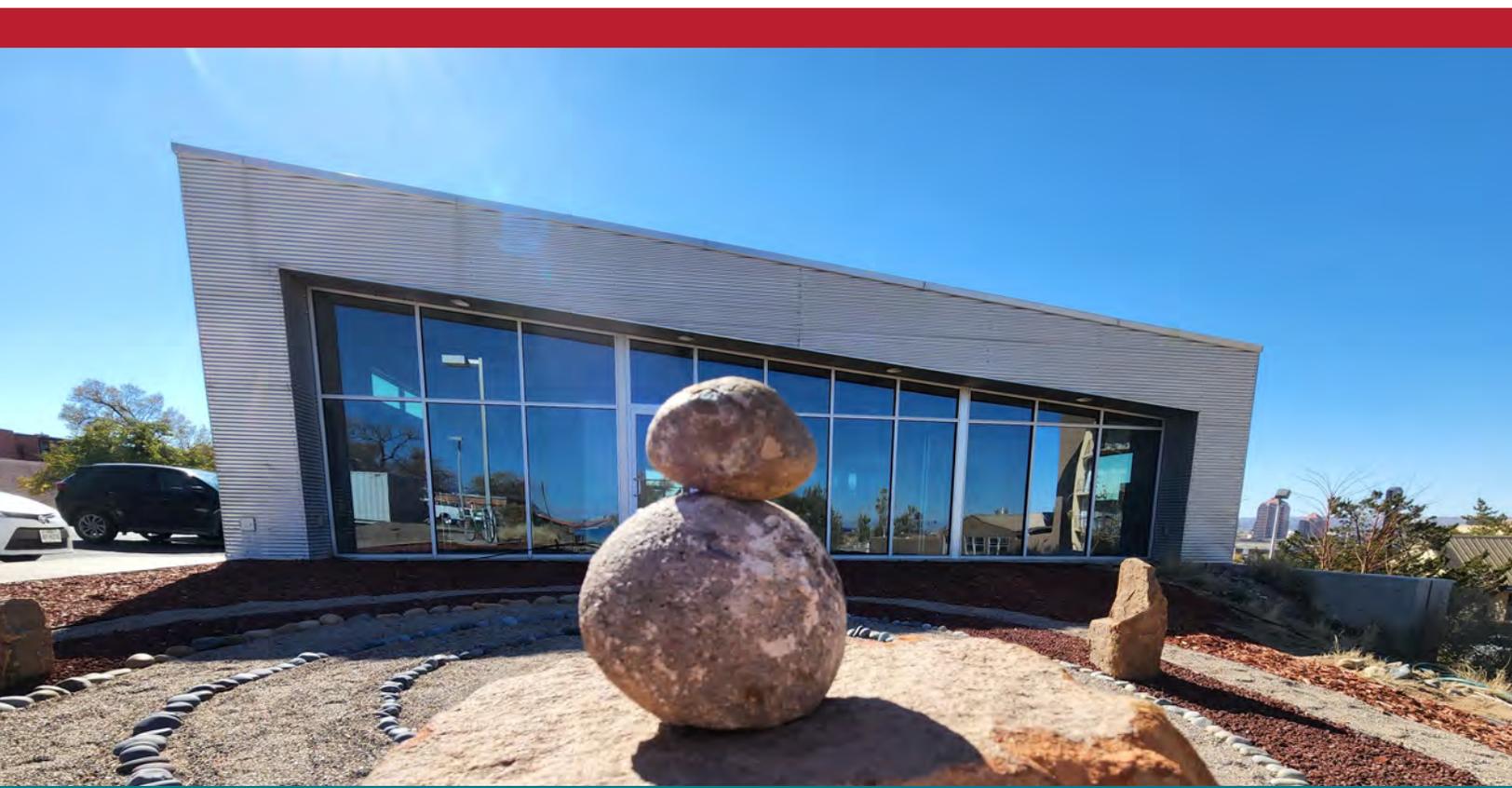




## HEALTH SCIENCES

TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH,  
EQUITY AND ENGAGEMENT CENTER



# Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center

Advancing Community Engaged Team Science for Health Equity

NIMHD Grant #U54 MD004811-10 (S)

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From 2017 to 2023, the University of New Mexico (UNM) was awarded a grant to support a university-wide, national research center of excellence (3U54MD004811-10S2). This award to UNM reflects sustained collaboration and co-leadership among 13 distinct disciplines across the social and health sciences at UNM.

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# Director's Letter

The Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement (TREE) Center for Advancing Behavioral Health is currently closing out its second generation of funding and returning to its roots to prepare for a renewed vision for the future. Our first generation of work together as a One University Center of Excellence at UNM was as the NM CARES Health Disparities Center (P20) from 2010 to 2016. In 2017 we were awarded a five-year \$7 million federal grant that established the TREE Center (U54).

