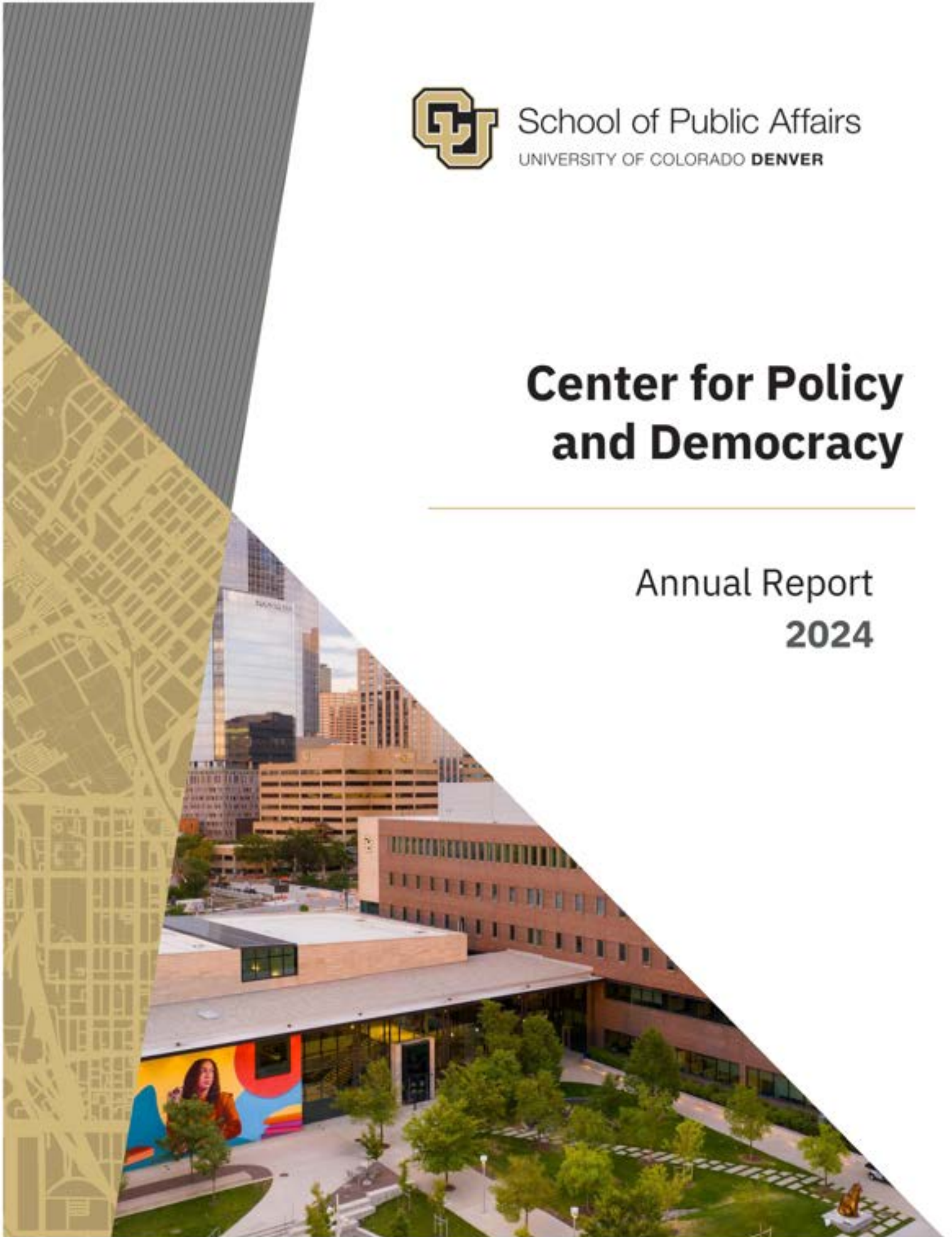UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Center for Policy and Democracy

Annual Report
2024

Center for Policy and Democracy

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WHO WE ARE

The Center for Policy and Democracy is a hub for research, teaching, and community engagement on public policy and democracy.

