Stanford | Impact Labs

Putting social science to work for society

STANFORD IMPACT LABS

SOCIAL SCIENCE HAS A PURPOSE

TO SERVE SOCIETY

"Stanford Impact Labs creates new pathways for faculty, staff, and students to bring their analytical capabilities to bear on today's most challenging social problems. Working in partnership with leaders and practitioners outside the university, we seek to deliver insights that can be put to work by those on the front-lines of problem solving. SIL is reimagining the role of the university in the 21st century and demonstrating how social science can make a real impact."

JEREMY WEINSTEIN

TERMAN FOUNTAIN *on Stanford's Campus* ▶

WHERE RESEARCH MEETS SOCIAL IMPACT

JEREMY WEINSTEIN & MISAN REWANE

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO REDESIGN HOW HIGHER EDUCATION DRIVES THE CREATION OF MEANINGFUL SOLUTIONS TO REAL PROBLEMS?

Academia can run the risk of considering social ills in abstract, scientific terms. Leaders in government, nonprofits, or business may be better positioned to solve them, yet face barriers to using the best that science has to offer in their decision making.

What if we boiled society's biggest problems down into tractable questions—and equipped researchers and practitioners with resources and training to tackle them together?

That's been the premise—and the promise—of Stanford Impact Labs since its creation. Diverse groups of people making better, faster progress on social problems that matter to us all: Food insecurity. Educational inequality. Unsafe drinking water. Chronic disease. Racial disparities.

With a long history of transforming how higher education works, Stanford is uniquely poised to take on problems with the urgency they require. We've built our expertise and broken down barriers between fields. Now, it's time to push beyond the bounds of the university to better serve society.

The future is here. And together, we must act responsibly to shape it and step forward with optimism, determination, and purpose. Join us.

Thank you,

JEREMY WEINSTEIN
Founding Faculty Director

MISAN REWANE
Executive Director

IMPACT, AT SCALE

SOLUTIONS TO SOCIETY'S BIGGEST PROBLEMS AREN'T BORN IN A SEMINAR ROOM—THEY TAKE SHAPE IN REAL-WORLD COLLABORATIONS.

Sometimes the initial spark or discovery that ultimately drives progress emerges from a scientific advance. But it's only through meaningful partnership, engagement with diverse experiences, testing ideas, and learning what works (and what doesn't) that new ideas can transform lives.

Stanford Impact Labs (SIL) is building a new university-wide ecosystem for investing in the social sciences to grow Stanford's public impact.

Moving the needle on pervasive social problems requires a unique approach. Through a multi-tiered strategy of investment and support, we provide resources and mentorship to collaborative teams of researchers and practitioners from government, business, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropy. We also train scholars and external partners to develop the skills needed to bring advances in data and evidence into their work.

By building an ecosystem more akin to domains like engineering and medicine, SIL opens up novel pathways for teams to collaboratively develop, test, and scale new approaches to social problems.

There's never been a time of greater need—or possibility. When we knock down barriers and bring everyone to the table, we meet big problems with promising solutions.

▶ **THE STANFORD DATA SCIENCE AND COMPUTATION COMPLEX**, *the future home of Stanford Impact Labs, will be designed to collaboratively address today's most urgent challenges.*

INVESTING IN SOLUTIONS

THE ONLY WAY TO TACKLE MULTIFACETED PROBLEMS IS BY WORKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND EXPERTISE, ACADEMIA AND PRACTICE, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING BLIND SPOTS AND EMBRACING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES.

This is a radical new approach to social science—a portfolio of investments to learn what works and what doesn't in improving people's lives. When we bring together the right people and equip them with the resources and training they need, we can move from understanding social problems to solving them.

▶ **ELLIOTT WHITE, JR. (2022–2023 DESIGN FELLOW)** *is an assistant professor of Earth System Science. He is working with grassroots and community organizations to identify, prepare, and build resilience within communities that are at the highest risk from coastal hazards.*

ELLIOTT WHITE, JR.
2022-2023 DESIGN FELLOW

SIL IMPACT ECOSYSTEM

INVESTMENTS IN PARTNERSHIPS

SIL investments support problem-focused teams of leading scholars, researchers, and practitioners who bring together expertise from across the university, government agencies, school districts, police departments, community-based advocacy organizations, and the private sector.

