

BECOMING THE PEOPLE'S SCHOOL

SPECIAL UPDATE 2024



University of Texas
School of Public Health
San Antonio

UT Health
San Antonio

UTSA.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF TODAY



I am honored to welcome you to the second annual update regarding the UT School of Public Health San Antonio. We continue our forward march with open arms (to embrace all people), open hearts (to love the communities we wish to serve) and open minds (to learn from the people of South Texas).

In its first year, our school worked with the community to co-construct a social contract and co-design departments and educational programs, ensuring all aspects reflect our mission to place people, their health and their well-being at the center of all we do. We vowed to grow into a school 'of the people, by the people for the people.' To realize our vision of 'whole health,' we sowed the vital seeds of partnerships with key stakeholders at The University of Texas

Health Science Center at San Antonio, The University of Texas at San Antonio, the San Antonio Metro Health District and Bexar County.

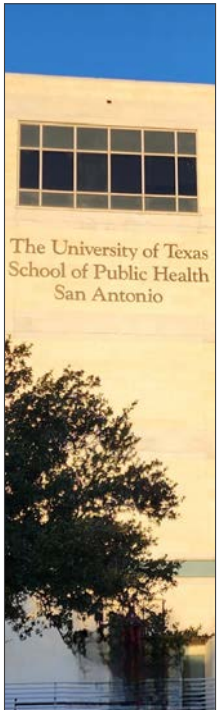
In our second year, we have laid the groundwork for our vision with the school's solid and foundational building blocks. We completed the remodeling and revitalization of our building, which serves as the home of your school. We have hired four accomplished leaders as our inaugural departmental chairs to spearhead our educational efforts. We have established a team of experienced associate deans leading finance and administration, and research and partnerships, alongside faculty members who are community-driven in their efforts. We have continued to expand our community partnerships across the City of San Antonio and Bexar County with great intentionality and loving care.

We launched our signature Master of Public Health (MPH) degree program, welcoming our first cohort of thirty-five students in August this year. We are co-developing an innovative Doctor of Medicine/Master of Public Health (MD/MPH) dual-degree program partnering with the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long School of Medicine, expecting to receive our first cohort of medical students in the summer of this year. During National Public Health Week in April, we unveiled an expanded and transformative vision for public health and well-being in San Antonio. Our vision thrives where families gather, in the heart of our neighborhoods and across the vibrant parks and green spaces that define our city. It draws inspiration from the rich arts and cultural heritage of South Texas, illustrating how creativity and tradition can drive innovation. By embracing this holistic approach, we invite leaders, organizations and community members to join us in shaping a healthier future for all.

In our current year, we will focus on building our doctoral programs and launch our flagship MD/MPH joint-degree program. We will continue to expand our faculty and grow our experiential learning and training efforts for the enrolled students. We hope to realize the full power and growth potential of our collaborative school as the plans for the recently announced UT Health San Antonio/UT San Antonio merger take shape. We anticipate building further on our budding community partnerships guided by all of us.

Through all this, I will continue to serve your school's needs and you. I am always available to each of you to hear, listen, learn and understand how we can co-visualize our collective dreams of a healthy and thriving South Texas. I invite you to visit our campus, engage with our staff and faculty and contribute your ideas to inform the next leg of our collaborative journey as we build and manifest our shared heritage of the People's School.

Vasan Ramachandran, MD, FACC, FAHA
Dean, The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio



IN THIS UPDATE

INAUGURAL CLASS.....	4
Celebrating our first students	
KEY MILESTONES	6
Marking a year of major achievements	
MISSION STATEMENT	8
ACADEMIC, FACULTY, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS (AFSA).....	9
Establishing the program	
DEPARTMENT OVERVIEWS.....	10
Prioritizing experience and engagement	
STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS	12
Scholarships support a thriving community	
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.....	14
Partnering for the public's health and well-being	
NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK	16
Celebrating a week dedicated to our mission	
GRANTS AND RESEARCH.....	18
A hub of innovative public health research	
COLLABORATION AND ADVANCEMENT	20
Uniting to address public health priorities	
MEET OUR TEAM	21
Training tomorrow's public health professionals	

UT SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SAN ANTONIO WELCOMES INAUGURAL CLASS



**WE ARE
EXCITED TO
WELCOME
OUR FIRST
COHORT OF
STUDENTS,”**

said Vasan Ramachandran, MD, founding dean of The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio. “Our mission is to train and educate future public health professionals, providing them with high-quality education and the tools to develop innovative solutions to local and regional public health problems. We believe promoting health is essential to building strong communities.”