WHAT WE DO

Working across disciplines, states, and countries, we bring various perspectives to study and inform how policies and politics impact the most important issues facing democratic societies today.

OUR PRIORITIES

Collaboration

Use interdisciplinary collaboration to connect diverse perspectives across disciplines and regions.

Research

Advance policy process theories and methods by supporting both emerging and established research communities.

Engagement

Establish community engagement through public policy education and seminars.

More Info

For more information, visit our website at publicaffairs.ucdenver.edu

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

We are honored to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Center for Policy and Democracy (CPD). This past year has been transformative for our Center, filled with groundbreaking research, impactful partnerships, and meaningful progress in our mission to bring diverse perspectives to the study of how policies and politics shape the most pressing challenges facing democratic societies.

Within these pages, you will find highlights from a year of growth and collaboration. Our research seminars, workshops, and public events have fostered critical conversations that bridge academic scholarship and real-world application. Through cutting-edge publications, teaching, and service, our faculty, staff, and students continue to drive forward innovative solutions that address systemic inequities and deepen our understanding of the policy process.

This work would not have been possible without the generous support of donors and funders who share our vision for a more equitable and inclusive democracy. Your contributions have been instrumental in enabling the Center to build capacity, explore new research frontiers, and engage with communities across Colorado and beyond.

As we look to the future, your partnership will be more critical than ever. Together, we can ensure CPD remains a leading voice in the pursuit of evidence-based solutions that strengthen democratic institutions and serve the public good. Thank you for your continued trust, engagement, and generosity. Without further ado, enjoy CPD's 2024 Annual Report.

With deep gratitude,
Tanya Heikkila and Chris Weible
Co-Directors, Center for Policy and Democracy

Tanya Heikkila, Ph.D.

Chris Weible, Ph.D.

STAFF AND FACULTY

ALLEGRA FULLERTON, PH.D. CANDIDATE
PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH ASSISTANT

DHANI FREELAND, M.P.P. STUDENT
GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

DESERAI CROW, PH.D.
PROFESSOR & INTERIM CO-DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY & RESILIENCE

SHEILA HUSS, PH.D.
ASSISTANT TEACHING PROFESSOR & INTERIM CO-DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY & RESILIENCE

ALEJANDRA MEDINA, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

ANNIE MILLER, PH.D.
ASSISTANT TEACHING PROFESSOR & ASSOCIATE DEAN,
STUDENT SUCCESS & STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

PEPE SÁNCHEZ, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

KATIE IMHOFF
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT,
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

STUDENTS

KATHLEEN BAILEY
PH. D

JOEL BENSON
PH.D. CANDIDATE

DAVID BRAZ
PH.D. STUDENT

JOHN BUTT
PH.D. CANDIDATE

ANNA CRAWFORD
PH.D. STUDENT

KAYLA GABEHART
PH.D.

AERANG NAM
PH.D.

NICO PUNKAR
M.P.A. STUDENT

EMMA SCHEETZ
PH.D. STUDENT

ARIANA TYLER
M.P.A.

HOPE YOHN
PH.D. STUDENT

JILL YORDY
PH.D.

2024

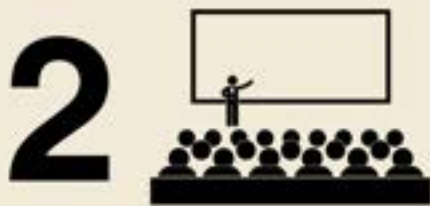## BY THE NUMBERS

7 INVITED PANELISTS AND SPEAKER EVENTS

14 CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2 GUEST LECTURES

13 JOURNAL ARTICLE PUBLICATIONS

3 BOOK CHAPTER PUBLICATIONS

2 BLOG PUBLICATIONS

SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, & EVENTS

CPD creates opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and community members to enhance their skills and deepen their understanding of the policy process across different subdomains.

MPP & POLICY WORKSHOP SEMINAR

The Master of Public Policy (MPP) program combines the analytical features of traditional MPP degrees with the emphasis on democracy and the policy process unique to CU Denver. The Policy Workshop Seminar, facilitated by Tanya Heikkila and Chris Weible, features critical analyses of policy and democracy scholarship, in-depth discussions of student research, exploration of contemporary events, and guest lectures by scholars and practitioners.

