Shane McWilliams

In high school in Florida, Shane McWilliams was active in a range of community service activities from organizing beach clean-ups and healthy lifestyle initiatives to serving as Council President of Florida's 4-H Program where he helped mobilize a quarter of million students in outreach campaigns that helped children of servicemen and minority youth in poor neighborhoods. At Penn, Shane has doubled-majored in Economics and Political Science while remaining heavily committed to civic engagement. He has served as a volunteer consultant for the Social Impact Consulting Group. Through Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, he assisted in the design and implementation of summer college access and career readiness programs for Philadelphia high school students, one of which has received awards and been replicated at other universities. He also collaborated on a paper with other students that led to a funded partnership between the Netter Center and the Wharton School aimed at linking business education to civic engagement. Upon graduation, Shane will be work as an inter-dealer securities broker. His ambitions include pursuing a career in development banking or public finance, and ultimately running for public office.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Participation and Eligibility Analysis, a Quantitative Approach, 2006-2008

Faculty Advisor: Mary Summers, School of Arts & Sciences, Robert A. Fox Leadership Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an American public benefits program that has direct and indirect implications for the U.S. economy. Not only does it serve as a safety net against hunger for the American population, but it also acts as a counter-cyclical device, automatically triggering fiscal stimulus. For these reasons, it is in the interest of Americans and their policy makers to maintain SNAP's functional efficiency. This paper adopts the metric of SNAP participation as a proxy for efficiency, and uses econometric modeling to examine the effects of a slate of state policies and economic indicators on registration levels in each U.S. state. The purpose of this is to move towards an understanding of which policies truly affect participation rates, and therefore make good policies. Strong findings were reached in favor of policies expanding categorical eligibility (making more citizens eligible for SNAP) and SNAP retention (helping those with a need to keep receiving SNAP stay on a benefits plan), as the inclusion of these policies in a state helped to increase participation. However, further research is needed to explain why this is the case, and to isolate other variables which could possibly have an effect on participation.