

2020-2021

***Academic  
Year in  
Review***





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## *Looking Back & Moving Forward*

The past academic year marked a defining moment both in the Program's history and in the field of public health. During the initial stages of the pandemic, the UCI Public Health community convened in inspiring ways to advance public health practice, research, scholarship, and public service in the face of unprecedented challenges – and it thrived.

Never in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has the world looked toward the field of public health for guidance as much as it has in the past 20 months. From the global COVID-19 pandemic and movement for social justice to the devastating natural disasters caused by climate change, the past year has been fraught with colliding crises that underscore the critical role public health plays in all matters of health and safety.

### *Our path to becoming a school*

What we've been able to achieve this past year is nothing short of remarkable. We began the academic year with the expansion from being a single Department of Population Health & Disease Prevention to a Program that houses four departments. We welcomed two new departments from the School of Medicine: Epidemiology & Biostatistics and Environmental & Occupational Health, and faculty formed a fourth Department of Health, Society, & Behavior. Our leadership and faculty continue to make strides on the pre-proposal to become the UC Irvine School of Population and Public Health with a planned launch and celebration for Summer and Fall 2022, respectively.

This growth coincided with the onset of the pandemic, which brought with it a heightened interest in public health. We had a record number of undergraduate degree and master's degree applications for the 2021 cycle – more than double what we had the previous year – and we anticipate the upward trend continuing in the years to come. We have also recruited our largest PhD cohort since the inception of the doctoral program in public health. Furthermore, the Biden administration's initiative to add 250,000 jobs to the public health workforce is promising for our future graduates and for the growth of our planned school.



## *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion*

We celebrated similar growth in our pool of faculty, welcoming two new members to the Program while expanding initiatives in equity, diversity, and inclusion in the hiring process. We are proud of our Department of Environmental & Occupational Health and Department of Health, Society, & Behavior, which helped develop the winning proposal for the Black Thriving Initiative Faculty Cluster Hiring Program on Environmental Health Disparities. Additional achievements in this area include the appointment of the Program's first Equity Advisor, Sora Park Tanjasiri, DrPH, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics.

## *Responding to COVID-19*

Indeed, the pandemic has catapulted the field of public health into the spotlight, and I couldn't be more impressed by our Program's leadership on campus and throughout the region. David Souleles, MPH, UC Irvine's Director of COVID-19 Response, has provided leadership at the local, regional, and state level and, along with me, sits on the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force for Orange County Health Care Agency. Additional projects – developed and executed by this program – include contact tracing workshops, an interactive COVID Chatline, a large-scale surveillance study (“actOC”), and an anti-body study with the City of Santa Ana. Additionally, our Occupational and Environmental Medicine Clinic was essential to the campus's COVID-19 response and was responsible for COVID testing, contact tracing, and return-to-work clearances for several public sector offices. Beyond our grassroots initiatives, several of our faculty members have provided expertise and insight for a national audience through daily earned media commentary.

Please join us in celebrating the Program's achievements of the past academic year and thanking our community of public health pioneers for their dedication to public service. **We look forward to continued growth, resilience, and innovation in the years to come.**



Bernadette Boden-Albala, MPH, DrPH  
Director and Founding Dean, Program in Public Health  
Professor, Department of Health, Society, & Behavior and Department of Neurology  
Susan & Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences  
University of California, Irvine

# ***A regional leader in COVID-19:*** **Pandemic response through a health equity lens**

*The UCI Program in Public Health has spearheaded several projects in the past 20 months to promote community health, address COVID-19 disparities, and reduce the burden of disease.*

## ***On-Campus Early Acute Response***

At the start of the pandemic, deans across the UC system, including Dean Bernadette Boden-Albala, convened as part of a UC Office of the President initiative. Boden-Albala played an active role in contributing to early recommendations for social distancing, education and awareness, configuration of dorm life, and general health and well-being. With COVID-19's coinciding with a massive social justice movement for racial equity, Boden-Albala and fellow deans advised on safe protesting and activism so UC-community members could continue to use their voice and advocate for social justice reform while preventing transmission of the virus.

As part of its on-campus early acute response, UCI Public Health organized and participated in campus awareness campaigns, most notably "Spread the Word, Not the Virus." Students, staff, and faculty also held informational booths and hand-washing demonstrations to educate peers and colleagues on mitigation measures.

UCI Public Health staff and faculty also researched COVID-19 stigma to assess the well-being of students on campus. Results from a 4-wave study revealed that Asian students are 1.5 times more likely to report being mocked or avoided, 2.6 times more likely to report feeling ashamed or worthless, and 6 times more likely to fear future stigmatization. Survey findings were critical in developing programming to promote a healthy, inclusive, and positive campus climate.

## ***UCI Contact Tracing Workshop & Program***

Led by Drs. Alana LeBrón and Daniel Parker, UCI Public Health partnered with the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHA) and the Orange County Health Equity COVID-19 Community-Academic Partnership to offer a Health Equity Contact Tracing Workshop. The workshop trained roughly 700 public health practitioners, students, community leaders, and residents to perform COVID-19 contact tracing with a fundamental focus on health equity. The workshop integrated community knowledge about the impacts of the pandemic on low-income communities of color while providing strategies for risk mitigation. It was designed as a series and delivered asynchronous online content, live online group-based discussions and role-playing sessions.

In September 2020, the Contact Tracing Program was established at UCI and, to this day, continues to operate in partnership with OCHCA to provide contact tracing services on campus under the authority of the local health department. Since the start of the pandemic, the UCI Contact Tracing Program has investigated over 1,200 cases, interviewed nearly 2,000 close contacts of cases, and have called over 31,000 students to provide COVID-19 vaccine education and navigation services.



## ***Public Service***

Led by Miryha Runnerstrom, PhD, associate professor of teaching, the UCI COVID-19 Chatline was created to provide fact-based guidance for individuals with general questions about the virus. Staffed by undergraduate volunteers and supervised by UCI Public Health faculty and doctoral students, the chatline allows individuals to communicate online and in real time with trained public health students and get links to relevant internet sources.

Sora Tanjasiri, DrPH, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, in collaboration with faculty at UCI Libraries and Asian American Studies, led a project that assessed COVID-19's impact on Asian and Pacific Islander communities in Orange County through Photovoice, a qualitative needs assessment technique. Additionally, Tanjasiri, through her role at the UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, conducted needs assessments of vulnerable Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities with a goal of understanding the disproportionate burdens and impact of COVID-19. One recent needs assessment conducted under Tanjasiri's leadership, with support from MPH student Jessica Lu, looked specifically at the impacts of COVID-19 on millennial Asian Americans living in Orange County.

## ***Advisory***

The Program in Public Health is proud to have served local Orange County businesses this past year by advising on COVID-19 mitigation efforts and safe reopening procedures. Businesses our faculty consulted for include the Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort's "StaySafe Program" with the help of Drs. Karen Edwards, Suellen Hopfer, and Andrew Odegaard; and the Pacific Symphony and the South Coast Repertory both sought our expertise on how to develop safety protocols and a plan to produce safe live events. We look forward to partnering with local businesses and organizations to promote health and well-being across Orange County in the months and years to come.

## Testing and Surveillance

Closer to the start of the pandemic in summer 2020, UCI Public Health researchers, in partnership OCHCA, conducted a large-scale, population-based study. Volunteers from UCI Public Health administered antibody testing in a sample of approximately 3,000 Orange County residents to better understand the true prevalence of the virus in the county. Dubbed "actOC," findings from the study showed that the prevalence among Orange County residents was seven-fold greater than previously estimated and that the virus disproportionately affects Hispanic and low-income adults, revealing COVID-19 as a disease of disparities. UCI Public Health researchers on this study included Drs. Scott Bartell, Bernadette Boden-Albala, Tim Bruckner, Andrew Noymer, Daniel Parker, and Verónica Vieira, and researcher Emily Drum.

On another OCHCA collaboration, Drs. Bernadette Boden-Albala, Alana LeBrón, and Daniel Parker served on a Latino Health Equity COVID-19 Taskforce to offer increased testing, outreach, education, contact notification support, and referral services through a "promotora" or community peer outreach model that addresses the root causes impacting Latino communities.

Professor and chair of environmental and occupational health, Verónica Vieira, DSc, conducted COVID-19 antibody testing of roughly 900 Orange County fire department personnel, with follow-up testing of participants that test positive, to determine how long antibodies are present after infection. The findings showed that the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies among Orange County firefighters were notably lower than the estimated prevalence compared to the general county population. The study appeared in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

In a large-scale, population-based surveillance study conducted in partnership with the City of Santa Ana and part of their CARES COVID-19 response efforts, researchers found 28% positivity of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies among adults with disparities in previous infection across racial/ethnic groups. The study – the first of its size and scale in California to include a pediatric population – also revealed 26% positivity among children ages 5 and older.