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

This year, Tanya Heikkila was appointed to the Board of Trustees for the Colorado Health Institute (CHI). CHI is committed to driving change in three initiative areas: climate and health, behavioral health, and integrating systems of care to better the lives of Coloradans.

CPD continued to support Building Democratic Communities a multi-disciplinary effort that spans more than a dozen academic units and 30 faculty on supporting teaching, research, and community engagement on democratic themes.

Allegra Fullerton has worked alongside Kristin Olofsson of Colorado State University to promote and facilitate the Advocacy Coalition Framework Seminar. This year's presentations included CU Denver's Chris Weible, University of Tennessee's Michael Jones, and Brock University's Tim Heinmiller.

CONFERENCE ON POLICY PROCESS RESEARCH

COPPR

The Center for Policy and Democracy is proud to have been a primary sponsor for the second Conference on Policy Process Research (COPPR) hosted at Syracuse University. COPPR brought together nearly 400 policy process researchers, more than half of whom represented institutions outside of the United States, creating a vibrant and diverse setting for policy process scholarship.

The mission of COPPR is to advance policy process scholarship by supporting a wide range of theories and methods while fostering connections among established and emerging research communities. COPPR encourages critical reflection on past lessons, challenges contemporary boundaries, and promotes innovative research agendas for the future. CPD supported the programmatic elements for the event and our team of co-directors, students, and staff all attended and presented our research. This engagement remains a cornerstone of CPD's service to the research community. Together our team shared over 20 papers, five of which Emma Scheetz led!

COLLABORATIVE EVENTS

FEATURED VISITING SCHOLAR

The CPD, the School of Public Affairs, and CPD's very own Pepe Sánchez hosted Dr. Hank Jenkins-Smith for a dialogue session linking policy processes and policy analysis. Dr. Jenkins-Smith is well known as one of the co-creators of Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). This session, moderated by CPD Co-Director Chris Weible, explored questions about the role of policy analysis and science in the policy process, policy change and learning, coalition politics, and more!

FIRST FRIDAYS

CPD supports SPA's signature First Fridays with the School of Public Affairs event series covers a wide range of pressing issues and features panelists representing a diversity of viewpoints. The events are held in person and virtually most months during the fall and spring semesters.

HERRICK ROTH LECTURE SERIES

The Herrick Roth Lecture Series supported a variety of CPD's First Friday and other Election Series Events. These events included *First Fridays: Colorado and the Country at a Crossroads, Election 2024: The Colorado Ballot: Seismic Decisions, Election 2024: Disinformation and the Perils of Election Administration,* and *First Fridays: Election Aftermath-Key Takeaways for Colorado.*

METHODS FOR THE POLICY PROCESS WORKSHOP

The CPD sponsored the Methods for the Policy Process Workshop (MOPP) at the Lulea University of Technology in Sweden. MOPP Workshops featured sessions focusing on challenges in research design, data collection, measurement, indicators, analyses and the philosophical underpinnings for advancing knowledge about policy processes.

CENTER FOR POLICY & DEMOCRACY
2024 SEMINAR SERIES

SIMONE GRANNSJO:
Mid-Sweden University (Östersund, Sweden)

CHARLIE THOMPSON:
Norwegian University of Science And Technology (Trondheim, Norway)

ELIZABETH KOEBELE:
University of Nevada, Reno (Reno, NV)

ANNA CRAWFORD:
University of Colorado Denver (Denver, CO)

HOPE YOHN:
University of Colorado Denver (Denver, CO)

EMMA SCHEETZ:
University of Colorado Denver (Denver, CO)

GIULIA FORNARO:
Bocconi University (Milan, Italy)

INVITED SPEAKING
EVENTS

Chris Weible: "International Symposium: Crisis & Multilevel Governance."
University of Crete, Greece.