Since 2010, we have acquired more than \$16 million in funding, worked collaboratively to implement four major cores (Investigator Development/Training, Administrative, Community Engagement and Research), conducted five R01-level research projects with diverse communities statewide, invested \$1 million in 25 pilot projects led by early-stage investigators and scholars of color, attained five supplement grants, produced more than 1,200 scholarly products and trained more than 2,000 faculty, staff, students and partners in health disparities research. Our work together has focused on health equity intervention research that utilizes community-engaged and transdisciplinary team science. We are dedicated to preparing the next generations of scholars of color to co-create knowledge for healing, social change and advancing health equity.

As we continue to transform, we invite your engagement, support and insights. A strong TREE grows from strong roots. On behalf of our TREE Center's co-leadership team, I want to acknowledge the collective contributions of many including our Community Scientific and Policy Advisory Committee, our Steering Committee and Senior Mentors, Community of Practice for Dissemination Champions and Partners, Pilot Project Principal Investigators, Community and Academic Mentors, Faculty, and students.

**TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER!**

**Lisa Cacari Stone, PhD, MS, MA (she/her/ella)**  
Tree Center Executive Director/Principal Investigator



TREE Center (U54)



NM CARES Center (P20)

# The TREE Center At A Glance

The Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center for Advancing Behavioral Health is ONE of TWELVE U54 Centers across the country funded by the National Institute on Minority Health & Health Disparities.

Finding solutions TOGETHER to advance behavioral health equity across New Mexico.

## Our Vision

To partner with local, state, tribal and national leaders to create opportunities for transformative impact that:

1. Improves behavioral health equity among diverse communities in New Mexico.
2. Nurtures community and academic ways of knowing; and
3. Prepares the next generation of under-represented minority scholars for conducting transdisciplinary multi-level intervention research.

## Working "WITH" Communities

Our collaborative intervention research embraces a model of engagement "with" diverse partners at the local, tribal, state and regional and national levels.

## Advancing Health Equity

We are a hub for health equity innovations that impact social determinants of health for all communities.

Drawing from both community and academic knowledge, we test multi-level interventions from the individual, family, community, organizational, systems and policies levels.

Our transdisciplinary team science embraces three core theoretical approaches: intersectionality, historical trauma and unresolved grief, and cultural resiliency.

## Building Communities of Practice for Dissemination (COP4D)

The Community Engagement and Dissemination Core (CEDC) collaborates with place-based partners and local champions to listen, learn and co-create knowledge for translational impact on policy and practice. The Community, Scientific and Policy Advisory Committee (CSPAC) plays a key role in guiding and assessing the progress and direction of the Center along with a National Steering Committee. Co-created tools for partnering in research can be found at <https://bit.ly/nmcares>

## Impact

We have produced a compiled total of 577 scholarly products including: 5 books, 12 research protocols, 13 book chapters, 14 policy briefs, 15 research tools, 18 technical reports, 42 funded grants, 43 diverse media products, 137 presentations, and 177 peer-reviewed journal articles. Grants funded by TREE Center scholars with community partners have totaled more than \$42M from 2017 through 2023.

We held over 180 academic and community events including 41 seminars, 33 community events, 26 workshops, 14 research roundtables, 11 webinars and 16 conferences.

## Growing a Diverse Scientific Workforce

The Investigator Development Core (IDC) works to improve the health and well-being of New Mexicans by providing training and mentoring for the future of behavioral health disparities researchers.

This includes 19 Pilot Projects with \$763,452 in funding; underrepresented minority scholars who have collaborated with over 75 community partners, mentored more than 45 students and have written 6 new grants.

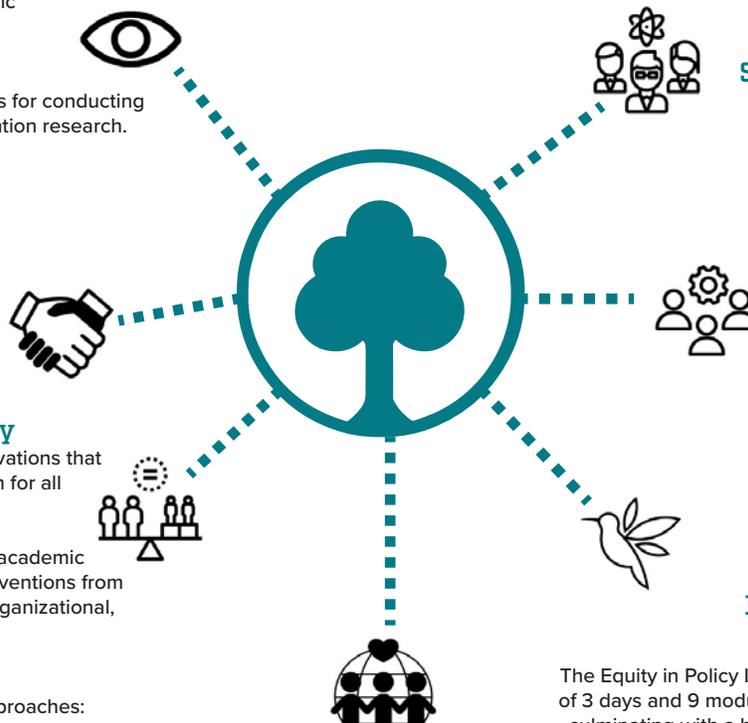
## Advancing Team Science with Communities