Several UCI Public Health faculty including Drs. Scott Bartell, Bernadette Boden-Albala, Tim Bruckner, Daniel Parker (corresponding author), and Verónica Vieira released a study on how socioeconomic, geographic, and demographic factors all played critical roles in the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 mortality among Orange County residents in 2020. The findings, published in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, show that some groups were more likely to test positive and die from the virus.

## ***State-wide Vaccine Distribution***

UCI Public Health faculty were appointed to several regional task forces to provide guidance and expertise on best practices for equitable statewide vaccine distribution. These appointments included Bernadette Boden-Albala, PhD, to the Orange County Health Care Agency's (OCHCA) COVID-19 Vaccine Pediatric Task Force whose goal was to provide guidance for Orange County school districts regarding transmission research and testing with a focus on the pediatric population. Additionally, Boden-Albala and David Souleles, MPH, both served on the OCHCA COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force to establish a plan for an equitable COVID-19 vaccine roll-out across the county.

Through her appointment at the UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, Sora Tanjasiri, DrPH, coordinated staff and student volunteers at over 15 mobile community vaccine pods throughout Orange County to vaccinate high-risk seniors and restaurant workers. Events were held in collaboration with community partners including OCHCA, Latino Health Equity Taskforce, OC API Task Force, and the cities of Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Garden Grove. Tanjasiri and team also worked with the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA), Programs in Medical Education (PRIME), and UCI Public Health Association (PHA) to mobilize a workforce of medical students to act as volunteer translators. Volunteers assisted patients at registration in a number of languages including Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean, Tongan, Hindi, and Gujarti.

## ***Moving Forward Together***

As we move forward in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Program in Public Health is committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of communities on campus and beyond. The Program's mission will continue to drive our work: promoting evidence-based science, understanding the social determinants of health, and promoting health equity. UCI Public Health looks forward to continued community partnerships and cross-university collaborations to address the COVID-19 disparities and the overall burden of disease.

# Training the next generation of public health practitioners

With over 1,300 undergraduate and graduate students in public health, many of whom are first-generation college students or underrepresented minorities, the UCI Public Health is uniquely positioned to train a new generation of leaders who reflect the rich, multicultural populations that we aim to serve in the field.

In the Class of 2021, 487 undergraduates and 31 MPH, MS, and PhD students graduated from the Program and embarked on the next chapter of their public health careers. Armed with the skills and knowledge needed for success in the field, graduates are moving forward and are well-equipped to address public health challenges locally, nationally, and globally. Their expertise and participation in the public health workforce is needed now more than ever.

This year, what has come with a heightened interest in public health is record growth across all its degree programs. The Program welcomed an undergraduate class of over 270 students, 97 and 176 are transfer students and freshman, respectively.

The Program also experienced a record number of applications to its Master of Public Health degree program, which saw a 125% increase in applications during the 2021 application cycle. Nearly 50 MPH students were accepted for Fall 2021 entry. We have also recruited our largest PhD cohort since the inception of the doctoral program – and welcomed 16 new PhD students.

**518**

**STUDENTS  
GRADUATED IN 2021**

**125%**

**INCREASE IN MPH  
APPLICATIONS THIS  
CYCLE**

**46**

**MPH STUDENTS  
ACCEPTED FOR FALL  
2021 ENTRY**

**270+**

**UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENTS ACCEPTED  
FOR FALL 2021 ENTRY**

**176**

**INCOMING  
FRESHMEN**

**97**

**INCOMING TRANSFER  
STUDENTS**

## Celebrating some of our exceptional students



### Identifying the factors of e-cigarette use among young Latinos

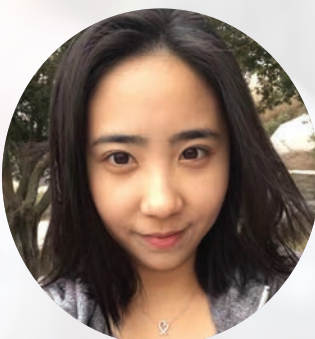
Ravi Sandhu, Bachelor of Science in Public Health Sciences, '20

Ravi Sandhu developed a passion for disparities research while earning his Bachelor of Science in Public Health Sciences and participating in the Program in Public Health's Undergraduate Honors Research Colloquium. In collaboration with faculty mentors Drs. Annie Ro and Miryha Gould Runnerstrom, Ravi delved into this area of research through a project examining e-cigarette use among Latino college students.

Ravi's study aimed to document the social factors encouraging and discouraging e-cigarette use among second-generation Latino college students. Interviews with students from UC Irvine and UC Riverside, who were either regular or infrequent smokers, revealed a number of social factors at play. These included peer-exposure, skepticism of the harmfulness of recreational e-cigarette use, and disagreement with familiar views of substance use.

Ravi's work addresses a critical gap in knowledge about youth smoking behaviors and was among the first to identify specific factors that influence e-cigarette use among Latino college students. Studies like Ravi's play a critical role in providing researchers with valuable insight to inform future research methodologies. Ravi's hardwork paid off, the study was featured in the *Journal of American College Health* with Dr. Ro as the corresponding author and Ravi and Dr. Runnerstrom as co-authors.

Ravi looks forward to conducting similar research in the future to address disparities in vulnerable populations and making a difference in his own community. He is grateful for the compassion and encouragement of faculty across the Program in Public Health and especially its Department of Health, Society, & Behavior.



### Understanding epidemiology & prevention in prescription drugs

Jiahui Dai, Masters of Science in Epidemiology '21

As a recent graduate of the Master of Science in Epidemiology program, Jiahui Dai focuses her research on exploring the understudied associations between metformin-use, a drug used in patients with Type 2 diabetes, and dementia risk. Jiahui developed an interest in this area through her studies at the Program in Public Health alongside faculty mentors Drs. Luohua Jiang, Andrew Odegaard, and Maria Corrada, who share her passion for investigating chronic disease epidemiology and prevention.

As part of her thesis, Jiahui conducted a systematic review aiming to determine if time-related biases exist in previous studies on metformin use and dementia risk among diabetes patients. Time biases are known to exaggerate the effects of drugs, sometimes making them appear effective when they may produce no effect.

Jiahui and co-investigators identified 12 studies reporting a reduced risk of dementia associated with metformin-use, two articles reporting increased risk, and two articles indicating no significant association. Of the 16 studies examined, time-related biases were found in the vast majority. Jiahui's work shows that time-related biases were not carefully considered in past studies investigating the association between metformin and dementia risk, underscoring the need for improved future observational studies on the topic. Jiahui is grateful for the support and encouragement from Public Health faculty, staff, and peers. She looks forward to future collaborations and continued study of chronic disease epidemiology.



## A split decision changed the trajectory of a career

Kalani Phillips, MPH

*UCI Undergraduate Class of 2016*

*UCI Master of Public Health Class of 2021*

*UCI PhD, Class of 2026 (expected)*

As a two-time UCI alumna, Kalani Phillips, MPH, was hooked on the field of public health after she enrolled, on a whim, in an introductory class on the subject. That class would be the reason that she eventually chose to major in public health policy for undergraduate study. After receiving her bachelor's degree in 2016 and working briefly at a fertility clinic, she decided to apply to the MPH degree program at UCI to expand her professional options. "I consider this campus to be my second home. I love the diversity of the community – the setting, the people, and the opportunities for different learning experiences are reasons that keep me coming back."

Kalani recently completed her MPH degree with an emphasis in sociocultural diversity and health with the Class of 2021 and has decided to continue her training. She is starting a new professional chapter in the fall of 2021 as a PhD student in disease prevention, also at UCI. "I never anticipated that I would be pursuing a doctoral degree in public health, but because of the support and mentorship of key people at UCI, anything seems attainable," Kalani said. "Without a doubt, the public health faculty put the success of their students above all else."

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Kalani took advantage of several hands-on learning opportunities over the past 20 months, including volunteering for research studies such as "actOC" and "ServeOC," working for the UCI-led COVID-19 Chatline, accepting a fellowship program to help faculty prepare for remote courses, and, most recently, working on a social media study to explore strategies that can effectively address vaccine hesitancy.

"Public health called to me. It's undeniably inclusive and I couldn't imagine doing anything else with my life," Kalani said. "There are so many directions that you can go in." As the eldest of five children to a Caucasian father and a Vietnamese mother, she is thinking of focusing her PhD research on generational trauma within immigrant households. While she may not know quite yet what she wants to do after completing her PhD, she does know one thing: "I want to live a life that I'm proud of, because at the end of the day, you need to be able to look in the mirror and be happy with what you see."