A NEW MODEL FOR ACCELERATION

Leveraging Stanford's legacy and location in the heart of Silicon Valley—and operating in the spirit of collectively moving more ideas to action—we will create systems to rapidly design, develop, and scale applied research. Through new or expanded partnerships with nonprofits, government, and the private sector, we're prioritizing on-campus accelerators for learning, health, social impact, and sustainability to positively impact the widest populations with the greatest need.

INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION & TRAINING

SIL-run programs help Stanford faculty and students build the skills and capabilities required to strengthen their public impact. Our goal is to create a diverse community of scholars who are committed to research that has a positive impact on society.

CREATING A CULTURE OF PUBLIC IMPACT

We are committed to creating a culture of public impact at Stanford and beyond. We are appointing a new cohort of Public Impact Professors across the university who model the integration of research, education, and impact, and supporting faculty to take sabbaticals in service working in government and nonprofit organizations. These efforts clearly signal the value we attach in the university environment to impact-focused work.

WHY NOW?

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SOCIAL SCIENCE CAN DO MORE FOR SOCIETY THAN EVER BEFORE.

With cutting-edge tools and more data than ever, researchers are poised for impact. By informing that research with practical experience, real progress has never been more possible.

◀ **KHALID OSMAN (STAGE 1 INVESTMENT)** *is an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering. He leads the Osman Lab, which works to create a more equitable and responsive water system by parterning with communities in Detroit and East Palo to conduct household water testing to measure their perception of water quality.*

LEADERS IN THE PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND SOCIAL SECTORS ARE CHAMPIONING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES AND INNOVATION.

With data and research insights, social scientists can step in as ideal partners to craft more effective solutions.

AN R&D MODEL FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES CAN CREATE PUBLIC IMPACT NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE.

In the way life sciences and engineering turn academic discovery into new technologies and medical advances, our model helps to transform fundamental insights about human behavior into scalable solutions that can improve the lives of millions of people.

STRONG, EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS SIT AT THE HEART OF STANFORD IMPACT LABS.

Our investment criteria selects and supports the most promising teams, and our stage-based investment strategy allows us to take bold bets against big challenges. Our professional staff work alongside these partnerships at every stage on the path from understanding and testing to scale and impact.

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ONE YEAR
DESIGN FELLOWSHIP

$50K OVER ONE YEAR, TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP

Faculty working in a cohort to design and launch new impact labs with partners in government, business, nonprofit, and community organizations

STAGE 1 — TWO YEARS
SEED PARTNERSHIPS

UP TO $350K OVER 2 YEARS

Labs work deeply to understand problems alongside our external partners

AMPLIFY IMPACT

UP TO $5M OVER 5 YEARS

Track A: Scaling insights into programs or policies
Track B: Run multiple R&D cycles identifying insights across a common agenda

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TEST SOLUTIONS

UP TO $800K OVER 3 YEARS

Labs run at least one R&D cycle of solutions-focused research with external partners

DANIEL E. HO
DIRECTOR, REGLAB
STAGE 3 INVESTMENT

DRIVE MEANINGFUL CHANGE. ACT WITH PURPOSE.

EMMA BRUNSKILL
2023 SCHOLAR IN SERVICE

IRENE LO

DRAWING THE MAP OF A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE

SEGREGATION IN SAN FRANCISCO'S SCHOOLS HAS GOTTEN WORSE. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS INTO THE NEXT DECADE.

Stanford's Equitable Access to Education in San Francisco team is working to shape that future for the better. Led by Irene Lo, a 2020–21 SIL design fellow, the team is working with the San Francisco Unified School District to create tools that evaluate whether and how San Francisco's new zone-based school assignment system reduces racial and wealth segregation between schools. The goal is to help students from across the city access better education.

> **With the goal of reducing segregation and making the process simpler and more transparent for families, these promising methods can be applied to school districts nationwide.**

▶ **IRENE LO (2020–2021 DESIGN FELLOW, STAGE 2 INVESTMENT)** *is an assistant professor in the Department of Management Science and Engineering in the School of Engineering. Design fellows like Lo work alongside colleagues to design and launch new impact labs with partners in government, business, nonprofits, and community organizations.*

THE POWER OF PLACE

HARNESSING DATA SCIENCE TO HELP IMMIGRANTS SUCCEED.

