We are delighted to announce the first recipients of our Early Career Scholars Grant:

More School Funding, Less Crime?
E. Jason Baron, Duke University
Joshua Hyman, Amherst College
Brittany Vasquez, University of Michigan

Baron, Hyman, and Vasquez use variation in public school funding from a 1994 reform in Michigan coupled with new administrative data that link public school records and adult arrests to ask the question “does investing in public education reduce crime in adulthood?” Their data allow them to follow more than 700,000 students across 500+ school districts. They will estimate the MVPF of increasing public school funding accounting for long-run outcomes including adult criminality in addition to high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation. Preliminary results suggest that exposure to higher levels of public school funding does reduce arrests in young adulthood, underscoring the importance of including changes to crime outcomes in both the willingness-to-pay and net cost when calculating the MVPF of increasing public school funding.

Eliciting Willingness to Pay for Public Policies
Neil Thakral, Boston University
Linh T. Tô, Boston University

Thakral and Tô will use an adaptive survey methodology called the Bayesian Adaptive Choice Experiment (BACE) to directly elicit individual-level willingness-to-pay for a variety of public policies. BACE is a dynamic variation on standard Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) survey methods that allows for efficiently estimating stated individual preferences while also accounting for heterogeneity. The survey will yield willingness-to-pay estimates for a range of public policies (disability insurance, unemployment insurance, social security, and parental leave) across five countries (Austria, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Thakral and Tô will then develop new MVPF estimates for the policies considered using the results of their willingness-to-pay research. Thakral and Tô plan to make their tools for implementing BACE publicly available to facilitate MVPF calculations by other researchers.
Incorporating MVPF Analysis into LEO’s Impact Evaluations
Patrick Turner, University of Notre Dame and the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO)

The Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) partners with state and local governments and nonprofits to reduce poverty in the United States. Turner is working with LEO on three program evaluations to generate causal evidence about their impact on employment and earnings: (1) The Padua Program, which is a comprehensive case management program; (2) ReHire Colorado, which is an enhanced transitional jobs program; and (3) the Goodwill Excel Center, an adult high school where students earn a diploma instead of a GED. The causal evidence of these programs comes from a combination of randomized control trials and administrative data. Turner will evaluate the welfare impact of these programs using the MVPF framework and work to incorporate MVPF analysis into more of the work done by LEO.

The Effects of Interactions Between Social Programs: The Case of Family Leave Policies
Valeria Zurla, Brown University

Zurla investigates the interaction between unemployment insurance and parental leave policies, and how that interaction impacts women's post-birth labor market outcomes and welfare. The paper uses administrative data from Italy and quasi-experimental variation from two reforms that increased the generosity of unemployment insurance to study the labor market outcomes for women facing these two benefit options. Zurla finds that expanding unemployment insurance benefits led to decreased earnings and labor market participation by mothers in the four years after giving birth. Zurla notes that ignoring the interaction of these benefit programs yields biased estimates of the effect of the reforms, highlighting the important of considering program interaction for welfare calculations. She will calculate the MVPF of these reforms with a focus on how the program interactions impact the calculation.