*"Public health called to me. It's undeniably inclusive and I couldn't imagine doing anything else with my life. There are so many directions that you can go in."*

# *The Future of the Public Health Profession*

*by David Souleles, MPH, Director of the COVID-19 Response Team & Director, MPH Program*

If the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded this country of anything, it is that a robust public health infrastructure is key to assuring communities are prepared to respond to 21st century threats to the public's health. COVID-19 has been perhaps the most visible of these threats in recent memory, but the threats to the public's health are all around us and have not dissipated during the pandemic.

Obesity, fueled by poor nutrition and lack of physical activity has led to high rates of diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension in our communities. Cigarette smoking, after all the efforts and progress public health has made in reducing its use, is still the leading cause of preventable death, accounting for over 480,000 deaths per year in the U.S. Alcohol and substance misuse and abuse continue to challenge our communities as do high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. These are among the many public health challenges facing our communities today whose impacts are not evenly felt across our communities. Vast disparities and health inequities persist, often neighborhood-by-neighborhood.

A key to the solution to these and other public health threats, and to improving and maintaining the health of our communities, is a robust public health system, the foundation of which is a vibrant, competent, and capable workforce. And public health has great workforce needs. The National Association of County and City Health Officials reports that local and state health departments have lost nearly a quarter of their workforce since 2008 and this deficiency is compounded by the age of the public health workforce with 55% of local public health professionals over the age of 45 and almost a quarter of health department staff eligible for retirement.

This is an important moment for public health. We have the opportunity to invest in our public health workforce to meet today and tomorrow's public health challenges. Public health is a diverse field with many career trajectories and opportunities to focus your pursuits in areas including epidemiology and biostatistics, population health and disease prevention, environmental and occupational health, or health, society, and behavior.





## Pathway to a PhD

Margaret Whitley, MPH, PhD '21

This past June, Margaret Whitley, PhD, completed a 5-year journey when she earned her doctoral degree in public health, with an emphasis in health inequities and occupational health. She chose the field of public health for many of the reasons that her colleagues chose this profession: To help people live healthier lives.

After completing her MPH degree at UCLA, Whitley worked in the field as a project manager on various projects including healthy eating, exercise, and breastfeeding. She also worked for the RAND Corporation where she focused on policy and analysis and decided that it was a good time to build on those skills. Pursuing her PhD degree was a big decision and she wanted to embark on the journey for the right reasons at the right time.

"The roots of UCI Public Health's doctoral program grew out of social ecology – an area of study that I'm especially drawn to," Whitley said. "Despite being a fairly new, up-and-coming program, it already has an excellent reputation that offers access to top-tier faculty as mentors, an excellent location, and fulfilling research opportunities."

Whitley studied under Annie Ro, associate professor of health, society, and behavior, who focuses her research on health disparities and immigration. Whitley's dissertation work was funded by the Southern California Education and Research Centers' Targeted Research Training Fellowship Program, through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Occupational Health.

Having already published two articles from her dissertation work, entitled, "Work, race and breastfeeding: A quantitative study of mothers in the United States," Margaret is now continuing her research as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan's Population Studies Center.

Longer term, Whitley plans to continue her research on work-family issues and their connection to health inequities. "I'm also looking forward to teaching the next generation of public health practitioners and scholars," Whitley said. **"And without a doubt, the UCI Public Health Program and throughout the process of pursuing my doctoral degree, I feel prepared to do both."**





## **When one door closes, look for other doors**

Seyi Awodele, MS '20

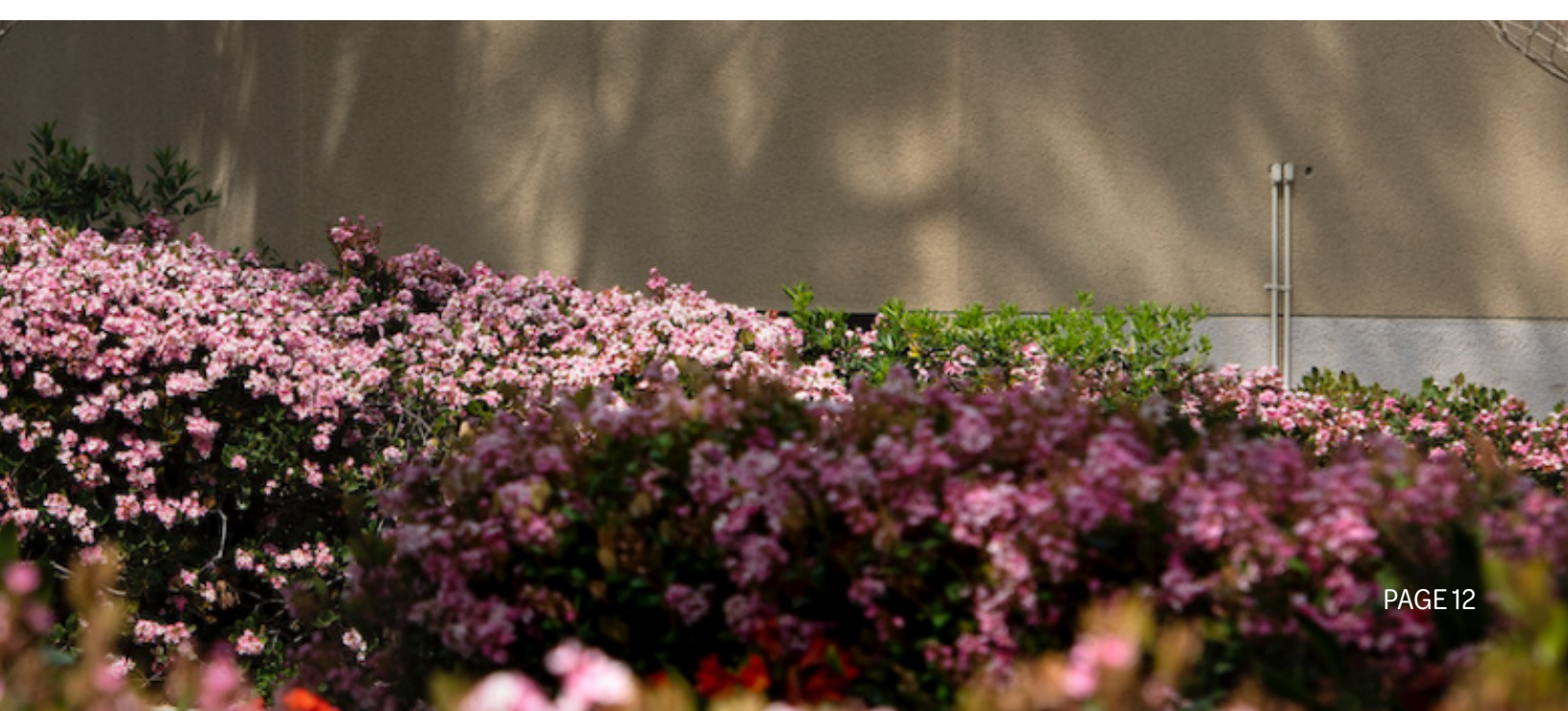
*Residency in Environmental Medicine '21*

Dr. Oluseyi “Seyi” Awodele, a U.S. Navy-trained physician, aeromedical officer, and current U.S. Navy Reserve flight surgeon, discovered his passion for public health and occupational medicine during his time in the military. Curious about the potential hazardous environmental exposures especially faced by female pilots – an underrepresented group in the military – Awodele sought an education in environmental toxicology and found what he was looking for through UCI Public Health’s M.S. in Environmental Health Science program, which he completed in 2020 before going on to complete an Occupational & Environmental Medicine residency program in 2021.

While earning his M.S., Awodele completed a graduate thesis project on the toxicological effects of space radiation on female reproduction (a NASA funded research) with support from thesis advisor and Director of the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, Ulrike Luderer, MD, PhD. When COVID-19 hit in early 2020, Awodele didn’t let it slow him down. With safety top of mind, Awodele swiftly found the lab space needed to complete his project and spent countless hours over the course of the year peering through a microscope, counting mice ovarian follicles one by one. His hard work paid off! He was recognized at the 2020 Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association virtual conference, where he won first place for his poster presentation entitled, “Space Radiation Effects: Comparison of Ovarian Toxicity of Low Dose Gamma Radiation vs. High LET Charged Particle Radiation.”

Throughout his education and during the pandemic, Awodele was inspired by a saying learned during his time in the military: **“When one door closes, look for other doors.”** Serving both civilian and military population simultaneously, he provided his public health and safety expertise to both populations from the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic. As the only medical officer serving over 800 U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy personnel, Awodele understood the importance of prioritizing safety while maintaining operational readiness. His efforts were recognized with the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for superior performance of his duties.

Awodele is grateful for the support received from UCI faculty, especially Dr. Luderer, who he is honored to have worked alongside on his research. As he moves forward in his career in environmental health and occupational medicine, he will always look back on his time at UCI Public Health with gratitude.