The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio (UT School of Public Health San Antonio), a collaboration between The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UT Health San Antonio) and The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), proudly welcomed its inaugural class and the official launch of the region’s first Master of Public Health (MPH) graduate degree program.

In August 2024, the first cohort of 35 students attended classes at the new UT School of Public Health San Antonio. Many of the students in the program reside in Bexar County and are working professionals in health care, education and government agencies.

The collaboration between UT Health San Antonio and UTSA brings together the academic strengths, expertise and resources of two institutions committed to excellence in education. Designed uniquely for South Texas, the new school will train graduate students to serve the public health needs of the communities across the area, improving the health and well-being of South Texans.

“San Antonio was the largest city in the United States without a school of public health until the creation of this new school, which combines our strengths in areas such as data science, epidemiology, biostatistics and behavioral science,” said Heather Shipley, PhD, UTSA provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. “It’s a game changer that will provide students with the distinctive education and experiences needed to prepare

them for the public health careers of today and tomorrow.”

The seventh-largest city in the United States, San Antonio is geographically located at the center of South Texas and reflects the country’s demographic future. By building the School of Public Health, UT Health San Antonio and UTSA are creating more opportunities for experiential learning and transdisciplinary research. Additionally, students will be more informed of the public health realities that the rest of the nation will experience in the years to come. This includes knowledge of health disparities and an understanding of how to address the unique needs of the state’s growing Latino population.

UT School of Public Health San Antonio’s curriculum is practical, where research matters to the people and service counts for the community. The Master of Public Health (MPH) degree requires a minimum of 45 semester credit hours.



Students have an opportunity to gain skills and apply evidence-based solutions and policies. The program emphasizes educating and training future leaders who can face public health threats and opportunities of today and tomorrow.

The interdisciplinary nature of the public health program gives students an opportunity to explore a wide range of careers in the areas of public health practice, including environmental, occupational and behavioral health, plus health services administration.

According to the American Public Health Association, the field of public health “promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play.” Public health improves quality of life, prevents the development of health risks and keeps people healthy. The work spans government, business and nonprofit sectors. Careers for public health graduates include scientists, academic scholars, health educators, community health workers, public health practitioners and policymakers.

“Through our new School of Public Health, we are growing our state’s workforce and equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to address complex health challenges in South Texas,” said Lynne Cossman, PhD, dean of the UTSA College for Health, Community and Policy. “This new school is a testament to UTSA and UT Health San Antonio’s shared commitment to improve the quality of life of residents in our state.”

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the field of public health is expected to grow approximately 17 percent between now and the year 2030. Based on the Texas Workforce Commission, community and social service occupations are expected to grow by more than 43,000 in Texas in the next six years. UT School of Public Health San Antonio will positively impact the workforce and aims to supply highly skilled individuals for future job growth in areas of high demand.



