

SLLI Research Grant 2022-2023

Launched in November 2018, the Student Loan Law Initiative (SLLI) is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between scholars and advocates to bring an end to the student debt crisis by creating a new foundation of legal scholarship that works for borrowers.

SLLI is a partnership between the University of California, Irvine; the University of California, Berkeley; and the Student Borrower Protection Center. SLLI offers an unprecedented opportunity to support and foster high-quality academic research that can help us better understand the student loan crisis and find a path forward. We bring together scholars, researchers, and practitioners to tackle the problem of student loans with a strategic and coordinated approach. In 2020, SLLI launched the first round of its grantee program, which supports scholars across [six](#) unique projects with the goal of providing policymakers and advocates with critical information for tackling the student debt crisis.

SLLI is offering a new round of research grants. The grant program will fund multiple grants of up to \$15,000, and will be administered by the Student Borrower Protection Center.

Grant Program Goals

The SLLI Research Grant Program seeks to support research that will fill critical gaps in existing student loan research. The grant program seeks researchers who will help us better understand how student loans affect individuals, communities, states, and our country as a whole. Researchers can tackle this question from many angles, but we have a particular interest in research that gets to the impact of delinquency and default on specific communities and populations within the U.S.

The grant program gives preference to proposals including quantitative or qualitative analysis, but applications from a broad field of disciplines—including but not limited to law, economics, sociology, or higher education—are encouraged. The grant-supported research should identify and close gaps in data, provide actionable legal analysis of litigation or legislation, or identify best practices across consumer markets or across financial products.

Grant-supported research can be published according to the wishes of the grant recipient, but must always include an attribution to the Student Borrower Protection Center; the University of California, Irvine; and the University of California, Berkeley.

Eligible Applicants

Any individual, organization, or institution may apply for the SLLI Research Grant. One or more individual(s) or institution(s) may also partner on an application, and researchers are welcome to submit more than one application covering distinct research projects.

Preference will be given to applicants who have a demonstrated track record of producing high-quality legal or empirical analysis (quantitative or qualitative) in the consumer finance space or analogous marketplaces.

Preference will also be given to applicants who commit to using datasets provided through SLLI. These datasets are described in detail below.

The SLLI Grant Program expects grant projects will be completed in the Spring of 2024. If applicants expect projects to take longer, they should provide an explanation in their application.

We strongly encourage applications from women, minorities, people with disabilities, and veterans.

Proprietary Datasets

SLLI has acquired two datasets, described below. Applicants to the grant program can request to use the UCCCP set as part of their proposal at no cost. As noted above, we will prioritize funding proposals that include the use of one or more of these datasets.

1) University of California Consumer Credit Panel

The University of California Consumer Credit Panel (UCCCP) is a new dataset of anonymized consumer credit information, created for the purpose of studying consumer financial well-being. The UCCCP was created in 2020 through a partnership between the California Policy Lab, the UCI School of Law, and the Student Borrower Protection Center.

The UCCCP is a longitudinal panel of approximately 40 million consumers starting in 2004, continuing quarterly through 2019, monthly in 2020, and quarterly thereafter. Updates to the dataset are expected to continue, pending funding availability. The sample comprises credit records of a nationally representative 2 percent sample of U.S. adult consumers with credit records and a 100 percent sample of consumers residing in California. The dataset also includes household members and co-signers of those in the sample. The data originates from Experian, one of the three nationwide consumer reporting agencies. Before being provided to the UCCCP, the data was stripped of any information that might reveal consumers' identities, such as names, addresses, and Social Security numbers.

The UCCCP is similar to other consumer credit panels built by the [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#), the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#), and other universities. The UCCCP is different in four main ways:

1. The dataset is designed for use by researchers affiliated with the University of California and the Student Borrower Protection Center;
2. The sample size is quite large, and California consumers are oversampled;
3. The data are as granular as are available; and
4. There is a streamlined process for potentially linking the UCCCP to other data, especially administrative data in California.

Data elements include demographic and credit information about consumers. Demographic information (starting in 2010) includes gender, age, geography, and household count. Credit information includes credit scores and raw tradeline-level information about each loan or collections item, including payment history, credit limits and balances, and various information about the type and status of those tradelines.

These data provide a powerful platform for researching student loans. Though the identities of lenders are masked, each loan is linked to a lender ID that can be tracked

across borrowers. This allows researchers to group loans by originator or servicer. The detailed loan-level credit information allows researchers to track the status of repayment over time, including deferments and forbearances.

Moreover, characteristics such as income-driven repayment plan participation can be imputed from the data based on existing models. The full credit file of these borrowers allows researchers to investigate relationships between student loan debt and other tradelines on their credit bureau file (e.g., revolving debt, mortgages). Finally, the time period of the panel covers a period of substantial growth in student lending, including the growth in for-profit college lending and a major financial recession.

2) Student Loan Servicer Historical Dataset

A large servicer of Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) has provided SLLI/CPL with a historical dataset of loans that are no longer in the servicer's portfolio due to repayment, default, consolidation, or the like. All records are anonymous and do not contain the borrower's name, address, social security number, or any other personal identifiers. The current sample includes all the FFEL lender California loans and a 100,000-person nationwide random sample.

Data elements include loan type, school code, disbursement date, graduation/separation date, repayment date, interest rate and type, original loan balance, principal paid by the borrower, interest paid by the borrower, whether the loan was rehabilitated or consolidated, the most recent payment amount, and the most recent payment plan. Demographic data elements include imputed gender and race, age, and census tracts.

It may be possible to link this file to the UCCCP and/or to other California administrative records (such as tax records).

Budget details

Applicants must provide a breakdown of how the requested funds will be used. This grant cannot be used to pay overhead or indirect expenses for the grantee's institution. If applicants intend to use outside money or matching funds, please indicate that in the proposed budget.

Grant funds may be used for approved budget purposes, which may include reasonable compensation for the principal investigator(s), consultant(s), or research assistant(s), print and computer-based research materials, or other necessary expenses.

Application information

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis with submissions closing on **January 15, 2023**. Applications will be reviewed by the University of California, the Student Borrower Protection Center, and subject matter experts. Decisions will be made on a rolling basis, with final decisions being made by February 28, 2023.

Applications are to be submitted electronically and should consist of a single Word Document and a single PDF document as outlined below. The e-mail should be sent to slli@protectborrowers.org with the subject line "2022-3 SLLI Research Grant RFP."

The Word document should include the following:

- The name and preferred contact information for each applicant and, if applicable, the affiliated institution. CVs and other supporting materials for applicants can be attached separately in a PDF
- A narrative description of the research project including:
 - Overview (one sentence)
 - Project explanation (1000 word maximum but shorter descriptions are welcome)
 - Description of how the research meets the goals of the SLLI Grant Program (500 word maximum but shorter descriptions are welcome)
 - Description of the final work product (75 word maximum)
 - The publications, if any, to which the final work product is expected to be submitted for publication
 - A statement regarding human subjects (IRB) approval process (e.g., if the project has received IRB approval already, or if such approval will be requested, timeline for such approval, etc.)
 - Project timeline
 - Project budget

The PDF document should include the following

- CVs or supporting informational materials on the applicants can be submitted as a single PDF attachment
- Examples of previous work to demonstrate a track record of producing high-quality scholarship

About the Student Loan Law Initiative

The Student Loan Law Initiative (SLLI) is the nation's first academic research project focused on student debt and the law. SLLI fosters the highest quality research, provides grants, and builds the capacity of student loan experts to shape the future of this marketplace.