The Center is home to 2 major research projects. "The Integrating Intergeneration Cultural Knowledge Exchange with Zero Suicide" is based in San Felipe Pueblo and works to integrate cultural knowledge and language into the Indian Health Services Primary Care system in order to prevent youth suicide. "The Immigrant Well-Being Project" reduces mental health disparities among immigrants through community-based advocacy, learning and social support interventions in partnership with existing community and immigrant-based organizations.

## Democratizing Knowledge for Policy Change

The Equity in Policy Institute is a unique training comprised of 3 days and 9 modules, ongoing technical assistance and culminating with a half day of "policy dialogues." A total of 14 community teams with over 100 participants were trained and produced 12 policy briefs and 6 digital policy stories

<https://equityinpolicy.org>



# A Hub for Health Equity Innovation: Vision, History and Purpose

Our Vision is to partner with local, state, tribal and national leaders to create opportunities for transformative impact that:

- 1** Improves behavioral health equity among diverse communities in New Mexico;
- 2** Nurtures community and academic ways of knowing; and
- 3** Prepares the next generation of under-represented minority scholars for conducting transdisciplinary multi-level intervention research.



The TREE Center is one of 12 research centers funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) Centers of Excellence program. The TREE Center is a partner in NIMHD's mission to lead scientific research to improve minority health and reduce health disparities, promote the training of a diverse research workforce, disseminate research findings and foster innovative collaborations and partnerships.

Throughout its transformations, the TREE Center has partnered with other key centers at The University of New Mexico, including the Center for Social Policy, the Prevention Research Center, the Center for Native American Health, the Center for Participatory Research and the Clinical & Translational Science Center. Since 2022, when we moved into our new building, the TREE Center has been working alongside other projects that share our vision and values: the Equity in Policy Institute, MTIC (Medicina Tradicional, Intercultural y Comunitaria), the 2022 Statewide Health Equity Summit and Conversations, and the NIH-funded Wide Engagement for Assessing COVID-19 Vaccine Equity (WEAVE) New Mexico project.

Moving from concept to impact, the TREE Center stands in 2023 as a vibrant pillar of health equity research and innovation. Our research focuses on the social determinants of behavioral health and comorbid conditions, including adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), suicide, historical trauma and the intersectional effects of poverty, discrimination and lack of access to health care. Drawing from community and academic knowledge, we test interventions at multiple levels – ranging from the individual to family, community, organizations, systems and policy.

# Our Aims



1

To implement a synergistic co-leadership model to promote transdisciplinary, multi-level intervention research that will advance knowledge and science to improve behavioral health outcomes.

2

To operationalize integration of theories, study design and analysis into collaborative, multi-level interventions that improve behavioral health outcomes for socioeconomically disadvantaged and underserved rural populations in the Southwest.

3

To expand the development of a diverse scientific workforce by training new and early-stage under-represented minority investigators in a transdisciplinary context to conduct community engaged, multi-level intervention and behavioral health research.

4

To cultivate equitable research collaborations with community and tribal stakeholders, regionally and nationally, to translate and co-disseminate transdisciplinary research evidence into practice and policy.

# Our Impact

Over three waves of TREE Center evaluation surveys, our partners reported increasingly favorable perception of achievement of each of these aims. A majority (52% for Aim 1, 58% for Aim 2, 63% for Aim 3 and 58% for Aim 4) of 24 respondents endorsed “high, sustained progress” by the close of 2020.

Regarding the TREE Center’s most important outcomes, open-ended community partner responses in these surveys highlighted the degree to which the TREE Center has extended the scope and reach of community partnerships to support greater impact and visibility of behavioral health equity for communities of color.

**Community and academic partners share their perspectives on the impact the TREE Center has made to team science, finding solutions together and advancing behavioral health and health equity:**



The TREE Center has produced **577** scholarly products including:

5		Books
12		Research protocols
13		Book chapters
14		Policy briefs
15		Research tools
18		Technical reports
42		Funded grants
43		Diverse media products
137		Presentations
177		Peer-reviewed journal articles

Grants funded by TREE Center scholars with community partners have totaled more than **\$42M** from 2017 through 2023

**“Cultural reinforcement for behavioral health in New Mexico.”**

**“I think the TREE Center could be a model of how to support, guide, encourage and assist people to move upward socially and academically. The TREE Center can be a model of how to work sensitively and successfully with communities of color!”**

**“Intersection of public health, behavioral health, community and academic stakeholders - holding space to connect and envision, strategize for the future”**

