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Urban Institute
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To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am currently a senior at Hartwick College majoring in Economics and Business Administration. I will be graduating in May, 2009, and I am writing to express my interest in an entry level policy research position at Urban Institute.

During the past two years at Hartwick I have been actively engaged in both theoretical and empirical analyses using mathematical optimization (including game theoretic modeling) and ordinary least squares analysis tools with STATA software. I have very much enjoyed this aspect of my undergraduate career and have been encouraged by my professor, Dr. Carlena Ficano, to contact you regarding employment possibilities. I am eager to develop my skills and become more familiar with current US policy issues, with an eye towards eventual graduate study.

My interest in pursuing a career in policy analysis has developed from the research experiences I have had at Hartwick, including most recently an analysis of cross-price elasticity of demand for public transportation in an environment of rising gasoline prices. For this project, I estimated a regression model to measure the impact of changing gas prices of public transportation ridership, controlling for public transit characteristics and rider socio-demographics. I chose this topic for its relevance to the recent gas price fluctuations and growing interest in public transportation use as an alternative to individual vehicles. Previous literature had found statistically significant relationships between public transportation use and gas prices; however, the estimated magnitude of the effect had been small relative to that of other explanatory variables, possibly due to the inclusion of rural US areas and European cities in most studies. To address this limitation in previous work, I focused my study on eight major US cities using monthly data from 2004 through the beginning of 2008. Using OLS regression techniques controlling for cross sectional fixed effects, I found a statistically significant and positive relationship between gas prices and public transportation use that was larger than previous models had shown.

I thoroughly enjoyed this research experience and am seeking employment that would both address my interest in this area and provide opportunity for further skill development. I would be interested in discussing with you the possibilities of employment as a research assistant at Urban Institute. I feel that I could both contribute to and learn from such an opportunity at your organization. If you feel that my qualifications warrant further discussion, I may be reached by phone at (607) 437-9694 or by email at heiderk@hartwick.edu.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Heider