

Social Welfare's

Associate professor of social welfare **TODD FRANKE** has built his career evaluating and researching the effectiveness of social programs. The recipient of over \$10 million in grants over the past seven years (making him one of the most successful grant-funded faculty in the school), Franke's current efforts have him working hand-in-hand with Homeboy Industries, evaluating the effectiveness of California's Mental Health Services Act, and helping measure success of an LA-based initiative to improve communities by providing better support for new mothers.

Todd Franke

Measuring the Success of Social Programs

TRAINED IN SOCIAL WORK and educational psychology, associate professor of social welfare Todd Franke has spent his career working to help make community-based organizations better. Utilizing a practice known as evaluative research, Franke works with area non-profits, foundations, and government agencies, to define success, measure it, and ultimately provide results that can assist in improving the organizations' efforts.

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"One of the hardest things I have to do," says Franke "is go into a group of people whose program I've been funded to evaluate and get them to understand that I

recognize they work really hard, but at some level maybe it's not working as well as they might think it is."

Using a framework known as utilization focused evaluation, where you design the evaluation with the goal in mind that all stakeholders involved will utilize the results, Franke manages multiple research projects at a time, thanks in part to the support of a highly skilled team of researchers.

One of his most recent

efforts has him working with Homeboy Industries, a Los Angeles-based gang prevention and intervention organization. Franke has teamed up with UCLA

adjunct associate professor of social welfare Jorja Leap to conduct a 5-year longitudinal study of the program's effectiveness. Marking the first-ever longitudinal evaluation of a gang intervention program, Homeboy is hopeful analytical research provided by Franke and Leap will assist their efforts to procure future funding.

Franke also recently received two \$1 million grants to perform evaluative research projects related to California's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Initially established in 2004 through a voter initiative, the MHSA was crafted to support a system-wide change in the public community mental health system of California. Between the two grants, Franke will work to examine the effectiveness of the MHSA and look at what the ultimate impact has been on consumers.

In addition to these and numerous other projects he

currently has underway, including work with the Best Start LA initiative, which aims to build stronger communities by engaging and supporting new mothers, Franke is also passionate about his time in the classroom.

"When you go out to analyze data that you collected in the community, that data is never as clean or as easy to work with as the data in the back of the text book," says Franke, who teaches primarily research methods and statistics to UCLA MSW students.

Whether it's in-class instruction or helping a student with research in the field, Franke works to impart not just analytical theory, but also a passion for how one can utilize evaluative research to engage with the community and help make social programs more successful.

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