Chris Weible: "Tips for Overcoming Concept-to-Measure Challenges in Policy Process Scholarship."
Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

Andrea Gerlak and Tanya Heikkila: "Learning for Environmental Governance:
Insights for a more adaptive, transformative future." *In Common Podcast*

Tanya Heikkila:"Breaking Down Barriers to Learning for Adaptive Water Governance."
University of Colorado, Boulder

Tanya Heikkila: "Connecting the Drops: Managing Water for a Changing Future."
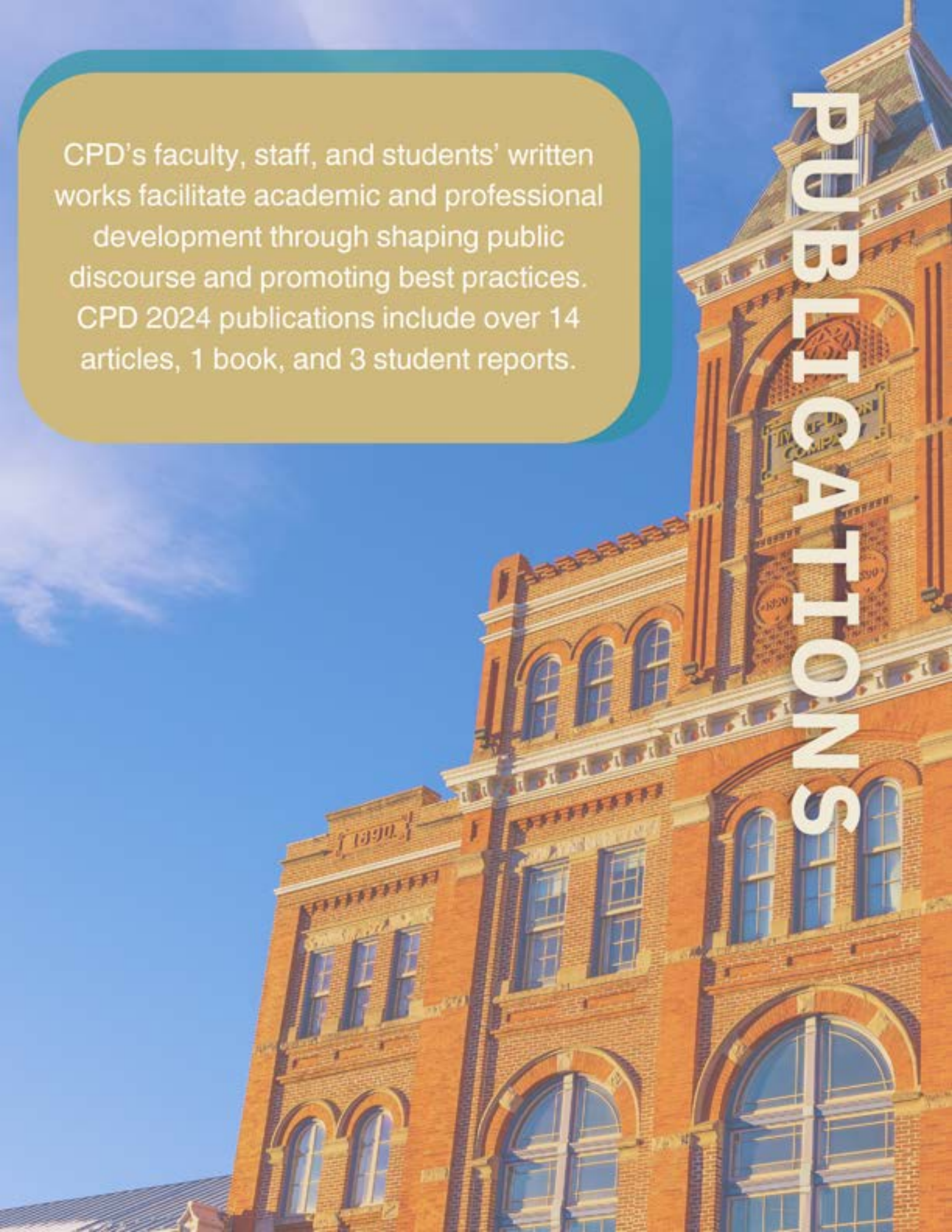Western Slope Conservation Center, Hotchkiss, CO

Tanya Heikkila:"Navigating the Rapids: Colorado River Governance in the 21st Century."
University of Arizona