# Pushing the boundaries of public health research

In what was a record-breaking year for university-wide research funding, **UCI Public Health was awarded nearly \$15.4M in research contracts and grants for the fiscal year 2020-2021.** With the addition of the Departments of Epidemiology & Biostatistics and Environmental & Occupational Health, this was a significant increase – a 94% jump – over the last fiscal year 2019-2020, which came in at more than \$7.9M. Through collective efforts across the Program, this commitment to research will generate much-needed analyses and support to address critical gaps in care and health equity among vulnerable populations.

*Corresponding authors and only co-authors from the Program in Public Health are noted.  
For the full list of authors for each publication, please visit PubMed or another publication database.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & CLIMATE CHANGE

### **Ambient air pollution and ovarian cancer survival in California**

*Gynecologic Oncology*

Corresponding author: Villanueva, C.

Co-authors: Vieira, V.

This study found that greater exposure to two common ambient air pollutants – nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter with diameters less than 2.5µm (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) – may negatively impact ovarian cancer survival with differences by race/ethnicity.

### **Comparative effectiveness of technical and regulatory innovations to reduce the burden of electronic waste**

*Resources, Conservation and Recycling*

Corresponding author: Ogunseitan, O.

Electronic waste (“e-waste”) contains toxic metals and organic compounds, posing significant threats to human health and environmental quality. In this study, researchers examined different types of e-waste including mobile phones and circuit boards and found trends of toxic chemicals that may lead to cancer and other diseases. The study found higher contamination in low-income communities, suggesting greater risk of negative health outcomes including cancer.

### **Impact of 4th of July Fireworks on Spatiotemporal PM 2.5 Concentrations in California Based on the PurpleAir Sensor Network: Implications for Policy and Environmental Justice**

*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*

Corresponding author: Wu, J. Co-authors: Mousavi, A., Yuan, Y., & Masri, S.

Using real-time air quality measurements, researchers found that short-term, extremely high-particulate-matter air pollution from the widespread use of fireworks spiked during the periods of late June through early July in 2019 and 2020. These fine particles are known to cause a wide range of adverse health effects, and according to this study, impacts are most pronounced in Southern California’s low-income communities.


### **Using machine learning to examine street green space types at a high spatial resolution: Application in Los Angeles County on socioeconomic disparities in exposure**

*Science of the Total Environment*

Corresponding author: Wu, J. Co-authors: Sun, Y., and Jiang, L.

Using machine learning models, Public Health researchers found that disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles County have substantially less green space.





**Risk assessment of soil heavy metal contamination at the census tract level in the city of Santa Ana, CA: Implications for health and environmental justice**

*Environmental Science Process Impacts*

Corresponding author: Masri, S. Co-authors: LeBrón, A., Logue, M., and Wu, J.

Conducted in partnership with Orange County Environmental Justice, this study assessed the health risks associated with soil heavy metal contamination in the city of Santa Ana to calculate cancer risk across the region.

**Impact of underground storm drain systems on larval ecology of Culex and Aedes species in urban environments of Southern California**

*Scientific Reports*

Co-corresponding author: Yan, G. Co-authors: Bastear, J., Li, Y., Octaviani, S., Shin, A., Wang, X., Zhong, D and Zhou, G.

Public Health researchers took to the streets to study the creation and alterations of new habitats for mosquitoes that can pass potentially fatal diseases to humans. The study demonstrates that the impact of urbanization on the ecology of disease vectors should be closer looked at as species respond very differently to environmental changes.

*CHRONIC DISEASE & CANCER*

**Critical review on PFOA, kidney cancer, and testicular cancer**

*Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association*

Corresponding author: Bartell, S. Co-authors: Vieira, V.

By summarizing peer reviewed epidemiological studies on perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) – also known as “forever chemicals” – and cancers of the kidneys and testes, researchers found associations between PFOA exposure and increased risk of cancer.

**Improving reporting standards for polygenic scores in risk prediction studies**

*Nature*

Co-author: Edwards, K.

As a member of the National Working Group for the National Human Genome Research Institute, Edwards co-authored a groundbreaking paper that outlines a promising new approach for assessing a person's inherited risk for chronic diseases by calculating polygenic risk scores. Scores provide an estimate of an individual's risk for specific diseases based on DNA changes.

**The Incidence of Stroke in Indigenous Populations of Countries with a Very High Human Development Index: A Systematic Review Protocol**

*Frontiers in Neurology*

Co-author: Boden-Albala, B.

Boden-Albala served as a co-author for the first systematic review assessing disparities in stroke incidence in indigenous populations of developed countries, and as part of the study, the group developed a protocol that is community-based and culturally responsive.

**Let's Chat: A process evaluation of an intergenerational group chat intervention to increase cancer prevention screening among Vietnamese American families**

*Translational Behavioral Medicine*

Corresponding author: Duong, H. Co-author: Hopfer, S.

Vietnamese Americans have a higher rate of cervical and colorectal cancer (CRC) compared to other ethnicities. This study describes the successes and challenges of implementing a novel intergenerational family group chat intervention that encourages CRC screening, Pap-testing, and HPV vaccination.

**Neighborhood Contexts and Breast Cancer Among Asian American Women**

*Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*

Corresponding author: Morey, B.

This study found that neighborhood socioeconomic

and ethnic contexts are associated with breast cancer risk for Asian American women. Asian American women living in neighborhoods with high neighborhood socioeconomic status and high ethnic composition had the highest odds of breast cancer.

**Project Forward: A Population-Based Cohort Among Young Adult Survivors of Childhood Cancers**

*JNCI Cancer Spectrum*

Corresponding author: Milam, J.

This study found that age and ethnic background is associated with inadequate follow-up care among young adult childhood cancer survivors, with Hispanic and older survivors significantly less likely to receive a recent follow-up care visit. Long-term follow up care is essential for managing the health of young cancer survivors.



## **Composite Score of Healthy Lifestyle Factors and Risk of Hepatocellular Carcinoma: Findings from a Prospective Cohort Study**

*Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*

Corresponding author: Andrew Odegaard.

The study examined the associations between individual lifestyle factors and risk of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Results found that healthy lifestyles protect against HCC development, especially for individuals without hepatitis B and C infections.

## *MENTAL HEALTH*

### **Peer victimization and relationships to approach and avoidance coping to health and health behaviors**

*Behavioral Medicine*

Corresponding author: Hoyt, MA.

This study revealed that different patterns of past bullying experiences may be differently related to health over time. Study participants that reported moderate levels of bullying in high school also reported having more depressive symptoms as university students later in life – versus even those reporting high levels of bullying.

## *ADOLESCENCE*

### **Correspondence Between Perceived Pubertal Development and Hormone Levels in 9- & 10-Year-Olds From the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study**

*Frontiers in Endocrinology*

Corresponding author: Uban, K.

Puberty is an important developmental milestone that begins with rising hormone levels and leads to physical changes in secondary sex characteristics. In this study, the researchers examined perceived physical features and hormones of pubertal maturation in 9- and 10-year-old children as a function of sociodemographic characteristics.

## **A Multi-Contextual Examination of Non-School Friendships and their Impact on Adolescent Deviance and Alcohol Use**

*PLOS One*

Co-author: Lakon, C.

Despite decades of research on adolescent friendships, little is known about adolescents who are more likely to form ties outside of school. The study examined multiple social and ecological contexts including parents, the school, social networks, and the neighborhood to understand the origins and health significance of out-of-school ties.

## *SUBSTANCE USE*

### **E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use–Associated Lung Injury Produced in an Animal Model from Electronic Cigarette Vapor Exposure Without Tetrahydrocannabinol or Vitamin E Oil**

*Journal of the American Heart Association*

Corresponding author: Kleinman, M. Co-authors: Arechavala, R. Herman, D., Hasen, I., and Ting, A.

Named one of the top 10 UC studies in 2020, a study co-authored by affiliated faculty Michael Kleinman identified the heating elements in e-cigarettes as the likely culprits behind serious lung injuries associated with vaping.

### **Insight into Selecting Adolescents for Drinking Intervention Programs: A Simulation Based on Stochastic Actor–Oriented Models**

*Prevention Science*

Co- author: Lakon, C.

Adolescent drinking remains a prominent public health and socioeconomic issue in the U.S. with costly consequences. While numerous drinking intervention programs have been developed, there is little guidance on whether certain strategies of participant recruitment are more effective than others. This study aims at addressing this gap in the literature using a computer simulation approach, a more cost-effective method than employing actual interventions.