**“Increased awareness and visibility of the role and importance of equity in behavioral health in N.M.”**

**“The engagement of diverse communities who are traditionally left out of shared roles in research and has created a bridge between community and the large institutional agencies”**

# Stronger Together: Co-Leading for Collective Impact

Our Center houses three complementary cores (Administrative, Investigator Development, Community Engagement and Dissemination) as well as two major ongoing community-engaged core research projects (“Integrating Intergenerational Cultural Knowledge Exchange with Zero Suicide” and “The Immigrant Well-Being Project”) and funds yearly pilot research projects. The Community, Scientific and Policy Advisory Committee plays a key role in guiding and assessing the progress and direction of the Center along with a smaller Steering Committee that includes NIMHD officers, Center PIs, community members and affiliated senior scholars. Our Communities of Practice for Dissemination (COP4Ds) represent a strategic Center innovation for building and cross-pollinating both community-based and academic-based evidence into collaborative practice.

Fundamentally, we are intersectional scholars of color working with intersectional communities of color. Founded by four overall PIs, each a leading scholar of color, both of our core research projects, each of our three supplemental research projects, all seven of our communities of practice for dissemination, and all 19 of our pilot research projects (80% BIPOC PIs), have centered a focus on BIPOC and intersectional communities here in New Mexico. The TREE Center has been the only research center in New Mexico that is entirely led by under-represented scholars of color, mentoring other scholars of color with our diverse communities of color in New Mexico.

Based on the principle of “stronger together at UNM,” the TREE Center has forged alliances across more than 13 academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communications and journalism, education and human sciences, political science, pediatrics, public health, pharmacy and nursing, and is a recognized model of ONE UNIVERSITY, an innovation hub in community engaged scholarship and forward thinking, and a national action and thought partner among Carnegie-classified Community Engagement Campuses.

We collectively impact the following outcomes, each in alignment with Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement goals: 1) to mutually benefit the exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity between UNM/UNM Health Sciences and diverse communities in New Mexico; 2) to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity; 3) to enhance curriculum, teaching and learning in a bidirectional way with investigators, students, staff and community members; 4) to prepare educated, engaged citizens; and 5) to strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility to address critical societal issues and contribute to the public good.

We partner with authenticity, grounded in critical reflective trustworthiness. We advance justice by supporting emerging scholars of color to improve behavioral health equity among diverse New Mexico communities. We provide instrumental support, strategic development and a sense of community/academic home to more than 200 faculty, staff, students and community partners.

The TREE Center’s operational success in implementing the ONE UNIVERSITY-STRONGER TOGETHER approach stems from substantive collaborations across UNM and UNM Health Sciences, including the Center for Participatory Research, Center for Native American Health, Center for Social Policy, Office for Community Health, Prevention Research Center, Clinical & Translational Science Center, Center on Alcoholism, Substance Use & Addictions, Community Engagement Center and, more recently, as a formally certified partner of Project ECHO. For instance, the TREE Center forged University-wide alliances with the Center for Native American Health and the Center for Participatory Research through a three-year (2021-2024) Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Against COVID-19 Disparities grant from the National Institutes of Health.



Our CEAL grant, called Wide Engagement for Assessing COVID-19 Vaccine Equity (WEAVE) NM, has proven our capacity to engage educational and research projects together, based on each of our unique areas of expertise. In collaboration with the Center for Native American Health (Dr. Tassy Parker) and Center for Participatory Research (Dr. Nina Wallerstein), our TREE Center (Dr. Cacari Stone) are leveraging our long-term partnerships across the state to deepen the work of “place-based” engaged research with Native American, Latinx, African American and Asian American communities. These partnerships involve students, faculty and grass-roots community leaders and anchor organizations in rural, urban and tribal communities with the purpose of co-knowledge creation and production of mixed methods evidence to advance racial and health equity and data justice.

Our impact has resulted in growing a statewide Community of Practice Network (300+ partners) that is activated to co-learn and apply findings to systems and policy changes. We have tested our model of supporting community-prioritized research and practice projects in both Centers and have unique technical assistance and workforce development experiences to offer.



**Lisa Cacari Stone, PhD**  
PI 2017-Present  
Professor, College of Population Health, UNM; Director, Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center for Advancing Behavioral Health



**Steven P. Verney, PhD**  
PI 2017-Present  
Professor, Department of Psychology, UNM



**Theresa Cruz, PhD**  
PI 2022-Present  
Professor, Department of Pediatrics School of Medicine, UNM; Deputy Director, UNM Prevention Research Center



**Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD**  
PI 2018-2022  
Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, School of Medicine, UNM



**Gabriel Ramon Sanchez, PhD**  
PI 2018-2022  
Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Political Science, UNM; Executive Director, UNM Center for Social Policy

# Grounded in Theories of Change

Our conceptual framework recognized the impact of multiple domains of influences on our target population's health. Drawing from socio-ecological approaches, our multilevel interventions in the research and pilot projects can more pointedly produce a knowledge base for identifying specific practice, systems, and policy solutions. The conceptual foundation of this Center (Figure 1) is based on several theoretical frameworks:

-  NIMHD Minority Health Disparities Research Framework and Domains of Influence (behavioral health disparities have a complex, multifactorial basis);
-  Transdisciplinary Research (requires collaborative and integrative thinking, cuts across disciplines, integrating and synthesizing content, theory and methodology);
-  Multi-Level Intervention Research (no intervention targeting a single identified cause of disparities will produce substantial or lasting effects in eliminating health disparities);
-  Community-Based Participatory Research (interventions not based in partnership with communities have little chance of reducing health disparities). Via a collaborative research approach that builds from community strengths and priorities, CBPR has increasingly moved towards social, health and environmental policy targets;
-  Intersectionality as a theory and method for analyzing multiple systems of oppression (social categories are mutually constitutive insofar as individuals experience social dynamics differently based on multiple social locations);
-  Dissemination and Implementation Research in health (moving research into health practice and policy through diffusion, dissemination and delivery of research).

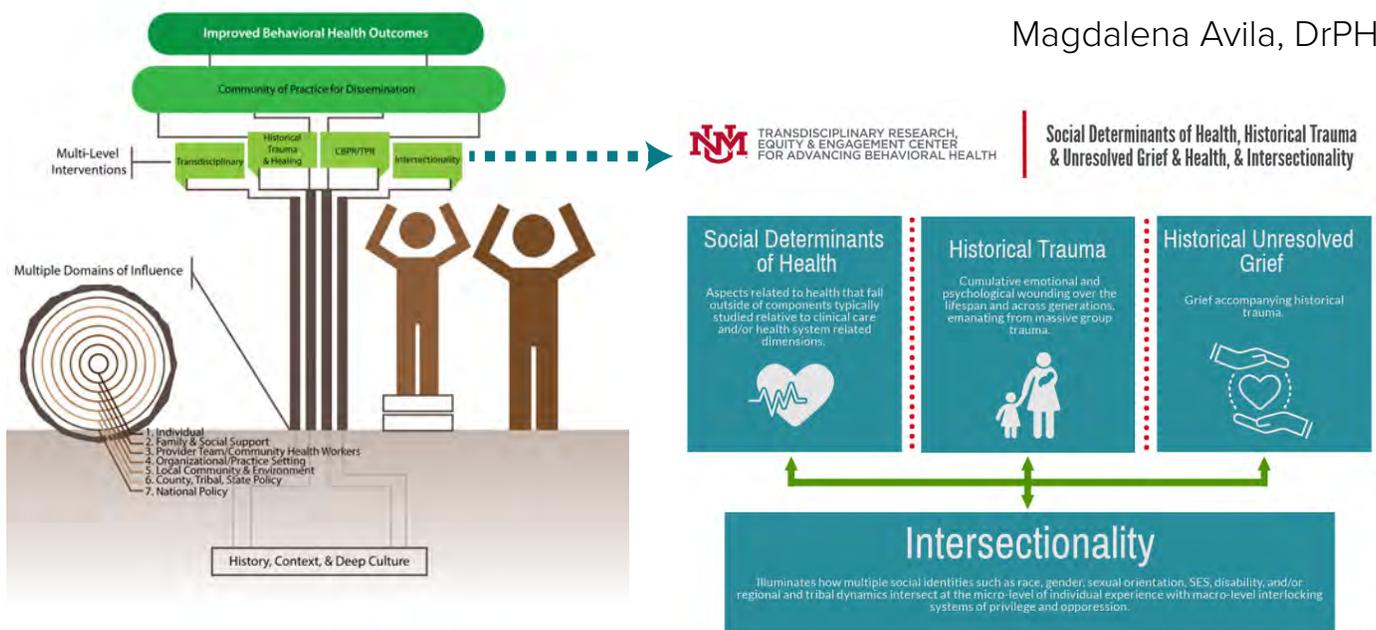
Our conceptual model highlights the relationships between the health equity, history/context and deep culture, multi-domains of influence, multi-level interventions, dissemination of research through a community of practice and anticipated impact of all on behavioral health outcomes. Our TREE Center’s work recognizes that behavioral health outcomes are deeply rooted in the history, context and culture of place and people in New Mexico as shown in the roots of the TREE. The two people standing symbolize our devotion to incorporating health equity as the foundation of our work. Health equity addresses the history, context and deep culture that affect behavioral health outcomes due to unfair disadvantages and access to social resources.

The Center’s TREE framework also illustrates the influences of multiple levels on the health of populations as an on-going organic life process as depicted in the TREE trunk. We implement multi-level transdisciplinary interventions that draw from historical trauma and intersectionality theories and community engaged research approaches. Anchored in Community-Centered Dissemination Science, our TREE Center actively engages with a larger community of practice to translate research approaches to practice and policy. Our anticipated outcomes include improved mental and behavioral health conditions as measured through our research and pilot projects.