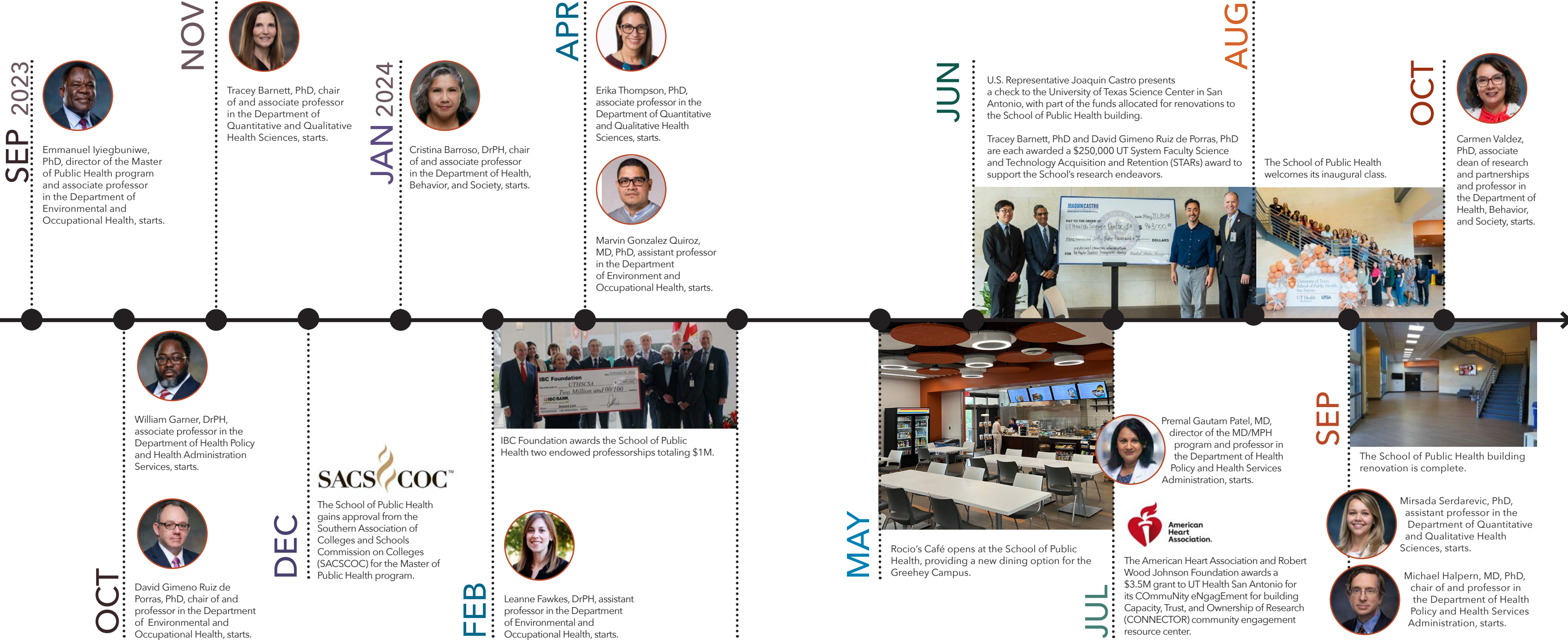
A BOLD BEGINNING: MILESTONES IN THE LAUNCH OF OUR SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The launch of The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio marks a transformative moment for public health innovation and education in our region. Rooted in a mission to advance community well-being, this journey has already achieved remarkable milestones, setting the stage for a future filled with impactful breakthroughs.



of The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio is just beginning, but its potential knows no bounds. As we continue to grow, we invite you to be part of this transformative journey. Together, we can shape a healthier, more equitable future for all.

THE STORY





OUR MISSION

EDUCATION THAT IS EXPERIENTIAL AND LEVERAGES LOCAL DATA.
RESEARCH THAT ADDRESSES REGIONAL HEALTH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES.
SERVICE THAT COUNTS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

ACADEMIC, FACULTY, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS (AFSA)

In its inaugural year, the University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio has made significant strides in establishing its programs and mission. Admissions targets for the first cohort of students were successfully met, laying the groundwork for a robust learning community. The school also developed courses and frameworks for two Master of Public Health (MPH) degree concentrations (Public Health Practice and Administration and Health Systems in the Community Context) and established initial faculty governance and student involvement committees, ensuring a foundation of collaborative leadership.

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Emmanuel Iyiegboniwe, PhD, MSPH, MBA: Director of the MPH program and associate professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health.

Premal Patel, MD, MSc, FACP, AAHIVS: Director of the MD/MPH program, professor in the Department of Health Policy and Health Services Administration and Long School of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Disease.



*Emmanuel Iyiegboniwe, PhD, MSPH, MBA
and Premal Patel, MD, MSc, FACP, AAHIVS*

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

The 45-credit MPH curriculum equips students with interdisciplinary skills for careers in public health, including epidemiology, environmental and occupational health, behavioral health and health services administration. Designed to meet the growing local and regional demand for public health professionals, the Master of Public Health in Public Health Practice and Administration program prepares students to lead, administer and evaluate public health programs and policies.

MD/MPH PROGRAM

The MD/MPH program allows students to earn both degrees simultaneously, integrating public health expertise with medical training. The program, which includes the Health Systems in the Community Context MPH concentration, prepares future leaders to address health challenges by collaborating with communities, analyzing data and designing interventions that address both medical and non-medical needs. Students will also develop communication strategies to effectively share health information with the public.

With these initiatives, the School of Public Health San Antonio is poised to shape a new generation of leaders dedicated to solving the most pressing public health challenges.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

Shaping public health leaders: A commitment to practical education and community engagement

The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio continues to build on its mission of delivering practical education, impactful research and meaningful service. The curriculum emphasizes systems thinking and health access, preparing students to lead with purpose in addressing complex public health challenges.