# Environmental & Occupational Health



**Verónica Vieira, DSc**  
Chair and Professor

The mission of the Department of Environmental & Occupational Health is to conduct interdisciplinary research and teaching across the fields of exposure science, toxicology, risk assessment, urban health, climate change, natural disasters, and environmental health disparities to elucidate how environmental exposures in home, community, and occupational settings influence human health and well-being. In pursuit of this mission, the department draws on basic, clinical, environmental, social, behavioral, economic, and other sciences to understand and promote wellness across local and global communities.

This year's COVID-19 pandemic prompted the global community to swiftly mobilize to respond to the threat. Like COVID-19, environmental issues like climate change and natural disasters require that we do the same. Combating pressing environmental health issues – which no doubt impact every aspect of human life – is best accomplished through the same interdisciplinary, collaborative efforts our campus community has demonstrated in this past year.

As public health practitioners, leaders, and advocates, we have a duty not only to take collective action on climate change, but to do so through the lens of health equity. We know for certain that climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations, namely communities of color and indigenous groups. Climate change is a social justice issue as much as it is an environmental one.

## HIGHLIGHTS



### **UCI Public Health faculty present critical review findings at Air & Waste Management Association Annual Conference**

Scott Bartell, PhD, professor of environmental and occupational health, presented research at the 51st Annual Critical Review for the Annual Conference of the Air & Waste Management Association. The topic was perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) and cancer, for which Bartell and Verónica Vieira performed a critical review and meta-analysis of the epidemiologic literature, which was also published in the *Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association*.

### **UCI receives \$1M from to study PFAS contaminated drinking water**

As part of a study sponsored by the CDC Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Bartell is investigating the extent to which per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) – toxic chemicals that have been detected in public water supplies in Orange County and beyond – are associated with a variety of cross-sectional health outcomes in children and adults.

## Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) Faculty Present at 2021 UC Risk Summit

On May 20, COEH faculty presented at the virtual UC Risk Summit entitled “Leading in Crisis: UCI’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery,” which provided an overview of the UCI Logistics Response Team, as well the critical role served by the COEH during the pandemic.

### Featured Study: Toxicant Effects on Mammalian Oocyte Mitochondria

Environmental Health Science, Environmental Toxicology Track Doctoral Student, Kelli Malott, and her advisor, Ulrike Luderer, MD, PhD, co-authored a review paper discussing the effects of toxic chemicals and ionizing radiation on oocyte mitochondria. This is important because all of the mitochondria in offspring are derived from mitochondria in the oocyte. The review was published in *Biology of Reproduction*.



### Faculty appointed to International Journal of Molecular Sciences Editorial Board

As a member of the International Journal of Molecular Sciences Editorial Board, Stephen C. Bondy, PhD, professor of environmental and occupational health, plays a critical role in editing special issues like the 2020 Molecular Basis for the Environmental Promotion of Neurodegenerative Disease. He is one of 52 Editorial Board Members in the “Molecular Toxicology” section and one of 16 distinguished scientists to join in 2020.

## *Two new faculty members to be hired to focus on environmental health inequities*

Faculty members from the Program’s Departments of Environmental & Occupational Health and Health, Society, & Behavior contributed to the winning proposal for a new faculty hiring initiative. The initiative aims to promote environmental justice and health equity in Southern California’s Black communities and is part of the UCI Black Thriving Initiative (BTI) Faculty Cluster Hiring Program. The program will bring two new faculty to the Program in Public Health and a total of five new UCI faculty members who study environmental health inequities and bring perspective from different disciplines.

Verónica Vieira, DSc, chair and professor of environmental and occupational health, is the lead Principal Investigator on the project and collaborated with Drs. Cynthia Lakon, Alana Lebrón, and Jun Wu, along with colleagues from School of Social Sciences, School of Medicine, and the Henry Samueli School of Engineering.

“In Southern California, Black communities are often overlooked because they are not the majority minority,” said Vieira. “But, in some respects, that creates even more complex social issues for the local communities, in a nation that already has a lot of entrenched and historic issues.”

The campus launched the Black Thriving Initiative in August 2020 with a goal to create a culture at UCI in which Black people thrive, in part by linking UCI’s success with that of Black communities on and off campus.

# Epidemiology & Biostatistics



## **Karen Edwards, PhD**

### Chair and Professor

Associate director for cancer control and population sciences at the UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center

This year more than ever, the mission of the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics has rang true: to improve population health through research, education, community engagement, and translating discoveries into practice.

Throughout the pandemic, Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics students, staff, and faculty came together in inspiring ways to address COVID-19 through quantitative, data-driven efforts to examine the distribution and determinants of the disease. These efforts have been key in developing disease prevention strategies to improve population health and reduce transmission of the virus, which many would agree represents the biggest public health challenge of our lifetimes.

The Department migrated from the UCI School of Medicine to the Program in Public Health at an opportune time. It joined the Program in Public Health during the early stages of the pandemic, swiftly mobilizing the expertise of departmental faculty to contribute to key program and university-wide initiatives aimed at addressing COVID-19. The Department prides itself on its work in interdisciplinary research and its collaborations with other units across UCI throughout the year.

## *HIGHLIGHTS*

### **Participation in American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) 2020 Virtual Meeting:**

The Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics had strong representation this year with graduate students presenting their research at the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) virtual conference, the world's largest human genetics conference, in October 2020.

### **Dr. Luohua Jiang to serve as the 2021-2023 DECADE Mentor for Public Health**

Luohua Jiang, MD, PhD, an associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, was chosen to serve as Public Health's DECADE (Diverse Educational Community & Doctoral Experience) mentor for the next two academic years (2021-2023). Jiang will work closely with the Program's graduate students and Equity Advisor, Sora Tanjasiri, DrPH, to promote an inclusive and diverse graduate student body and culture.

Additionally, Jiang and her collaborators conducted a study to look for improvements in the management and control of diabetes and CVD to prevent dementia among older American Indians and Native Alaskans (AI/ANs). The study showed that improving training and support of primary care clinicians, addressing cultural considerations, and ensuring inclusion of AI/ANs in research are steps that could help meet the populations' needs.





### *Behavioral epidemiologist joins faculty*

We welcomed Joel Milam, PhD, to the Program in Public Health where he serves as a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics. Joel came to UCI with a robust research portfolio covering a range of public health issues from young adult cancer survivorship and positive psychology to HIV prevention and control.

Prior to joining UCI Public Health, Milam served as an associate professor of research at the Keck School of Medicine of USC's Department of Preventive Medicine and Institute for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention, head of the Health Behavior Research Postdoctoral Program, and co-leader for the Cancer Control Program at the

at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. He also co-founded and currently co-directs the Center for Young Adult Cancer Survivorship Research.

### **UCI receives \$700K from the City of Santa Ana to support new initiatives for health literacy, address barriers to COVID-19 resources in vulnerable populations**

A project, spearheaded by Public Health's Sora Tanjasiri, DrPH, and the School of Medicine's John Billimek, PhD, UCI received a \$700,000 subcontract award from the City of Santa Ana to address inequities and gaps in health services, and enhance COVID-19 testing and other mitigation measures in racial and ethnic minority populations and other socially vulnerable populations.



Tanjasiri and Billimek will play a critical role in evaluating the Initiative's progress and forming the community-based partnerships that are essential to the project's success. A technical advisory group will be established and will include academic and clinical advisors in infectious disease, public health, community engagement, and primary care. The advisory group will provide data-driven guidance and initiate ongoing evaluation on process, reach, and outcome measures.

The award is part of a larger award of \$4M that Santa Ana received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health.

### **Reviewer for the Feb. 2021 NIH Kidney, Nutrition, Obesity and Diabetes (KNOD) Study Section:**

Karen Edwards, chair and professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, served as a reviewer for a special emphasis panel and scientific review group for the February 2021 NIH Kidney, Nutrition, Obesity and Diabetes (KNOD) study section meeting. The NIH KNOD study section reviews applications on the epidemiology and genetic epidemiology of kidney, diabetes, obesity, urinary, gastrointestinal, and liver diseases in human populations.

### **Feb. 2021 NIH Pathophysiological Basis of Mental Disorders and Addictions (PMDA) Study Section:**

Professional researcher, Elizabeth Thomas, PhD, served on the NIH Pathophysiological Basis of Mental Disorders and Addictions (PMDA) study section on February 3-4, 2021. The PMDA Study Section reviews applications that use *in vitro* and animal models to investigate the pathophysiology of psychiatric, addictive, and neurological disorders and the biological systems that mediate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, and learning abnormalities.

## Health, Society & Behavior



**Cynthia Lakon, PhD**

Interim Chair and  
Associate Professor

The 2020-2021 academic year saw the formation of the Department of Health, Society, & Behavior, whose faculty and students strive to address complex health issues at the local, global, regional, and national levels. Their activities include investigating the etiology of health behavior related processes and outcomes, the dynamics of marginalized populations, community-based research and practice, the creation of theoretically informed health interventions and their respective evaluation studies, health communication, and biobehavioral health.