**“Visually the TREE is real & embodies theory and traditional community knowledge. It has become an organizing force and vision for interconnectedness.”**

Magdalena Avila, DrPH

Figure 1. TREE Center Conceptual Model



# Finding Solutions Together

The TREE Center is “finding solutions together” for advancing health equity by engaging with communities, accelerating innovative interventions and growing a diverse research workforce. The TREE Center promotes scientific inspiration, vision and oversight while facilitating synergy and linkages with TREE Center cores, community stakeholders and advisors.

Partnering with the Investigator Development Core and as part of the TREE Center Training and Mentoring program, the TREE Center Administrative Core hosted over 100 research education and career development seminars, workshops and community forums (since its establishment), including publication-focused writing studios.

Knowledge cluster-focused writing studios are a key TREE Center innovation, fostering emerging insights from junior scholars of color alongside the seasoned wisdom of TREE Center senior scientific mentors. In concert, an invited speaker series featured TREE Center partners as well as national figures, mirroring the multiple domains of influence of successful multi-level, transdisciplinary behavioral health intervention research. Cross-pollinating these efforts, the Administrative Core also engaged widely with multiple groups of community stakeholders and scientific and policy advisors and consultants.

In addition to the national-level Steering Committee’s periodic meetings, the TREE Center Administrative Core hosted annual gatherings of the Community, Scientific, and Policy Advisory Committee (CSPAC), which is comprised of behavioral health providers, private and public health systems leaders, philanthropists, community health advocates and county, state, tribal and national policymakers.

Extending these engagements, the TREE Center Administrative Core also implemented a comprehensive communication strategy including web site development, video distribution (with more than 1,000 total views on YouTube alone), social media (including 162 Twitter followers), national and local news coverage and a newsletter series. To date, across 43 newsletters, we have had 4,534 views.



**Blake Boursaw, MS**  
Sr. Research Scientist



**Carlos Linares Koloffon, MD, MPH**  
Research Scientist



**Anissa Duwaik, BS**  
Program Specialist



**Daisy V. Rosero, MPH**  
Research Scientist



**Thomas A. Chávez, PhD**  
Instituto Intercultural y Comunitario



**Edgar Arevalo, BPH**  
Program Coordinator



**Ámbar Espinoza-Ángeles, BSN Candidate**  
Research Assistant

# CSPAC Community, Scientific, and Policy Advisory Committee

CSPAC meetings are widely participatory, include work groups focused on core TREE Center knowledge clusters, pair advisors with TREE Center Investigators for the purpose of co-learning and co-applying a range of investigative and analytical tools toward improving the quality of conditions for individuals, families, communities and the environments in which we live. A key initial innovation of our CSPAC meetings was the inclusion of IGNITE for Equity talks. In 2018 and 2019, our partners presented eight of these fast-paced empowering talks.

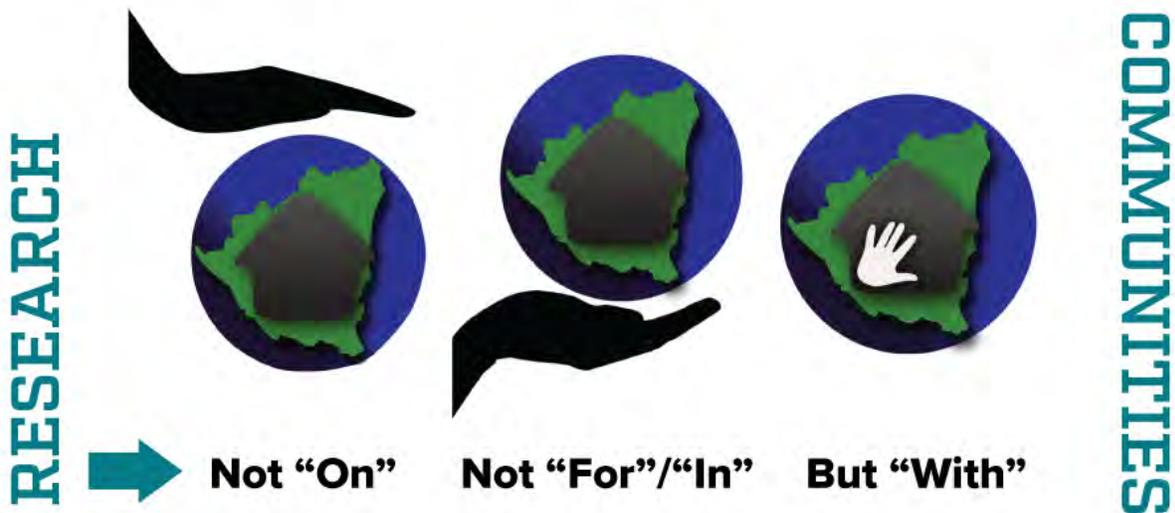
- Creating Opportunities Out of Trial: A Hat Queen Celebrates Her Legacy of Service, by Evelyn J. Rising
- Growing Our Own, by Francisco Ronquillo, PA
- Stories of Spirit in Native Communities, by Kee J.E. Straits, PhD
- Youth, Resiliency and Power, by Ryan Sanchez
- United We Dream – NM Dreamers, by Josue De Luna Navarro
- Are Evidence-Based Treatments Culturally Responsive?, by Charlene Poola, PhD
- Healthy, Happy, Holy: Community Care Begins with Self Care, by Wanda Ross Padilla, DPA
- The Querencia Project: Soul Sickness & Addiction, by Lupe Salazar, MSW