Through community-engaged learning, students bridge theory and practice by working directly with urban, rural and border communities. Experiential opportunities, such as practicum and capstone courses, provide hands-on training that fosters advocacy, partnership building and capacity development.

The Master of Public Health program remains deeply rooted in addressing the unique public health needs of San Antonio, Bexar County and South Texas. Coursework focuses on leadership and program management, equipping graduates to excel in professional roles within local, regional and state health departments, community-based organizations, government agencies and health care delivery systems.

The school has also advanced its organizational structure with the establishment of four academic departments, led by newly appointed chairs. This development strengthens the foundation for interdisciplinary study and innovative public health solutions.

With these milestones, the School of Public Health is poised to shape the next generation of public health leaders dedicated to making a tangible impact in the communities they serve.



Department of Environmental and Occupational Health

The Department of Environmental and Occupational Health seeks to advance our understanding and practice of environmental and occupational health. The department's goal is to address the social, economic and environmental conditions affecting people throughout their lives through research, education and service. The department aims to develop proactive systems to protect communities and workers, integrating and customizing findings to local needs. The focus areas include environmental health, which involves creating strategies to mitigate pollution and contamination, and occupational health, which emphasizes safe and healthy work environments. The department also engages in policy and advocacy to support effective regulations and health promotion.



The department is led by the founding chair, David Gimeno Ruiz de Porras, PhD, a trained psychologist and social and occupational epidemiologist with over two decades of experience in public health research and training. His work explores the impact of environmental and occupational exposures on individual and community health through psychosocial, behavioral and biological pathways, focusing on health disparities affecting vulnerable populations.



Department of Health, Behavior, and Society

The Department of Health, Behavior, and Society aims to integrate community perspectives into public health research, education, service and leadership. Its mission focuses on three key areas: health over the life course (maternal and child health, adolescence and young adulthood and middle and older adulthood), lifestyle behaviors and health communication. The department is committed to understanding and improving health by exploring the connections between mental and physical health, behavior and policy.

Cristina Barroso, DrPH, MPH, the department's founding chair, is a leading community-engaged researcher specializing in lifestyle behaviors within the policy, systems and environment framework. Barroso collaborates with community organizations, local health departments and policymakers to enhance physical and social environments, aiming to improve community health outcomes and support thriving communities.



Department of Health Policy and Health Services Administration

The Department of Health Policy and Health Services Administration focuses on enhancing community engagement, research and education to improve health care delivery and health outcomes. This is addressed through three primary areas: evaluating and improving health care services, leading and administering health care organizations and developing policies to promote and protect population health. The department's work includes identifying barriers to health care, examining patient-centered outcomes, improving health care organizational performance and leveraging data to improving health care systems. The department will actively collaborate with community organizations, academic institutions and other stakeholders to address health disparities and improve health outcomes in South Texas.

The department's founding chair, Michael Halpern, MD, PhD, MPH, is a physician, health services researcher and data scientist with over 30 years of experience. Renowned for his applied research aimed at enhancing patient-centered care, his work addresses health care access challenges and includes over 200 peer-reviewed publications. Halpern is a member of the Mays Cancer Center Population Science and Prevention Program.



Department of Quantitative and Qualitative Health Sciences

The Department of Quantitative and Qualitative Health Sciences is dedicated to leading research, educating future public health professionals and serving the community. In a data-driven world, the ability to evaluate data quality and interpret results accurately is more important than ever. The department prioritizes combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, ensuring a comprehensive approach to addressing health disparities. By incorporating community voices, the department works locally through research and partnerships to address community health and non-health needs, improving health outcomes and reducing disparities. Additionally, it embraces the potential of artificial intelligence and machine learning tools, focusing on leveraging technology responsibly to advance health equity and create meaningful solutions.

The department's founding chair, Tracey Barnett, PhD, is a social epidemiologist with over 20 years of experience in public health. Barnett focuses her research on tobacco use among youth and young adults, as well as smoking cessation and reducing environmental exposure to tobacco products in adults. Her work includes prevention strategies for reducing tobacco use, understanding health risks and resilience across the life course and addressing health disparities by identifying structural barriers.



EMPOWERING HEALTH

Scholarships support a thriving community

By **Santiago Garcia Jr.**

After seeing the generational struggle of her mother and grandmother as single parents, and now her own experience as a single parent, Melissa Garza decided to pursue a career in public health in the first class of The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio. “I want to pursue a career in public health to help single-parent families in my community and support them in achieving their dreams,” she said.