The Department of Health, Society, & Behavior has experienced tremendous growth since forming a year ago. Through the creation of a departmental committee on Black Thriving Research and Initiatives, faculty submitted numerous proposals for the UCI Black Thriving Initiative Faculty Cluster Hiring Program to promote diversity and inclusion in the UCI workforce. As a result of these efforts, departmental faculty were represented on the proposal that was ultimately awarded funding university-wide and in the area of environmental health disparities.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Misinformation Adoption or Rejection in the Era of COVID-19**

In a study that aimed to understand the effects of exposure to misinformation and the threats it presents, assistant professor of health, society, and behavior, Suellen Hopfer, PhD, helped develop a system that recognizes misinformation themes and concerns on the web.



#### **Xenophobia as a Public Health Threat**

In an installment of the UCI Susan & Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, "Bridging the Gap" series, Brittany Morey, PhD, assistant professor of health, society, and behavior, focused on health equity where she offered long-term solutions to counter the damaging health effects of racism on Asian Americans. A related editorial by Morey was also published in the OC Register. Morey also received a grant from the Summer 2021 Temporary Research Enhancement Support.



#### **The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Project: A Short Film**

FASD is more prevalent in the U.S. than Autism, Down Syndrome and Spina Bifida combined, yet has a fraction of the awareness or resources to support families living with this every day. Kristina Uban, PhD, recently served as a producer for the grass-roots awareness movement, the FASD Project, and its short awareness film.







### *Bioethics scholar and professor joins faculty*

Bioethics scholar and professor, Leigh Turner, PhD, started with the Program at the end of the academic year. Turner has dedicated his career to exploring the study of ethical issues related to medicine, health care, public health, and biotechnology. He believes that ethical issues in public health research, policy, and practice are just as important as they are to clinical settings. He aspires to develop a center at UCI that is supportive of students and faculty members interested in public health ethics and bioethics-related scholarship.

The Department also welcomed Amanda Garcia-Hall as its new Department Administrator. The department looks forward to continued growth in the coming year and beyond. It currently has three ongoing recruitments including an associate or full-rank health policy faculty, adjunct associate professor, and in-residence associate professor.



### **The association between social ties and depression among Asian and Pacific Islander undocumented young adults**

The mental health of Asian and Pacific Islander undocumented young adults has been understudied, despite an increasingly restrictive immigration climate that poses a risk to mental health. Research, led by Annie Ro, PhD, associate professor of health, society, and behavior, found that higher levels of social ties were associated with lower odds of depression, while social isolation was associated with higher odds of depression. Study appeared in the journal *BMC Public Health* and Ro was the corresponding author.

### **UCI Podcast: Did COVID-19 cause a mental health pandemic?**

Tim Bruckner, PhD, professor of health, society, and behavior, sat down with the producers of the UCI Podcast to discuss whether the predictions of a follow-on mental health pandemic came true, how women's careers have been affected by the pandemic, and how equity has been incorporated into California's public health response.

The discussion was partly based on a study that Bruckner co-authored, which appeared in the journal *BMC Public Health*. Titled: "Risk of stress/depression and functional impairment in Denmark immediately following a COVID-19 shutdown," the study aimed to investigate the impact of the first COVID-19 lockdown on risk for stress/depression among adults in Denmark, which had lower infection rates, and whether the impacts of lockdown varied across living situations. Results indicated that living with children at home may have, in the short term, buffered the potential mental health effects of the COVID-19 shutdown.



# Population Health & Disease Prevention



**Lisa Grant Ludwig, PhD**  
Chair and Professor

This has been a landmark year for the Department of Population Health & Disease Prevention (DPHDP). In the wake of multiple global and national challenges, DPHDP students, staff, and faculty had countless achievements in education, research, and public service in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Established in 2008 as the first department within the Program in Public Health, DPHDP reached a critical size and junction in 2020 that allowed faculty to branch out into the three complementary departments. This was a transition guided in part by DPHDP's commitment to excellence in interdisciplinary public health research, education, and practice, which positioned faculty for success as they began to populate the newly formed departments.

Despite the public health challenges of the past year, DPHDP has remained steadfast in its mission to create, integrate, and translate population-based knowledge into preventive strategies to reduce the societal burden of human disease and disability. The department is proud to have conducted exemplary research, cultivated a robust extramural funding portfolio, and contributed directly to the university, local, and global communities in this milestone year.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### **This Is Public Health Global Grant Program**

The Program in Public Health, specifically DPHDP as a leader in critical global health research, was selected as a recipient of the 2021 This Is Public Health (TIPH) Global Grant Program and member of the program's first cohort. TIPH is sponsored by the Global Network for Academic Public Health, which convenes leaders from around the world to share, learn, collaborate, and act to advance academic public health.



### **Diversity and Disparities in Cancer Research Traineeship Award**

Michael A. Hoyt, PhD, associate professor of population health and disease prevention, and research assistant Raymond Carrillo Ceja were given a traineeship award to support ongoing research on cancer survivorship among Latino young adults.

### **Top 100 Influencers in Orange County**

Andrew Noymer, professor of population health and disease prevention, was named in a list of the Top 100 Influencers in recognition of his work in becoming an interpreter of pandemic trends in Orange County. Over the course of the pandemic, Noymer has been cited extensively in the media for his expertise in COVID-19 demography.



## Faculty Named an Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellows



Oladele Ogunseitan, PhD, UC Presidential Chair and UCI professor of population health and disease prevention, was named one of this year's Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) fellows for distinguished contributions in studies using fundamental science to inform impacts of toxic components in manufacturing on human and environmental health with significant societal impacts. Ogunseitan was one of only nine UCI faculty named this year and one of 185 in the university's history.

Additionally, Ogunseitan and frequent collaborator, Julie Schoenung, PhD, from UCI Engineering, were awarded a \$200,000 research grant from Microsoft Corp. They are co-principal investigators on a project entitled "Sustainable Development of Materials in Printed Circuit Boards for the Next Generation Electronic Products."

## Two Faculty Among the Top 2% of Scientists in the World According to Stanford University Rankings

Guiyun Yan, PhD, professor of population health and disease prevention, and Oladele Ogunseitan were both recognized for their work in the Stanford University Rankings.



## Pandemic lessons for Earthquake Resilience Presented at Annual Meeting

Lisa Grant Ludwig, PhD, chair and professor of population health and disease prevention, delivered a plenary talk entitled, "Pandemic lessons for earthquake resilience" at the Southern California Earthquake Center (SCEC) Annual Meeting. As part of her talk, she discussed the similarities observed between pandemics and earthquakes, as well as how human behavior can mitigate or exacerbate public health crises. Ludwig also received funding from NASA to study natural disasters and disaster response to help develop data analysis tools for emergency responders to assess disaster impacts.

## NIH Grant Renewal for Malaria Research in Myanmar

Daniel Parker, PhD, assistant professor of population health and disease prevention, and his colleagues were awarded a 3-year NIH grant renewal to study acceptability and feasibility of mass drug administration with primaquine for local elimination of *P. vivax* malaria in Myanmar. Parker also received a grant from the Summer 2021 Temporary Research Enhancement Support from Vice Chancellor Douglas Haynes as part of a campus-wide initiative to support senate faculty career development.



# Faculty Grants, Honors & Awards



2021-22 Academic Senate Mid-Career Faculty Award: Presented to **Andrew Noymer, PhD, associate professor of population health and disease prevention**, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to public

service to the university and communities across Orange County.

American Psychological Association Outstanding Contribution to Trauma Psychology by an Early Career Psychologist Award was presented to **affiliated faculty Dana Rose Garfin, PhD**, for her contributions to the field of trauma psychology.



2021 Orange County Business Journal Innovator of the Year was presented to **affiliated faculty Phillip Felgner, PhD**, in recognition of contributions to mRNA vaccine development.

Award for Service in Medical Education was presented to **affiliated faculty Wayne Chang, MD**, in recognition of excellence in teaching in medical education.

**Karen Edwards, PhD, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics**, was asked to serve on the UCI Council on Equity and Inclusion for a 3-year term for 2021-2024. Edwards is one of only two faculty who represent the Susan & Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences and helps advise on matters related to equity, inclusion, and diversity.



**Oladele Ogunseitan, PhD, UC Presidential Chair and Professor** was appointed to serve on the Tripartite Technical Advisory Group, assembled under the direction of global organizations, including the WHO to address zoonotic disease. Additionally, the

Fellowship of the Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce recognized Ogunseitan for his work on addressing global electronic waste.



Health Effects of Air Pollution Foundation of the South Coast Air Management District Principal Investigator Award presented to **Jun Wu, PhD, professor of environmental and occupational health**, for her research on the impacts

of air and noise pollution on the risk of developing breast cancer.