The place immigrants and refugees first call their new home can serve as a major stumbling block—or a vital steppingstone—to later success.

In helping refugees figure out where to settle in the U.S. , Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS)—a nonprofit organization providing resettlement support—considers myriad factors, including language capabilities, family size, employment opportunities, housing, and available programs for trauma victims.

Now, LIRS is partnering with Stanford's Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) to improve that process with the goal of generating better economic outcomes for arriving families.

> **Using an AI algorithm called GeoMatch, the LIRS and IPL teams are analyzing refugees' personal characteristics, historical data on economic outcomes, and key information to identify potential locations where they are most likely to succeed.**

This allows placement officers to make better matches more quickly, and it helps refugees and asylum seekers land in places where they're likely to find employment, earn higher wages, and make a positive impact in their communities.

The Immigration Policy Lab is also working with international partners in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Canada, and beyond. By expanding this tool to other immigration and refugee services and applications, together we can give immigrants a chance to improve the trajectory of not only their lives, but also of their families and the communities they call home.
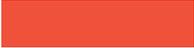
▶ **LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE SERVICE** *is a nonprofit organization that welcomes and supports refugees and migrants in the United States.*

MALISSA ALINOR

DISRUPTING
DISCRIMINATION

THE STANFORD IMPACT LABS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP IS BUILDING A DIVERSE PIPELINE OF FUTURE SCHOLARS PREPARED TO ADDRESS SOCIAL CHALLENGES HEAD-ON.

Women and people of color often face discrimination in the workplace that may limit their success. By researching the impact of bias in the workplace, Malissa Alinor is using her research to help organizations reduce gender and racial inequality and create more inclusive environments.

▶ **MALISSA ALINOR (2021–2023 POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW)** *was a postdoctoral fellow in the VMware Women's Leadership Innovation Lab at Stanford University as well as an assistant professor in the Department of Public Policy at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*
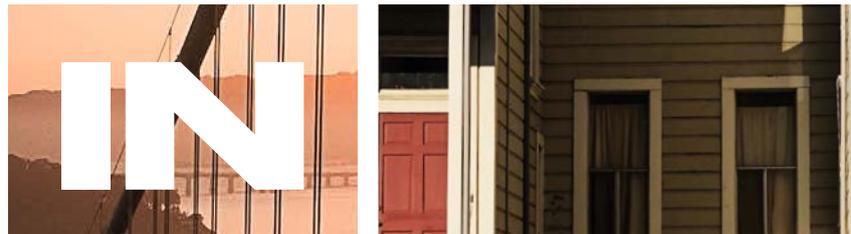
SEEKING STABILITY IN CHANGING CITIES

UNDERSTANDING WHO HOUSING PROGRAMS SERVE—AND WHO THEY DON'T— IS NECESSARY FOR OAKLAND TO PROVIDE EQUITABLE, STABLE HOUSING FOR ITS RESIDENTS.

Oakland, California, is facing a dearth of affordable, equitable, and accessible housing. That scarcity has many low-income renters sacrificing a lot in order to stay in their homes, according to Jackelyn Hwang, assistant professor of sociology and director of the Changing Cities Research Lab.

Hwang was able to get a sense of these trends through an analysis of large datasets, but the problem really came into focus as she began talking to residents in the city. She wasn't the only one thinking about this challenge. Oakland's Department of Housing and Community Development has a mandate to produce new housing, protect housing for residents, and preserve affordable housing. Addressing the housing instability that Hwang identified has been a top priority in recent years.

Together, city leaders in Oakland and the CCRL team are uncovering racial disparities in how people live, whether they must move, and what happens afterwards. They are particularly focused on issues like tenant harassment and overcrowding, which are exacerbated in housing insecure environments.