Garza is one of two recipients in the inaugural cohort of the School of Public Health of a newly established scholarship fund created in memory of Fernando A. Guerra, MD, MPH, Guerra served as director of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District for 23 years. The scholarship was created to support students pursuing public health at the UT School of Public Health San Antonio. Garza, who works at the Metropolitan Health District added, “I hope to expand Dr. Guerra’s work to benefit our community. I aspire to bridge the gap between public health services and the needs of our community, ensuring that all families have the support they need to thrive.”

While first pursuing a career as a nurse, Alyssa Gonzales, the second inaugural scholarship recipient, had an insight that much of the care she and her clinical peers provided was managing symptoms. “I recognized that people in the community lacked resources,” she said. “I love that public health aims to address the social causes of disease. With this upstream approach, I believe that more widespread and sustainable community change can be made.”

The scholarship will continue to be awarded to support two School of Public Health graduate students each semester, ensuring Guerra’s commitment to public health excellence lives on.



UT School of Public Health San Antonio inaugural students and scholarship recipients Alyssa Gonzales and Melissa Garza.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS
\$3.35 MILLION | 7 ENDOWMENTS

FOUNDING DONORS

Maria M. Becerra	IBC Foundation	J. David and Harriet Oppenheimer
Craig J. Brenner, MD	Norma Y. Knickerbocker	Dr. Janet D. Puckett and Dr. John S. Richardson
Bernardo and Adalia H. Cantu	Harry S. and Carolyn M. Lang	Alfred G. Tapia and B. Fran Brewer
Sharon P. Fowler, PhD, MPH	William L. and Mary Norwood	Joan W. Woodley
Gene and Frances George	Thomas I. and Barbara C. O’Connor, III	John W. and Ann Woody



WAYS TO GIVE

All gifts, in all forms, are significant to UT Health San Antonio. Whether you make a gift of cash, stock or another asset, you can direct your gift to a specific school or program at UT Health San Antonio. Visit makelivesbetter.uthscsa.edu/SPHdonate.

Contact Senior Managing Director of Development, Janice Da Silva, at 210-450-8701 or beccadasilva@uthscsa.edu with any questions or for additional information.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Partnering for the public's health and well-being

The University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio is dedicated to meaningful community engagement, recognizing that pursuing a Master of Public Health is a shared commitment between students, their families and the community. As "The People's School," the School of Public Health prioritizes forging strong connections with the San Antonio and South Texas communities, integrating local voices and needs into its mission.

Through active presence and collaboration with individuals, organizations and missions, the school emphasizes both personal and professional growth. By listening, learning and engaging, it continues to build a foundation of trust and partnership to advance health and well-being across the region.

WHAT OUR PARTNERS ARE SAYING...



FAMILY SERVICE

"Family Service is excited to collaborate with the School of Public Health in advancing the awareness and understanding of what is involved in the full spectrum of the health of individuals, families, and communities, and from there, how we, across sectors, can implement those best-identified practices and services to sustainably improve the health and well-being of all."

– Mary Garr, President and CEO, Family Service



Pictured: Mary Garr, President and CEO of Family Service with student artwork created for one of their many programs.



GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

"Our partnership with UT School of Public Health San Antonio has helped us hone in on articulating the impact of our cultural programs on our community's well-being. We are becoming more and more aware of how we are a key piece to this complex puzzle and becoming more intentional in forming and measuring desired outcomes. We have been able to start this important dialogue with our community including our patrons and fellow cultural arts partners, thanks to the connection with the school of public health."

– Cristina Ballí, Executive Director, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center



Executive Director Cristina Ballí leads a panel discussing art and public health during National Public Health Week, 2024.



HOUSE OF NEIGHBORLY SERVICE

"The School of Public Health can assist us as we create a mental health component to our senior program. Studies show that depression and isolation can severely impact the quality of life and overall health of older adults. Older adults in our community deserve to age in place healthy and gracefully. The School can be a resource to House of Neighborly Service, with access to specialized knowledge, research and data. The collaboration would help increase the impact in our community."

– Sandra Morales, Executive Director, House of Neighborly Service



Volunteers at the House of Neighborly Service load to-go lunch plates for delivery to those in need in the surrounding Westside San Antonio community.



