PEDL Field Experiments in International Relations Conference

In September, the Political Economy and Development Lab, the Wheatley Institution, and the Kennedy Center held the Field Experiments in International Relations conference in Park City, UT. The Conference began with a lecture from Professor Robert Keohane of Princeton University. After that, many of the top scholars in International Relations attended to discuss research designs and the benefits and challenges of field experiments. Our own Daniel Nielson along with Helen Milner of Princeton University and Mike Findley of University of Texas-Austin served as conference organizers. Forty scholars from across the country attended, including Princeton’s Robert Keohane; Columbia’s Donald Green; Yale’s Dan Butler and Susan Hyde; Stanford’s Michael Tomz and Jeremy Weinstein; Harvard’s Dustin Tingley; and Brown’s Rose McDermott. Participants will now revise their designs, execute their experiments, and then present their findings and receive feedback at a follow up conference to be held at Princeton University during the fall of 2013.
Uganda Mentored Research Abroad
Program Summer 2012

Led by Daniel Nielson and Mike Findley (now of UT-Austin), eighteen BYU students spent summer term conducting field experiments with the Political Economy and Development Lab (PEDL) in Kampala, Uganda. Students worked on faculty-led research, including a project that evaluates non-governmental organizations using a scorecard. Students also conducted their own research on a broad range of topics, including: people’s willingness to participate in different microsavings accounts; whether being abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army (a guerilla group) affects an individual’s opinions about peace and reconciliation; whether people respond differently in settings with co-ethnics and non-co-ethnics; how feminine hygiene materials affect the school attendance of adolescent girls; and whether people respond differently to requests for a favor from requestors of varying socio-economic status. This student work is currently being prepared for publication.

The main goal of this program is that students gain experience in research skills. Each year student participants leave Uganda with increased abilities in research and field work.

Designing my own research and carrying out that research was a huge learning experience which I value. Included in this was the ability to work so closely with Professor Nielson and Professor Findley. Planning and carrying out the project exposed me to the world of research, which I was rather ignorant of beforehand. Because of my experience in Uganda I feel that I have gained insight into how to carry out and critique research in the social sciences. -Brady Grayson