**Bernadette Boden-Albala, dean and professor of health, society, and behavior**, was invited to serve on

the University of California Global Health Institute Board of Directors to advise on an array of public health issues related to health equity.



She was also presented with the Latino Excellence & Achievement Award for championing graduate student success and

research excellence in the Hispanic/Latinx community at UCI and in Orange County.



**2021 Awardee**  
**Ted Gideonse, PhD**  
**Assistant Professor of**  
**Teaching**

**UCI Celebration of Teaching Honorees**

The annual UCI Celebration of Teaching recognizes undergraduate teachers at UCI who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment to undergraduate education. Ted Gideonse was recognized for 2021 and Daniel Parker was recognized for 2020. Ted Gideonse was also selected as the 2021 Delta Omega Society in Public Health Honorary Inductee and was recognized for his excellence in teaching.



**2020 Awardee**  
**Daniel Parker, PhD**  
**Assistant Professor**

*Sora Park Tanjasiri appointed as program's first Equity Advisor*

The Program in Public Health is committed to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus by developing programs for its students, faculty, and staff to continue learning about and addressing social justice issues. This year and as part of its inclusion and diversity plan, the Program celebrated the appointment of its first Equity Advisor: Sora Park Tanjasiri, DrPH, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics and associate director of cancer health disparities & community engagement at the UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center.



**Sora Tanjasiri, DrPH**  
Equity Advisor & Professor  
of Epidemiology &  
Biostatistics

As Equity Advisor, Tanjasiri ensures that diversity and equity are considered in all aspects of the Program's academic mission. She supports strategic planning by advising on diverse faculty hiring and graduate recruitment, as well as serving on the founding dean's leadership team to ensure academic programming and student recruitment address social justice.

The Equity Advisor position plays an active role in fostering a positive climate of equity and inclusion on campus. By contributing to policies and practices that support diversity, Tanjasiri works with staff, faculty, and students alike to ensure that individual unit policies, practices, and procedures foster a collegial, fair, and professional environment.

Based on her extensive background in health equity research, Tanjasiri is well-versed in the ways in which diversity and inclusion are critical to promoting the lively intellectual exchange and variety of ideas and perspectives that are essential to higher education and advanced scholarly research.

Beyond her administrative role at the Program, Tanjasiri works closely with community partners to promote equity beyond campus and focuses on community health promotion to reduce cancer health disparities among diverse populations.

# Student Grants, Honors, & Awards

**2021 Anteater Legacy Award** presented to undergraduate student Stephanie Iraheta in recognition of her contributions to advancing the mission of the UCI Cross-Cultural Center and building inclusive communities.

**2021 Dynamic Womxn of UCI Awards** presented to Public Health students Olivia Longhetto, Janielle Vidal, and Herschell Valenova Dayag.

**2021 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship** awarded to doctoral student Alexis Guerra in support of her research of coastal ocean microbiomes and water quality along urban communities.

**This is Public Health Global Ambassadorship** presented to doctoral student Gabby Gussin for her project conducted alongside Dr. Oladele Ogunseitan entitled, "Antibiotics Stewardship is Public Health."

**UCI Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation Summer Fellowships** awarded to students Megan Key, Nik Warren, and Kameko Washburn.

**UCI Solutions that Scale Graduate Fellowship** awarded to doctoral student Anqi Jiao for work on impacts of heat exposure on pregnancy outcomes.

**Chicano/Latino Studies Giving Day Awardee** presented to MPH student Joceline Porron in support of her continued work in promoting equity.


**UCI Graduate Division Summer Inclusive Excellence Fellowship** awarded to doctoral student Victoria Rodriguez.

**28th Annual UCI Writing Awardee** presented to undergraduate student Sarah Wang in recognition of outstanding academic writing in science technology.

**UCI Graduate Division International Studies Grant and UCI Associated Graduate Students (AGS) Symposium Audience Choice Award** presented to doctoral student Yachen Zhu in recognition of her outstanding contributions to public health research.

**2020-2021 Public Impact Fellowship Award** presented to doctoral students Theresa Duong and Brandon Osborn in recognition of academic excellence and dedication to research that demonstrates the potential to significantly improve the lives of others.





**2020-2021 Chancellor’s Club Fund for Excellence Fellowship Award** awarded to Brandon Osborn in recognition of academic excellence, accomplishments, and leadership qualities consistent with the mission of the Chancellor's Club to represent, develop, and support our future leaders.

**MPH student and corresponding author, Nicholas Cuvelier**, enjoyed seeing his first publication in the *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology* entitled, “Shrinkage estimation of long-term water ingestion”, which was co-authored by Professor Scott Bartell, PhD. While previous studies rely on only 2-day averages when estimating long-term water consumption rates – leading to overestimation of variability in consumption – Nicholas’ study uses a new rate to assess chronic exposures and health risks for a variety of water contaminants.

**UCI Graduate Division’s Brython Davis Fellowship Award** presented to Herschell Valenova Dayag for outstanding academic achievements.

**2020 Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association (WOEMA) Virtual Poster Presentation** awarded to master's student in Environmental and Occupational Health student, Oluseyi Awodele, for placing first in the 2020 virtual poster competition.

**National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health Fellowship** awarded to doctoral student Ivy Torres for her work about the disability cross-over undergone by Latina immigrants and doctoral graduate Margaret Whitley for her research in work organization and stress-related disorders.

**NIH National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities Grant** awarded to MPH student Samantha Garcia for her project titled Individual, Interpersonal, and Community Factors Associated with HPV Vaccine Hesitancy among Mexican American Young Adult Women.



# *Alumni Found Ways to Connect and Give Back*

Despite the challenges brought upon by the pandemic, the UCI Public Health Alumni Chapter did not lose steam. As the first UCI Alumni Association Chapter to pivot and host a virtual event, the leadership board planned virtual guest lectures and discussions, mental health socials such as yoga, Bingo, and pet therapy, an “Odd Jobs” panel highlighting diverse public health careers, an alumni-led student workshop focusing on grad school applications and resume building, just to name a few. One of their greatest recent accomplishments was the establishment and fundraising for the first-ever Public Health Alumni Scholarship, which ultimately granted two scholarships to deserving undergraduate Public Health students. With a new leadership board in place, this volunteer group will not be slowing down any time soon and is motivated to continue their service to their mission: “To enrich the lives of Public Health alumni and engage them in a lifelong advancement of UC Irvine through community and service.”



*UCI Public Health Alumni Board Mission:*

*“To enrich the lives of Public Health alumni and engage them in a lifelong advancement of UC Irvine through community and service.”*



# Alumni Board 2021-2023

In July 2021, the second group of alumni since the chartering of our official UCI Public Health Alumni Chapter in 2019 began their 2-year term. In their roles, this board will connect and engage fellow alumni, give back to students through mentorship and fundraising, and serve as Ambassadors for UCI Public Health in the community, while developing their own leadership skills.



**Kalani Phillips '16, MPH '21**

President

Kalani started her PhD program, with an emphasis in Disease Prevention, this fall at the UCI Public Health.



**Jesus Chavez '20**

Treasurer

Jesus earned his BS and BA degrees in Public Health and minored in Medical Anthropology. He now works as a Project Assistant for the non-profit Latino Health Access.



**Lira Islam '19, MPH '21**

Events Chair

Lira is a two-time graduate of the UCI Program in Public Health, earning her Bachelor's in Public Health Policy and her MPH. She currently works for UCI Human Resources as an Engagement and Wellness Coordinator.



**Chad Ngo '15, MPH**

Communications Co-Chair

Chad received his BA in Public Health from UCI and pursued his MPH at Cal State Fullerton. He now works as a Communications Manager at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.



**Sophie Nguyen '24 (expected)**

Student Liaison (New position)

Sophie is an undergraduate in the Class of 2024 pursuing a double major in Public Health Policy and Biological Sciences.



**Megan Padilla '15, MPH '20**

Vice President

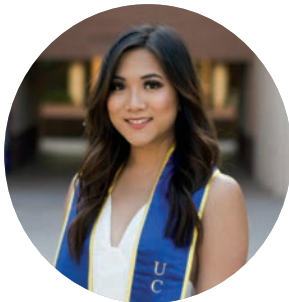
Megan is the COVID-19 Chatline Coordinator at the UCI Program in Public Health.



**Rajiv Ramdeo '07, MPH '11**

Regional Events Chair  
(New position)

Rajiv holds a Master's in Public Health and Bachelor's in Biological Sciences from UCI. He is currently a Senior Manager at Stanford Health Care.



**Arielle Bautista '21**

Communications Co-Chair

Arielle graduated from UCI with a Bachelor's in Public Health Sciences and works for Allergan as a Clinical Research Coordinator.