SAN ANTONIO FOOD BANK

"The San Antonio Food Bank is proud to collaborate with the School of Public Health, a partner who understands that access to nutritious food is critical to community health. Hunger is a health issue, and we believe that we can work together to leverage the school's high-quality curriculum with the Food Bank's hands-on community engagement to ensure our entire community is nourished and healthy."

– Eric Cooper, CEO, San Antonio Food Bank



Volunteers at the San Antonio Food Bank load groceries into cars during a drive-thru food drive.

CONNECTING, PROTECTING AND THRIVING DURING NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

The UT School of Public Health San Antonio celebrated its inaugural National Public Health Week (NPHW) from April 1-7, 2024, with eight engaging events highlighting the importance of community health and well-being. NPHW is an annual observance initiated by the American Public Health Association in 1995 to raise awareness about critical public health issues.

The school's NPHW programming focused on fostering holistic well-being, encompassing physical, mental and cultural aspects of health. A central theme, "Move! Wherever. However. Whenever.," encouraged community engagement in physical activity and its role in improving physical and mental health. The week's events underscored the school's commitment to addressing health inequities and building thriving communities.

The week began with a webinar addressing the unique challenges of rural public health and access to health care.

A highlight of the week was a panel discussion titled "Parks and Green Spaces in San Antonio," featuring former mayor Nelson Wolff and current mayor Ron Nirenberg. The discussion focused on the critical role of green spaces in promoting public health and wellness within the city.

The UT Health San Antonio community was later invited to tour the newly renovated School of Public Health building and participate in a commemorative tree planting.

Collaboration was a key element of the school's NPHW celebration. A joint event with the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center explored the intersection of arte y cultura (art and culture) and public health. In partnership with Health Confianza, the school also observed Digital Health Literacy Day, disseminating vital public health information to ensure community safety and well-being.

Finally, a unique collaboration between the UT School of Public Health San Antonio, the University of Texas at San Antonio College of Liberal and Fine Arts and the San Pedro Playhouse explored the profound connections between theater and public health in an event titled "Theater + Public Health."

The UT School of Public Health San Antonio expressed pride in its NPHW celebration, emphasizing its dedication to contributing to the broader public health mission and raising awareness of vital health issues in the San Antonio community.

Join us April 7-12, 2025 for the 30th anniversary of National Public Health Week.

SAVE THE DATE:
NATIONAL PUBLIC
HEALTH WEEK
2025
TAKES PLACE
APRIL 7-12

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH

A hub of innovative public health research

The UT School of Public Health San Antonio is a vibrant center for groundbreaking research addressing pressing public health challenges. The diverse portfolio of studies leverages cutting-edge technologies, community partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborations to improve the health and well-being of populations locally and globally.

Addressing Diverse Health Issues

Research at the School of Public Health covers a wide range of critical areas. For example, the **Cardiovascular Research Laboratory**, located within the school, uses advanced technologies like ultrasound and arterial stiffness measurements to study how diabetes and obesity affect cardiovascular health and related organ damage to the brain, liver and kidneys.

In the realm of environmental health, the **Community Action Research for Air Equity (CARE) Program** is pioneering innovative approaches to monitor and improve air quality in pollution-burdened communities. By utilizing electric buses equipped with real-time air quality monitors and working closely with community members as citizen-scientists, the program delivers precise, cost-effective data and empowers communities to take ownership of their environmental health.

Further environmental health research from Leanne Fawkes, DrPH, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, looks at the **health risks of residential pollution in underserved areas**, utilizing participatory research and geospatial analysis to assess the presence of contaminants like heavy metals and pesticides and to develop solutions for mitigation.

The school is also actively involved in research regarding substance use and behavioral health. A study by Tae Joon Moon, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Health, Behavior, and Society, on the **effectiveness of transdermal alcohol monitoring for reducing heavy drinking among drivers** demonstrates the potential of technological interventions to address alcohol-impaired driving, a major public health concern. Additionally, Tracey Barnett, PhD, chair and associate professor of the Department of Quantitative and Qualitative Health Sciences, conducts research focusing on **improving the treatment of substance use disorders in individuals with developmental disabilities**, addressing a significant gap in clinical practice and training.

Michael Halpern, MD, professor in and chair of the Department of Health Policy and Health Services Administration, focused on a range of studies examining cancer screening, treatment and survivorship. These included research using data from the National Cancer Institute's Patterns of Care Study to assess how to improve patient-centered care by identifying patient- and hospital-level factors that affect whether individuals with kidney and bladder cancer receive integrated care services such as care coordination and supportive care.