> **"There are so many tangled aspects to this work; you don't have a silver bullet to address it," said Chris Norman, the housing department's chief of staff. "It really helps to root our story in data."**

Building on an understanding of the specific barriers in Oakland, the team is focused now on designing and testing more accessible housing policies that can meet the needs of the city's most vulnerable residents. This work has the potential to drive more impactful housing policies in Oakland and to shape the policy agenda in cities around the country.
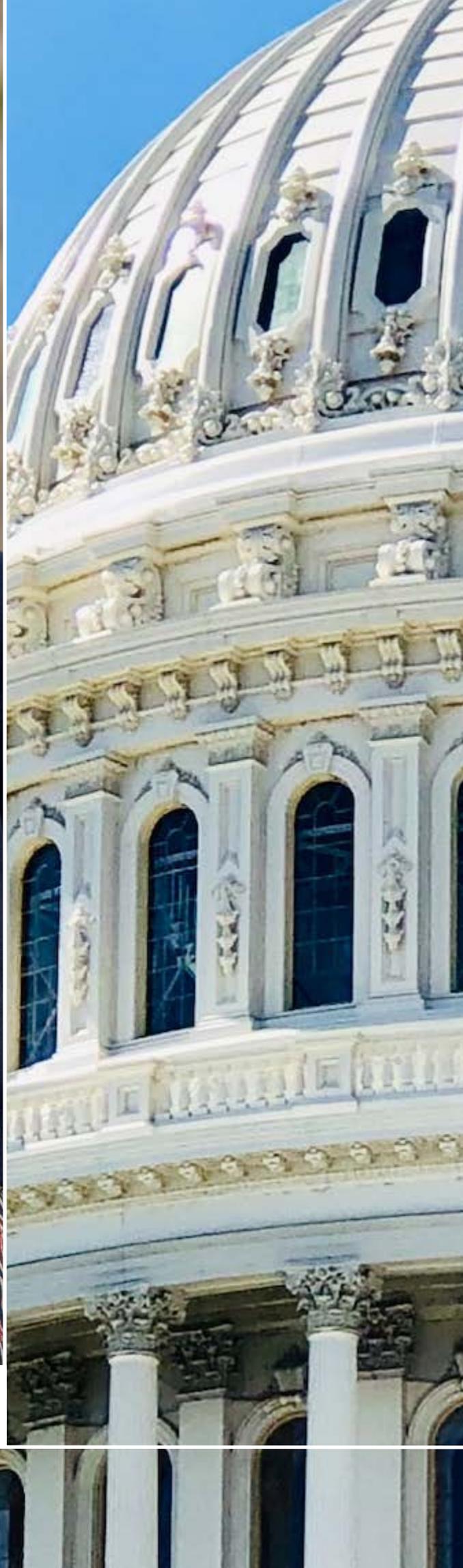
▶ **JACKELYN HWANG** *is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and a faculty affiliate at the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity and the Urban Studies Program.*

In partnership with the city of Oakland. The Department of Housing and Community Development is dedicated to improving Oakland's neighborhoods and to making sure all Oaklanders have safe and affordable housing.

GOPI
SHAH
GODA

MAKING POLICY WORK FOR UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES

SIL'S SCHOLARS IN SERVICE PROGRAM ENABLES FACULTY TO TAKE LEAVE FROM THE UNIVERSITY TO WORK IN THE PUBLIC AND SOCIAL SECTOR.

COVID-19 caused dramatic economic disruption as businesses, governments, and everyday people attempted to safely run the economy amid the worst public health crisis in a century. In this uncharted landscape, policymakers needed to understand how the virus was transforming economic behaviors and what to expect from a post-pandemic economy.

As a Scholar in Service, Gopi Shah Goda, senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, studied these problems while serving as a senior economist at President Biden's White House Council of Economic Advisers. The Scholars in Service program, which is sponsored by Stanford Impact Labs and the Haas Center for Public Service, offers funding and support for faculty members to devote up to a year of full-time service.

Drawing upon her research on the well-being of people as they age and the sustainability of public programs serving elderly and vulnerable populations, Goda focused her year of service on solving disparities made worse by COVID-19 and addressing the broader implications of the pandemic for health and labor supply.

▶ **GOPI SHAH GODA (2021–2022 SCHOLAR IN SERVICE)**

FRESH FOOD
FOR ALL

THIS TEAM OF DOCTORS AND PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS IS WORKING TO PUT VEGETABLES ON EVERY TABLE.

Food is medicine. But what can be done for patients and communities when healthy food is out of reach? In 2018, one in nine Americans could not afford enough food to lead an active, healthy life, and the pandemic doubled those numbers to nearly 40 million U.S. households.

At Stanford's Food for Health Equity Lab, epidemiologists, biostatisticians, physicians, and community health leaders are putting this knowledge to work by using healthy food to fight hunger and chronic disease.