Tanya Heikkila: "Learning in Environmental Governance: Lessons for Research and Practice."
International Public Policy Association Winter School, Aussois, France

CPD's faculty, staff, and students' written works facilitate academic and professional development through shaping public discourse and promoting best practices. CPD 2024 publications include over 14 articles, 1 book, and 3 student reports.
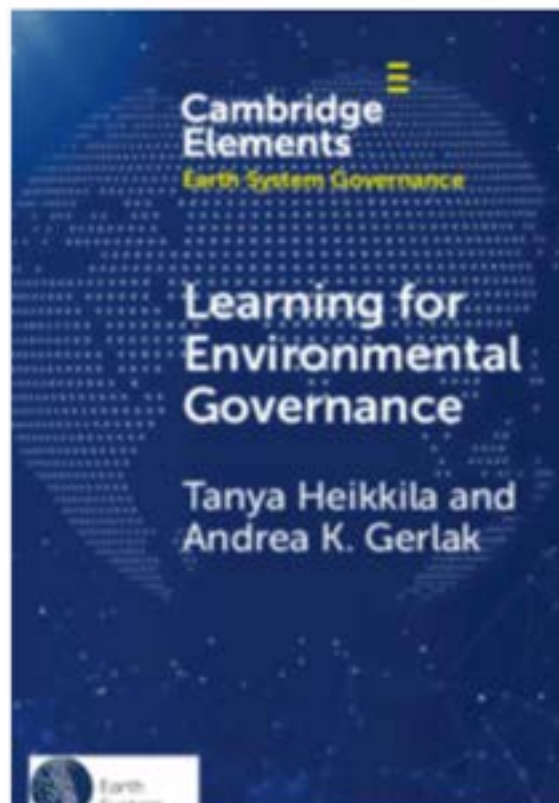
PUBLICATIONS

FEATURED PUBLICATION

LEARNING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

TANYA HEIKKILA AND ANDREA GERLAK

Learning is critical for our capacity to govern the environment and adapt proactively to complex and emerging environmental issues. Yet, underlying barriers can challenge our capacity for learning in environmental governance. As a result, we often fail to adequately understand pressing environmental problems or produce innovative and effective solutions. This Element synthesizes insights from extensive academic and applied research on learning around the world to inform both research and practice. We distill the social and structural features of governance to help researchers and practitioners better understand, diagnose, and support learning and more adaptive responses to environmental problems.

Cambridge Elements
Earth System Governance

Learning for Environmental Governance

Tanya Heikkila and Andrea K. Gerlak

Earth System

EMOTIONS AND POLITICS

Examining emotional belief expressions of advocacy coalitions
ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

Many theories and approaches to policy studies have recently begun to question and research how emotions interact with peoples' understanding and behaviors, especially in policy and politics. This paper builds on and contributes to studying emotions in policy and politics via the advocacy coalition framework (ACF).

Emotional expressions and Advocacy coalitions
ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON, KAYLA GABEHART & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

While many policy process theories mention emotions, they have remained mostly unexplored theoretically and empirically, even as broader social science literature incorporates emotions into understanding policy process-related phenomena such as political beliefs and behaviors. This paper introduces the theoretical arguments and a method for studying advocacy coalitions using a combination of emotions and beliefs within the Advocacy Coalition Framework.

Exploring emotional discourses: The case of COVID-19 protests in US media
JILL YORDY, ANNA DURNOVÀ, & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

Emotions are involved in virtually every aspect of human cognition, including information processing and decision-making. Thus, to understand political conflict and policy decision-making more fully, we must strive to understand the role of emotions in these phenomena. This paper explores expressed emotions in protests related to the policy decisions around the COVID-19 pandemic.

How are emotions and beliefs expressed in legislative testimonies?
An advocacy coalition approach
KAYLA M. GABEHART, ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON, ANNA M. CRAWFORD & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

While emotions are an inherent component of the human experience that influence behavior, values, and beliefs, they have largely been left out of policy process studies theoretically and methodologically. Using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), with its focus on how individuals coalesce into coalitions around a set of common beliefs, we begin to situate emotions as a critical component of belief systems and discourse about public policies. This study analyzes legislative testimony from four policies debated during the 2021 Colorado Legislative Session using discourse analysis to identify the emotions and coalitional beliefs.