The Risk Underlying Rural Area Longitudinal (RURAL) Mobile Exam Unit facilitates research on heart and lung disease in communities in 10 rural counties in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi.



A sonographer views images at the Cardiovascular Research Lab.



New exercise machines are utilized for patients at the Cardiovascular Research Lab, which is housed adjacent to the School of Public Health campus.

Community-Engaged Research

The school is dedicated to improving lives by building trust and creating tangible change, one community at a time. The **Bridging Innovative Research Methods to Community Health (BIRCH)** project, co-led by Erika Thompson, PhD, exemplifies this commitment, partnering with community organizations to conduct impactful research that directly benefits the populations it serves.

Similarly, the **Community Engagement for Building Capacity, Trust, and Ownership of Research (CONNECTOR) initiative**, funded by the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and led by School of Public Health Dean Vasam Ramachandran, MD, prioritizes community-driven research, fostering collaborations and resource sharing across multiple partner hubs. This focus on community involvement ensures that research is relevant, accessible and empowering for those most affected by health disparities.

Carmen Valdez, PhD, partners with communities in the Rio Grande Valley through coalition-building and youth citizen science to address environmental burdens faced by young people in colonias. Valdez co-leads the Frontline Community Partnerships for Climate Justice project, which has formed two research and public health coalitions: The Coalition on Youth, Health and the Environment and the Pharr Youth Eco Alliance.

Addressing Health Disparities

The research endeavors at the school advance health access by identifying and tackling the systemic barriers that impact the well-being of underserved populations, while striving to reduce gaps in health outcomes and empower communities to thrive. The **Study of Domestic Cleaners in San Antonio**, featuring research from David Gimeno Ruiz de Porras, PhD, chair and professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, investigates the respiratory health risks faced by Hispanic housecleaners due to exposure to volatile organic compounds from cleaning agents. Furthermore, the **Risk Underlying Rural Area Longitudinal (RURAL) Study**, led by Vasam Ramachandran, MD, focuses on understanding and addressing the significant health disparities experienced by residents in rural Southern communities, utilizing a mobile examination unit to provide accessible health assessments. An international effort to understand Chronic Kidney Disease of Uncertain Etiology in Agricultural Communities, co-led by Marvin Gonzalez Quiroz, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, further highlights this global commitment.

Moon and Cristina Barroso, PhD, chair of the Department of Health, Behavior, and Society work with The Institute for Public Health, education and research forming communities in San Antonio and other local community organizations to assess the health needs and social drivers of health of their communities. They aim to develop sustainable, effective, community-wide interventions using community-based participatory research principles to reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes and enhance quality of life for community members.

Improving Health Systems and Policies

The School of Public Health is also actively involved in research that aims to improve health systems and policies. The evaluation of the **Justice Intake and Assessment Annex (JIAA)** in Bexar County, led by Gimeno Ruiz de Porras, examines pathways for arrestees, mental health and substance abuse assessments and pretrial programs, proposing improvements to the system. Similarly, work by Erika Thompson, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Quantitative and Qualitative Health Sciences, disseminates an **online decision tool for human papillomavirus vaccination** that aims to improve cancer prevention through informed decision-making.

Gimeno Ruiz de Porras and Halpern collaborated to examine how workplace policies assist employees diagnosed with cancer. Many patients face financial strain from medical costs, which can affect their ability to afford necessities like food and housing. This research found that employer-provided health insurance or paid sick leave reduced workers' financial stress, medical bill concerns and challenges affording healthy meals.

The school is a dynamic institution conducting cutting-edge research across a broad spectrum of public health issues. Its commitment to community engagement, interdisciplinary collaborations and innovative methodologies positions it as a leader in improving health outcomes for populations both locally and globally.

View the UT School of Public Health San Antonio's research portfolio at uthscsa.edu/public-health/research-teams.



VIEW PORTFOLIO

COLLABORATION AND ADVANCEMENT:

Uniting to address public health priorities

UT Health San Antonio and UT San Antonio stand as beacons of collaborative excellence, with a rich legacy of forging robust partnerships across business, industry, academia, government and the military. This tradition of unity and shared purpose is vividly embodied by the UT School of Public Health San Antonio.