The pandemic illuminated many social ills—including the links among chronic health conditions, access to healthy foods, and COVID-related deaths. Working with a network of community health centers, Lisa Goldman Rosas and her team are designing and testing new approaches that put nutritious food and fresh vegetables on the dinner table in low-income neighborhoods—strategies that will play a vital role in improving health outcomes and shaping healthier communities.

▶ **LISA GOLDMAN ROSAS (2019–2020 DESIGN FELLOW, STAGE 2 INVESTMENT)**
is an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Population Health and the Department of Medicine, Division of Primary Care and Population Health at Stanford School of Medicine. With support from Stanford Impact Labs, her team is partnering with Alameda County's health centers and is launching a new collaboration with Instacart.

LISA
GOLDMAN
ROSAS

HOW DO WE HELP PEOPLE BECOME BETTER AT DETECTING AND AVOIDING MISINFORMATION WITHOUT DISTRUSTING OR DISCOUNTING EVERYTHING THEY READ?

That's the question the Empowering Diverse Digital Citizens Lab is working to answer. With partners from the Poynter Institute's MediaWise Initiative and the American Library Association, Stanford communications researchers are testing digital media literacy interventions with particularly vulnerable groups.

> The lab's director, Jeff Hancock, says he was inspired to bring his research outside academia after the fake news wave of 2016. Alex Mahadevan, MediaWise's director, notes the pandemic further emphasized the "economic and moral cost of misinformation."

Working in partnership with Stanford researchers, MediaWise is testing and improving their digital literacy tools to make sure they actually help people—particularly groups that are disproportionately targeted by misinformation, such as minority communities and older adults. Testing what works and what doesn't to promote digital literacy on platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp, the team is also learning which tools people are excited to use.

We often think of technology, media, and misinformation as happening to us. Hancock argues that we need to focus on people, their agency, and how they use technology. By empowering individuals and changing how they engage with information online, we can build a more trusting and informed society.

▶ **JEFF HANCOCK** *is founding director of the Stanford Social Media Lab and the Harry and Norman Chandler Professor of Communication in the School of Humanities and Sciences.*

In partnership with MediaWise. Poynter Institute's MediaWise empowers people of all ages to become more critical consumers of content online.
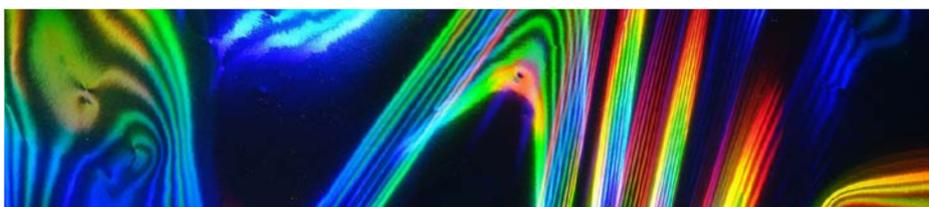
WISING UP TO MIS-INFORMATION

JEFF HANCOCK

DATAS

DENNIS SUN
ASSOCIATE TEACHING PROFESSOR
STANFORD DATA SCIENCE

CIENCE

A NEW PATHWAY FOR UNDERGRADUATES INTERESTED IN SCIENCE AND SERVICE

MANY STUDENTS ARE ASKING: HOW CAN I USE STATISTICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE, AND MATH TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS THAT MATTER MOST?

Today, students driven to serve their communities are learning to tackle social problems like poverty and inequality, discrimination and bias, and threats to democracy—with data.

A new track of the Data Science major, as reimagined by the School of Humanities and Sciences and incubated by Stanford Impact Labs, is a Bachelor of Arts degree in Data Science and Social Systems. This degree creates a clear pathway for undergrads to integrate science and service.