**Christine Nguyen '19, MPH '22**

(expected)

Graduate Student Liaison (New position)

Christine is a 2nd year MPH student, and she has a Bachelor's in Public Health Science from UCI.



## Alumna Takes Food Insecurities Head-On

*Malak Kudaimi, Class of 2018*

**UCI Public Health graduate, Malak Kudaimi, Class of 2018**, chose the field at an early age as she saw a number of family members suffering from chronic, preventable disease; and she felt she could make a mark by dedicating her life's work to implementing policy to improve public health. "I chose UCI because of the research opportunities and its reputation for preparing their students for postgraduate pursuits," Malak said.

As a UCI undergraduate, Malak was heavily involved with the food security movement on campus and advocated for the establishment of a campus food pantry to help meet students' basic needs. Following graduation, she became a Congressional Hunger Center fellow and spent six months in Seattle working to eradicate hunger. It gave her the hands-on experience she desired, and it also prepared her to being a paid staff member for the past year and a half at the UCI Fresh Basic Needs Hub. This newer campus resource has become one of the largest university food pantry programs in the country. While in this position, she is most proud of expanding eligibility to include law and medical students.

In the fall, Malak will be starting a yearlong Master of Science degree program in the U.K. and has her sights set on global health and international development and would eventually like to work for the United Nations or the World Health Organization. "I was born in Syria, and I feel the need to bring awareness to public health in the Middle East where there is a huge need for public health practitioners," she said.

To support her advanced degree endeavors, Malak was awarded the Marshall Scholarship late last year. With guidance and an endorsement from the UCI Scholarship Opportunities Program, this highly competitive funding mechanism supports a small pool of Americans who want to complete advanced training in the U.K. Only five percent of applicants are chosen out of thousands of applications.

***"I've found 'no' is rarely the final answer, and that challenges may require persistence, patience, or a different tactic," Malak said. "This has been my approach, and I plan to continue pursuing my passions with this in mind."***

*Ms. Kudaimi was featured on the UCI Newsroom in Jan '21.*

# Giving Day Results in Two New Scholarships

UCI Public Health hosted its fifth annual Giving Day in the spring, which was a great success. This year, the Program in Public Health raised over \$4,000 and dedicated all the proceeds to support our first-ever, UCI Public Health Alumni Chapter established student scholarships. Thanks to the generosity of our Anteater community, two scholarships were awarded to deserving undergraduate public health students whose stories are shared below. The Program looks forward to seeing this new tradition support future generations of UCI Public Health students.

## *Karina Brianna Rosalez, Class of 2022 (expected)*



**UCI senior and public health policy undergraduate, Karina Brianna Rosalez** wasn't feeling the spark that she was hoping for as a computer science major when she first started college. She felt lost and unfulfilled. After landing a job

with the Fresh Hub on campus her sophomore year, she instantly gravitated towards everything that it stood for: Helping those less fortunate and improving the health and well-being of the community. Many of her fellow student workers were public health majors – a field of study that she didn't realize was even an option. She quickly switched majors to public health in her sophomore year and hasn't looked back.

Karina is currently the Operations Coordinator and a CalFresh Advocate at Fresh Hub. In this role, she's helped spread awareness for the valuable campus resource and helps sign students up for Cal Fresh benefits. Following her

undergraduate degree, Karina plans to apply to law school to eventually work on policy change and health advocacy to help those who need it the most.

"Working at Fresh Hub is a big part of who I am and what I stand for," said Karina. "Beyond the connections I've made with other UCI students, the support that this resource provides for students brings so much joy to my life."

Like many undergraduates, the pandemic created a situation where Karina had to isolate from her friends and even family and it gave her perspective that focusing on her own wellness is just as important as looking out for others. "The silver lining of the pandemic was that I realized that you have to do more to care for yourself so you can help other people," said Karina. "And I hope to one day be able to make an impact through policy and advocacy."

Karina is grateful to UCI Public Health alumni, the Alumni Chapter board, and generous donors for their support of her academic pursuits.

## *Thu Phan, Class of 2024 (expected)*



Current UCI sophomore Thu Phan had a moment of clarity during her freshman year at UCI. She saw what was happening around the world with the pandemic and other threats to public health and knew that she wanted to make it her life's work to help improve society's standard of living.

Thu entered UCI as a public health undergraduate, but as the pandemic wore on, she felt like she could make a bigger difference by getting to the root of how disease spreads. She recently switched her major to biological sciences and is interested in epidemiology as well as pathology and how the disease impacts the body's biological systems. Public health will always be a motivating force for her training, and she would eventually like to integrate public health into her postgraduate training. For the time being, she is specifically focused on the spread of rabies and the problems that this disease poses to public health.

Despite the pandemic and having to isolate for a significant portion of her freshman year, Thu made the most of the situation and joined UCI Summer Bridge – a campus resource that gives incoming UCI students an opportunity to make the best possible academic and social transition to UCI. She became close with students in her dorm and felt that they truly created a community.

“The pandemic made me realize that having a network of close friends and family is very important,” said Thu. “I also realized that health is more than just systemic,

mental health and clarity are also crucial to a person’s overall well-being.”

Thu made a point to go home often during the height of the pandemic to reconnect with her family, as they were a healthy distraction from school. She’s grateful to UCI Public Health alumni, the Alumni Chapter board, and generous donors for their support of her academic pursuits and plans to use science to improve the world around her.

## First-time recipients of H&H Lee Foundation Scholarship

For the first time, four deserving PhD students, candidates, and a recent PhD graduate were awarded the H&H Lee Foundation Scholarship in Public Health. These students represent the best of the best that our doctoral program has to offer and epitomize public health: research, training, and service. Congratulations to each of the recipients who come from one of the four departments that are under the UCI Program in Public Health.



**Katherine Colcord** is a PhD student with an emphasis in epidemiology and was among the top candidates for admission for the 2020-2021 academic year. Her research focuses on the aging population, specifically on the individuals aged 90 and above and their risks of fractures and falls. *Advisor: Karen Edwards.*



**Kelli Malott** is a PhD student in environmental health sciences (EHS) whose research focuses on reproductive toxicology. An accomplished student and researcher, Kelli has already published several research papers and also served as the EHS student representative in Public Health for over a year. *Advisor: Jun Wu.*



**Sara Goodman** is a PhD in Public Health candidate with a concentration in Disease Prevention. As part of her current research, she is investigating hepatitis C treatment among Orange County residents, looking specifically at different outcome scenarios through modeling. *Advisor: Cynthia Lakon.*



**Georgia Halkia** is a recent Ph.D. graduate, emphasizing in global health. Her research focuses on the implications of induced earthquakes in Oklahoma, an area of low natural seismic hazard, and she defended her dissertation over the summer. She also presented her research at the 46th Annual Natural Hazards Workshop hosted by University of Colorado at Boulder. *Advisor: Lisa Grant Ludwig.*



## Ways to Support the UCI Program in Public Health

**Support the next generation of public health leaders.** Students like Ravi, Katherine, Seyi, Kelli, and Georgia, who you have met throughout this review, need your support to realize their dreams and reach their full potential. As our students commit to a rigorous curriculum that includes biostatistics, epidemiology, health policy management, understanding social determinants of health, and environmental health sciences, your support through scholarships and fellowships will ease the financial burden so many of our students face. An investment in our students is also an investment in our future public health workforce.

**Support public health research.** The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how vital scientific research and science is to maintain and restore health in our communities. At its core, public health faculty are Scholars-in-Action who are committed to advancing science while identifying and reducing factors that lead to health disparities. As the pandemic paralyzed our world, UCI Public Health faculty quickly shifted to focus on emerging health crises with the goal of restoring health. Your partnership will fund innovative studies and training programs that will stimulate research and nurture excellence in key areas including chronic disease prevention, nutritional science, human brain development, environment and occupational health, health equity, community engagement, and global health.

**Support Public Health faculty expansion.** Your investment of endowed chairs will allow UCI Public Health the ability to recruit and retain the most prestigious faculty across the globe while we commit to a culture of inclusion and diversity. The Program's faculty have multidisciplinary backgrounds with expertise in key areas of biological, natural, and social science subjects within the public health framework, and these scholars are vital to our Program's mission, goals, and objectives.

**Support Our Mission:** The future School of Population and Public Health is dedicated to the achievement of health equity for all populations through teaching, research, service, and public health practice locally and globally. Championing the principles of evidence-based public health science, we aspire to understand and impact population-level social, biological, and environmental determinants of health and well-being.

For more information about how to support the UCI future School of Population and Public Health, please contact **Juliana Goswick, Director of Development for UCI Public Health at [jgoswick@hs.uci.edu](mailto:jgoswick@hs.uci.edu) or (928) 830-9671.**

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