In our unwavering commitment to public health, the school is actively expanding its network of strategic alliances within the San Antonio and South Texas regions. As these relationships deepen and broaden, they not only enrich the educational journey of our students through unparalleled experiential learning opportunities but also significantly bolster the health care, public administration and city planning landscapes of the entire South Texas community. The UT School of Public Health San Antonio gives thanks to its collaborative partners.



**METROPOLITAN
HEALTH DISTRICT**



Pictured: Vasan Ramachandran, MD, Dean, UT School of Public Health San Antonio; Lynne Cossman, PhD, Dean, Health, Community and Policy, UTSA; Andrea Guerrero-Guajardo, PhD, Director, Bexar County Public Health; Claude Jacob, DrPH, Director, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District



Training tomorrow's public health professionals

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Vasan Ramachandran, MD, FACC, FAHA
Dean
Professor of Medicine and Population Health

LaTicia Y. Douglas, MBA, PMP
Chief of Staff

Patricia Dalton, MEd
Assistant to the Dean

Stephanie R. Madrid, MHA
Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff

Alain Arrieta, BA
Executive Assistant, Dean's Divisions

Fidel Flores, MBA
Manager, Marketing, Communications and Media

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Deepu Kurian, PhD
Associate Dean, Finance and Administration

Monica Palomo-Mendoza, MBA
Director, Finance and Administration

Courtney Peebles, PhD, MPH
Director, Business and Research Operations

Stephanie Gonzalez-Sanabia, MBA-HRM
Faculty Process Support Specialist

ACADEMIC, FACULTY, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS (AFSA)

Emmanuel Iyegbuniwe, PhD, MBA
Director, Master of Public Health Program
Associate Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health

Premal Patel, MD, MSc, FACP, AAHIVS
Director of the MD/MPH Program
Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Disease

Xylina Moctezuma, MEd, MS
Educational Development Specialist

Susan Duncan, MEd
Lead Academic Programs Coordinator

Selinda Cortez, BHA
Academic Programs Coordinator

RESEARCH AND PARTNERSHIPS
Carmen R. Valdez, PhD
Associate Dean, Research and Partnerships
Professor of Health, Behavior, and Society

Inez Cruz, PhD, LMSW
Director, Community Partnerships and Engagement

Carly Liu Smith
Manager, Grants and Contracts

RURAL AND CARDIOVASCULAR RESEARCH LABORATORY

Dritana Marko Serbo, MD, MSc
Director, Research and Laboratory Operations

Michelle Lopez, BA
Senior Manager, Research Operations

Stephanie Lucille Young
Community Outreach Coordinator

Rachel Langey, BA
Senior Project Manager

Sarah Platz, MPH
Research Area Specialist

Sarah Zieminski, BS
Senior Research Coordinator

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

David Gimeno Ruiz de Porras, PhD, MSc
Chair and Professor

Emmanuel Iyegbuniwe, PhD, MBA
Associate Professor

Leanne S. Fawkes, DrPH, MPH
Assistant Professor

Marvin Gonzalez Quiroz, MD, PhD, MSc
Assistant Professor

Kelly Oyer-Peterson, JD, MPH, RN
Research Coordinator

Ana Pineda Reyes, MPH
Research Assistant

Stephanie Laque
Executive Assistant

Aro Choi
Senior Statistician

HEALTH, BEHAVIOR, AND SOCIETY

Cristina Barroso, DrPH, MPH
Chair and Associate Professor

Carmen R. Valdez, PhD
Associate Dean, Research and Partnerships
Professor of Health, Behavior, and Society

Tae Joon Moon, PhD
Assistant Professor

Gloria Vasquez, BA
Executive Assistant

HEALTH POLICY AND HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Michael Halpern, MD, PhD, MPH
Chair and Professor

William Garner, DrPH, MPH
Associate Professor

Premal Patel, MD, MSc, FACP, AAHIVS
Professor

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE HEALTH SCIENCES

Tracey Barnett, PhD
Chair and Associate Professor

Erika L. Thompson, PhD, MPH, CPH, FAAHB
Associate Professor

Mirsada Serdarevic, PhD
Assistant Professor

Aro Choi, MS
Senior Statistician



DESIGNED FOR SOUTH TEXAS

ADVANCE WITH A MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH APPLY FOR FALL 2025

Lead the future of public health and experience firsthand how research, practice and policy come together to improve health across South Texas.

Elevate your career and shape the future of health at uthscsa.edu/publichealth.



University of Texas
School of Public Health
San Antonio

UT Health
San Antonio

UTSA



VISIT NOW