As nearly every industry becomes increasingly data-driven, students in this track will master technical skills, develop a deep understanding of the social sciences, and reflect on ethical principles as they prepare to harness data science for good.
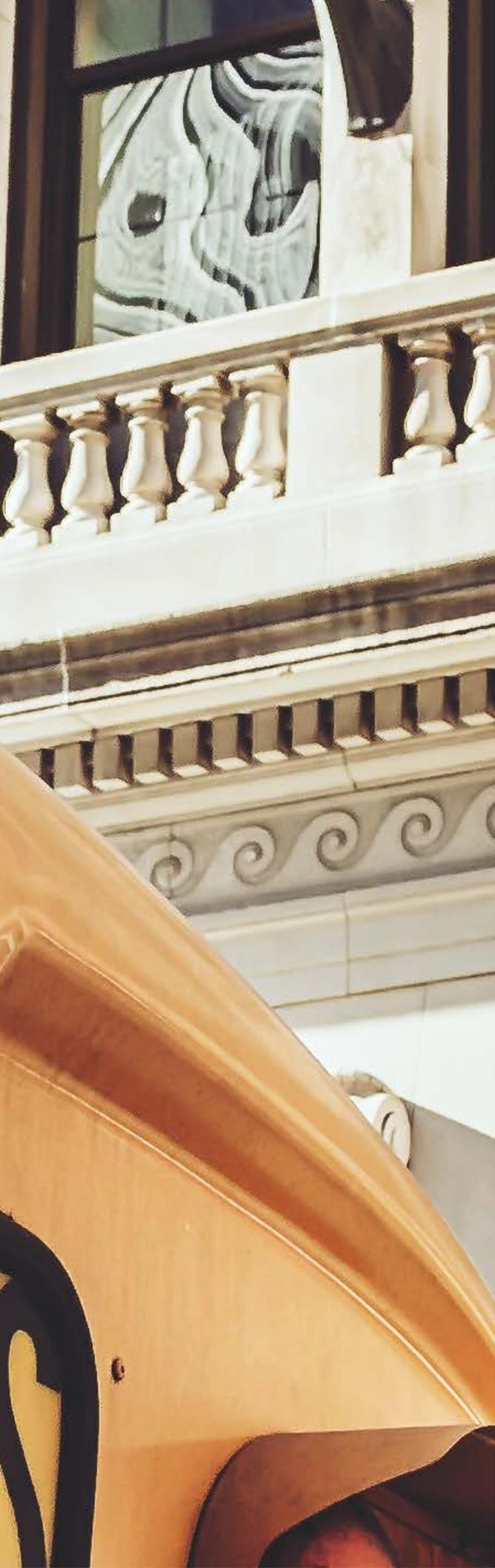
REINVENTING URBAN SCHOOLS

HELPING URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS MAP AND MEASURE STUDENT NEEDS TO REALIZE MORE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES.

Issues of homelessness, food insecurity, and immigration are increasingly coming to school with kids. Francis "Alvin" Pearman's Connect.ed project—developed during his SIL design fellowship—is a platform that aims to transform urban schooling to better respond to the needs of local communities. Using the best available evidence and new technologies, Connect.ed shores up communication among district leaders as well as between administrators and parents to ensure that resources are optimally allocated in line with kids' needs.

Pearman is also part of a research team, led by Professor Irene Lo, aiming to address segregation in public school systems in US cities. Collaborating with the San Francisco Unified School District, the team is utilizing data-driven approaches to design school assignment algorithms while seeking to understand and mitigate unintended consequences, including impacts on residential sorting patterns, with the goal of promoting equitable access to quality educational opportunities.

▶ **FRANCIS A. PEARMAN (2020–2021 DESIGN FELLOW)** *is an assistant professor of education in the Stanford Graduate School of Education.*

FRANCIS PEARMAN

RENEW
STANF
PURPO

FLOWERS AT MEYER GREEN *on Stanford's Campus* ▸

VING
ORD'S
OSE

We don't measure impact by what happens at Stanford. The challenges the world faces are too urgent, and our potential to contribute is too significant.

We measure our impact by what happens beyond Stanford. Solutions to today's problems will only emerge from genuine partnerships. When we come together across artificial boundaries—bridging disciplines, practice, and life experience—we can make progress. We are making progress. It's real. And it's happening right now.

As our momentum builds, so will the magnitude of our impact. Help us realize Stanford's promise.

◄ **JEFF HANCOCK, ALEX CHOHLAS-WOOD,**
HANNAH MELVILLE-REA, RANIA AWAAD, ALIX DICK,
AND ANTERO GARCIA *at the Cantor Arts Center for*
Testing Ground Live! Social Science on Stage. *Hosted*
by Stanford Impact Labs and The Story Collider, this event
featured personal stories about problem-solving for society.

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