Analyzing emotional discourse among allies and opponents in the news media
ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON, KAYLA M. GABEHART, JILL YORDY & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

The sociology of emotions reveals how emotion contributes to and helps inform social and political issues. This study contributes to the literature by examining how competing advocacy coalitions ascribe emotions to their allies and opponents in the politically contentious issue of siting a gas pipeline project in the US. It analyses the emotional and belief expressions of people engaged in the debate in approximately 370 newspaper articles.

LEARNING AND BELIEFS

The political polarization over abortion:
An analysis of advocacy coalition belief systems
ANNA M. CRAWFORD & CHRISTOPHER M. WEIBLE

Although abortion policy is often discussed as a black-and-white conflict characterized by polarization and a lack of compromise, this study explores the validity of such a presupposition by asking how advocates articulate their belief systems about abortion policy and in what ways —if at all—are those beliefs shared within and across coalitions and create fissures within and between coalitions?

Illuminating the collective learning continuum in the

Colorado River Basin Science-Policy Forums
MEREDITH HOVIS, ANDREA K. GERLAK, TANYA HEIKKILA, PAM RITTELMEYER, ELIZABETH KOEBELE, LINDA ESTELÍ MÉNDEZ-BARRIENTOS, & MARK LUBELL

Although considerable research over the past two decades has examined collective learning in environmental governance, much of this scholarship has focused on cases where learning occurred, limiting our understanding of the drivers and barriers to learning. To advance knowledge of what we call the "collective learning continuum," we compare cases of learning to cases where learning was not found to occur or its effects were "blocked."

Knowledge is not power: Learning in polycentric governance systems
PAM RITTELMEYER, MARK LUBELL, MEREDITH HOVIS, TANYA HEIKKILA, ANDREA K. GERLAK, & TARA POZZI

The link between knowledge and decision-making in polycentric systems is shaped by the process of collective learning, where policy actors participate in multiple policy forums to acquire, translate, and disseminate knowledge. This article argues that the relationship between learning and participation in polycentric systems differs for actors with executive responsibilities versus specialized staff.

Diagnosing individual barriers to collective learning:
How governance contexts shape cognitive biases
TANYA HEIKKILA, ANDREA K. GERLAK, & BETSY SMITH

A growing body of public policy and governance scholars recognize the importance of learning in supporting adaptive and responsive governance systems. Fostering learning within policy processes and governance systems, however, can be challenging. Collectively, we often ignore or misinterpret relevant policy information, or we may be incapable of translating new information into policy. Despite significant scholarly attention to learning, knowledge of the barriers to learning remains underdeveloped. To advance theoretical insights, this article integrates research on individual cognitive biases with literature on learning to identify barriers that can block learning or lead to non-learning in policy and governance processes. It also explores how these barriers can be mitigated or exacerbated by different governance contexts.

Learning in polycentric governance:
Insights from the California Delta science enterprise
MARK LUBELL, TARA POZZI, TANYA HEIKKILA, ANDREA K. GERLAK, & PAMELA RITTELMEYER

Science is critical for learning and adaptation of policy and governance systems. Increasingly, science is produced in the context of a science enterprise: a complex, polycentric institutional arrangement featuring multiple science forums and actors. The characteristics of these polycentric systems can influence whether and to what extent science supports policy-relevant learning. Limited research, however, has examined how science enterprises function as polycentric systems and how they can be governed to support learning

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2024 STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Signing Globally, Implementing Locally: Protecting Endangered Wildlife and the Predicament of Germany's Federalism
KAYLA M. GABEHART & CHRISTOPH STEFES

Ruralits, Resilience, & Identity: A Soft Systems Methodology Approach to Understanding Self-Reported Issues in Rural America
KAYLA M. GABEHART, ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON, & KRISTIN OLOFSSON

Policy Feedback and the Implementation of International Wildlife Treaties in Germany
KAYLA M. GABEHART, ALLEGRA H. FULLERTON, & CHRISTOPH STEFES

GRANTS, SUPPORT & AWARDS

CPD awards provide critical support in expanding impact through research, public engagement, and foster collaboration across different institutions.