**Building on the success of these talks, our 2021 CSPAC meeting included presentations on the following topics by Communities of Practice for Dissemination champions across five regions of New Mexico:**

- Querencia: Northern New Mexico during times of COVID – Keeping the Research Dialogue Going by Understanding Nuestra Herencia, Nuestros Tradiciones y Nuestra Cultura
- Twice Surviving the Crown – Oñate and the Coronavirus – Effects on Mental Health/Phenomena Experienced in 2020 Amongst Rural Chicano Communities in Northern New Mexico
- Using a Diné-Centered Lens in Working with Navajo Communities During the COVID Pandemic
- Centering Promotores de Salud: Pláticas, Principles & Practices with Border Communities
- Addressing Urban Asian Issues in Albuquerque Due to COVID-19

# Working “WITH” Communities

We engage widely and at many levels: place-based communities of practice for dissemination; a multi-sectoral advisory committee; and a transdisciplinary steering committee.



Cacari Stone, L., Hogue, C., Wallerstein, N., Cowboy, L., Chavez, N., Quin-Hussein, L. & McGough-Maduena, A. Research Guiding Framework, Community Engagement Core, New Mexico UNM CARES Health Disparities Center (2012).

Our intervention research embraces a model of engagement “with” rather than “on” or “in” communities. We cultivate equitable research collaborations with diverse partners at the local, tribal, state, regional and national levels in order to test solutions and translate and co-disseminate transdisciplinary research evidence into practice, systems and policy. The TREE Center uses the NIMHD Research Framework to recognize the impact of multiple domains of influence. Drawing from socio-ecological approaches, our research and pilot projects employ multi-level interventions to more pointedly produce a knowledge base for identifying specific practice, systems and policy solutions.

From 2018 to 2023 we sponsored and implemented widely engaged co-learning trainings, community dialogues, seminars and workshops with national and statewide participants. We held 214 community and academic events, including 52 seminars/webinars, 34 community events, 43 workshops, 20 conferences and 14 research roundtables. In total, these events had more than 2,500 attendees.

# Building Communities of Practice for Dissemination (COP4D)



Grounded in a community-centered dissemination science approach that emphasizes the involvement of all stakeholders in a participatory process, the TREE Center's Community Engagement and Dissemination Core (CEDC) established and nurtured place-and-culture-based Communities of Practice for Dissemination (COP4Ds) across five regions of new Mexico. While doing so, the CEDC worked closely with partners to integrate community engagement throughout every component of the TREE Center.

## The CEDC engages with seven communities across five regions:



**NE region** – Communities of Española, Chimayo and Las Vegas and partners including Barrios Unidos.



**NW region** – Gallup area, with the Diné-Centered Research and Evaluation working group as a key partner.



**SW region** – Rural border and colonia areas, with a diversity of government and non-profit organizations as key partners.



**SE region** – The city of Hobbs, focused on engaging rural African American partners.



**Central region** – Involving the International District neighborhood in southeast Albuquerque and the Asian Family Center as a key partner.



The CEDC leads the TREE Center in listening and learning from the COP4Ds to guide behavioral health research, practice and policy. In addition to place-based engagement co-disseminating TREE Center innovations to communities, the CEDC also served as a key bridge for communities to innovate with the TREE Center, facilitating bi-directional learning. COP4D members participated in the Equity in Policy Institute with other TREE Center experts, reviewed TREE Center pilot grant proposals, mentored TREE Center Pilot PIs, and presented at and participated in a panoply of TREE Center events.

CEDC with COP4Ds are diverse and contextually informed. Meetings with community partners across four New Mexico quadrants began in 2017, convening key community and tribal stakeholders with cross-sectoral expertise in behavioral health and grassroots to national organizational perspectives. Moving to action with CEDC support, the COP4Ds then implemented their own place-based action plans for dissemination and partnering in wellness, moving toward culturally centered solutions to behavioral and mental health issues.

## Continued Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The arrival of COVID-19 shifted the focus of engagement with New Mexico quadrant partners and led to the initiation of subcontract seed grants to promote active planning and use of culturally based models to address stark structural inequalities, as well as the grassroots rise of a new urban COP4D responding to anti-Asian hate.

