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UC San Diego Receives Grant for Groundbreaking Research in Global Health and Development

The Policy Design and Evaluation Lab (PDEL), based at the University of California, San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), announced today that it is a Grand Challenges Explorations winner, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. PDEL faculty affiliates Claire Adida, assistant professor of political science in the UC San Diego Division of Social Sciences, and Jennifer Burney, assistant professor at GPS, will pursue an innovative global health and development research project titled “Mobile Money, Schooling, and the Poor.”



Claire Adida, assistant professor of political science in the UC San Diego Division of Social Sciences

Grand Challenges Explorations (GCE) funds individuals worldwide to explore ideas that can break the mold in how we solve persistent global health and development challenges. Professors Adida’s and Burney’s project is one of more than 50 Grand Challenges Explorations Round 14 grants announced today by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

To receive funding, Adida and Burney and other Grand Challenges Explorations winners demonstrated in a two-page online application a bold idea in one of five critical global health and development topic areas. The foundation will be accepting applications for the next GCE round in September 2015.

“Mobile Money, Schooling, and the Poor” received a total award amount of \$100,000. The research project aims to develop, implement and evaluate a system of direct payments for secondary school fees in Benin, West Africa. The project aims to build confidence in mobile money by ensuring reliable, transparent and low-cost transactions so that schools, rather than individuals, are the recipients. This will be carried out by building upon partnerships with existing cell phone companies to enhance the mobile money system already in place and then



Jennifer Burney, assistant professor at the School of Global Policy and Strategy

developing an accompanying application to maintain a database of transactions. Adida and Burney will collaborate on the effort with colleagues at the Qualcomm Institute (QI) and PDEL. QI will develop an SMS based platform that will enable the remission of school fees via text message. Friends and family can contribute towards the payment of school fees of a designated student from anywhere through their mobile device. The platform will also connect teachers, students and parents to each other.

Adida joined UC San Diego in 2010. In addition to her affiliation with PDEL, she also is a faculty affiliate with the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies. Her research is in comparative politics, specifically the study of identity, immigration and intergroup cooperation and conflict. Burney joined UC San Diego in 2012. An environmental scientist, Burney was named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer in 2011. Her research focuses on simultaneously achieving global food security and mitigating climate change. Much of her current research focuses on the developing world such as West Africa.

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