TANYA HEIKKILA

"BUILDING REGIONAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL EQUITY THROUGH HOUSING AND LAND USE POLICY"

This year, Tanya, in collaboration with eight other CU Denver faculty (pictured below), received a $1.8 million dollar grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation. This grant supports research on two interrelated crises: climate change and housing affordability. These critical challenges are affecting urban communities in the U.S., and transit-oriented communities (TOCs) offer a promising strategy to address both issues. The research will engage in interdisciplinary research to identify and evaluate policies and urban designs that enable climate-resilient and equitable TOCs. The research will also develop tools to help policymakers understand tradeoffs and support transformative capacity for equitable and sustainable growth.

ANNA CRAWFORD

"IMPROVING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH POLICY THROUGH INTERSECTIONAL ADVOCACY"

This year, Anna received a $7,500 grant from the Society of Family Planning to support her work. This grant supports ongoing efforts to further Anna's research agenda which focuses on reproductive healthcare policy, intersectionality, and democracy. With this support, Anna can advance current studies on how marginalized communities disproportionately feel the policy effects of abortion regulations and also have an unequal voice in the policy processes that shape regulations.

SOJEONG KIM, ADAM M. WELLSTEAD, & TANYA HEIKKILA

Each year, the editors of the Review of Policy Research journal award an editors' choice best paper, which honors the contribution of the highest scientific quality and excellence to advance policy research. This year, the award was given to SPA PhD alum, Sojoeng Kim, who worked with Adam Wellstead at Michigan Tech University and Tanya on a study of policy innovation labs (PILs). The publication examined how PILs contribute to policy capacity.

PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
CO-DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF CPD

CHRIS
WEIBLE

Chris is an internationally recognized public policy scholar and professor who's work has significantly contributed to policy process theories. His most notable work being the Advocacy Coalition Framework explains how change occurs throughout the policy process as it relates to advocacy coalitions and organizations. Chris's contributions to public policy sciences have influenced academic research and real-world policy making. His scholarly work such as the *Theories of the Policy Process*, have been studied in classrooms worldwide and has shaped how they are studied and understood. Through his scholarship and leadership he has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Lulea University in Sweden.

Chris's influence on future generations as a mentor and leader has led to countless students receiving academic positions, making him one of the most impactful mentors at the CU Denver. His dedication has earned him the university's top mentoring awards.

Within the broader academic community, Chris has co-edited leading journals, launched the Conference on Policy Process Research (COPPR), and led initiative such as "Building Democratic Communities" at CU Denver to inspire progress in academic study and practical application of public policy.

" *CPD extends our heartfelt congratulations to Chris. We are so thankful for his role as a leader, mentor, and colleague.* "

CU DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Through our philanthropic partners, we are deepening our work to understand and support democratic policy processes.

Thanks to the School of Public Affairs Wirth Chair in Sustainable Development, foundation support from One Community, and individual donations to the deLeon Fund for Policy and Democracy, the Center for Policy and Democracy is actively dedicating resources to expanding research capacity, strengthening community relationships, and examining the role of marginalized and vulnerable communities in policy processes. Together, we are advancing knowledge on how diverse policy actors influence complex public policy challenges.

THE DELEON LEGACY

The Center of Policy and Democracy honors the legacy of Dr. Peter deLeon, a giant in the field of policy studies and policy sciences. In his work, Peter pioneered several subfields of policy and authored many insightful books and articles that continue to be cited by scholars in the field. Peter mentored at least half of the students graduating from the school's PhD in Public Affairs program during the period 1990-2010 and was a generous mentor to many junior faculty members during his time at the school.

Thank You

The Center for Policy and Democracy extends its gratitude to everyone who has supported and contributed to our mission. Our dedicated staff, faculty, students, and community members' hard work and passion have been a driving force behind our success. We are also thankful for our partners and grant providers whose generosity empowers the continuance of our vital work.

PREPARED BY:

The Center for Policy and Democracy

https://publicaffairs.ucdenver.edu/research-and-impact/research-centers/center-for-policy-and-democracy