

## Reflective Essay Calvert Award

Vanessa Marie Booth

When approached with analyzing a public policy topic as complex as the Nevada opioid epidemic, I knew originally that I had an abundance of resources at my disposal. Yet, I was posed with a degree of difficulty in finding a way to not get lost in the ‘void’ of research. The realm of public policy consists of large databases, scholarly articles, news outlets, and many other valuable sources.

During the collective research process, I designated a set of guidelines to abide by to ensure that I used credible sources that would pertain to my discipline and policy topic. The guidelines I frequently used when accessing the quality of a source were looking at its timeliness, credibility/authority, relativity, objectivity, and accuracy. In addition, I verified that my sources were within the time frame of 2010 to 2020, were non-partisan, and arguably supported my policy solutions. While there were a multitude of articles that opposed my own beliefs regarding treatment center success rates, I still chose to use them because I felt that they provided a larger scope to my argument. However, I did my best to omit parts that arguably downgraded my claims while still making sure that I was staying true to delivering testimony that was purely factual and refuted by sources.

Being just a freshman in college and only being aware of MLA formatting, I was posed with major obstacles to conform to this new style of research writing. However, with assistance from Dr. Saladino and UNLV Urban Affairs Librarian Susie Skarl, I was able to compensate for the major complication I was posed with. Through my research process, I learned of the massive Nevada legislative databases (including [NELIS](#)) that would assist me in my research and how to

properly navigate them. I also decided to make use of the UNLV URST 101 library guide that provided over 30 resources. While many of the federal resources I found through UNLV Libraries were very helpful concerning the national opioid crisis, some of the difficulties and nuances I encountered in my research process included not finding enough Nevada-specific statistics. Since my primary goal was to showcase how Nevada opioid deaths were so severe and that there was an urgent need for policy reform, I used the advanced searching strategies I learned in the library workshop to investigate state-specific resources on my own.

After dedicating a lot of my time investigating on the interweb, I found that there was an abundance of resources provided by the Nevada Department of Public and Behavioral Health. Although I engaged in many hours of lengthy reading, I found this time to be well spent in the long run of my policy analysis. After analyzing data from the NDPBH and files from the NELIS database, I was able to find one of the biggest loopholes in Nevada's address to the opioid crisis. The pinnacle moment in this research process was discovering that only three out of the 15 opioid treatment centers in Nevada were covered by federal funds. Meanwhile, it may seem I was on a wild goose chase trying to uncover data that pointed to a flaw in Nevada's system, I know that my discovery can one day make a change in how Nevada addresses the opioid epidemic and allocates federal grants. In addition to this, I learned through my research that little minute details like this in fine print are exactly what policy scholars hunt for in order to make institutional change.

While my research paper is the backbone for this for policy analysis, my culminating project for this course was creating a white paper which aimed at compiling my entire policy

problem with a proposed solution onto one sheet of paper. The purpose of my white paper is to convince legislative members to support my policy solution and ultimately enact it.

The research methodologies I utilized in this analysis are extremely valuable and will carry with me throughout my public policy career. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to be tested academically and intellectually so early in my college years. The research techniques I employed for this policy problem will surely help me with future research endeavors. As I continue through my Brookings Public Policy minor, I hope to study health policy in Nevada more while utilizing resources from the political science field, in addition to other disciplines, to further my policy analysis and findings. Thank you for your consideration.