**"Being part of the training has allowed me to be more impactful in terms of research and health policy. It's big, it's powerful, it brings light, – empowering our spirit by learning and understanding research and providing new cultural pathways of understanding . . . [It has] given me a voice, a research voice . . . empowering my voice."**

**Lupe Salazar**, MSW, Director, Barrios Unidos, Community Champion



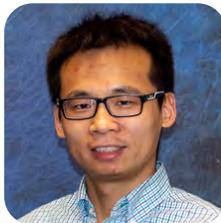


Currently, the CEDC is revisiting COP4Ds across the state with community champions and developing communication packages to ensure effective and appropriate access to materials by all members of each COP4D as we envision together the future of the TREE Center collaborative. While doing so, the CEDC is also offering training modules to address challenges communities face to engage in research, coordinated with the community champions from the COP4Ds. These modules focus on community-based research financial management models, as well as research ethics grounded in the experiences of Hispanic, Navajo, Black and Asian communities of New Mexico.

The TREE Center CEDC is currently led by Lorenda Belone, with contributions from Magdalena Avila, Shixi Zhao, Nina Cooper and Lisa Cacari Stone. Past contributors include Victoria Sánchez, Kiran Katira and Jongwon Lee.



**Lorenda Belone, PhD MPH**  
Professor, College of Population Health, UNM



**Shixi Zhao, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, College of Population Health, UNM



**Dr. Nina Cooper, PhD**  
Community Engagement Manager, Homewise



**Magdalena Avila, DrPH, MPH, MSW**  
Associate Professor Emeritus, College of Education and Human Sciences, UNM



**Kiran Katira, PhD**  
Director, Community Engagement Center, UNM



**Victoria Sanchez, PhD MPH**  
Associate Professor, Retired, College of Population Health, UNM



**Jongwon Lee, PhD, RN**  
Associate Professor, College of Nursing, UNM



**Lisa Cacari Stone, PhD**  
Professor, College of Population Health, UNM; Director, Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center for Advancing Behavioral Health

# Growing a Diverse Scientific Workforce

Using a transdisciplinary, community engaged mentoring model, the TREE Center Investigator Development Core (IDC) increased the number of under-represented emerging minority research leaders engaged in behavioral health intervention research by supporting pilot projects that addressed a range of social determinants of behavioral health.

Over five waves of funding beginning in 2018, the TREE Center IDC funded and supported 20 emerging scholarly leaders of 19 pilot research projects. A total of \$763,452 was awarded across New Mexico projects to produce research and action with local, statewide and national implications. Reflecting a general approach to intervening earlier and more effectively, 10 of the projects included a focus on children and youth. Consistent with TREE Center aims, of the 20 pilot project principal investigators (PIs), 16 were scholars of color (three Native American, nine Hispanic/Latinx and four Asian American) and 14 were female.

Responding to contexts of racial discrimination and colonization, TREE pilot projects employed a range of research designs and strategies. Research designs included novel or adapted multi-level interventions, primary data collection and secondary data analysis. Intervention strategies included socioemotional support, strengths-based messaging and culturally centered approaches to health and healing with the goal of improved behavioral health and behavioral health equity. Domains of influence of TREE Center pilot projects corresponding to the NIMHD Research Framework converged along Behavioral, Sociocultural Environment and Health Care Systems, ranging across all levels of influence.

		Levels of Influence			
		Individual	Interpersonal	Community	Societal
Domains of Influence	Biological (0)				
	Behavioral (17)	4	4	8	1
	Physical/Built Environment (1)				1
	Sociocultural Environment (19)	6	6	5	2
	Health Care System (9)	2	2	4	1
Health Outcomes		Individual Health	Family/Org Health	Community Health	Population Health

Pilot PI projects respond to NIMHD Research Framework Domains and Levels of Influence

A 2023 survey of these 20 pilot project PIs yielded 13 responses and positive results. Overall, respondents took advantage of available resources, had positive experiences with mentors, felt safe, agreed the TREE mentoring program positively impacted their professional and academic success, and would recommend this program to other early-stage investigators. All of the respondents reported the TREE Center had positively impacted their academic career and more than 90% of respondents would recommend TREE Center participation to others.

“I believe my experience with the TREE Center was transformative and facilitated my growth as a person and as a scientist in ways that reach beyond the confines of my daily research activities.”

“I am grateful for the safe and supportive environment the TREE Center has provided and for the guidance and support that has helped me grow both as a researcher and as a person.”

### The TREE Center Investigator Development Core Co-PI's.



**Matthew E Borrego, PhD, MS, RPh**

Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Pharmacy Practice and Administrative Sciences, College of Pharmacy, UNM



**Janet Page-Reeves, PhD**

Professor and Vice Chair for Research, Department of Family & Community Medicine, School of Medicine, UNM; Director of Research, Office for Community Health



**Theresa Cruz, PhD**

Deputy Director, UNM Prevention Research Center Research Professor, Department of Pediatrics SOM - Pediatrics

## Pilot Project Program

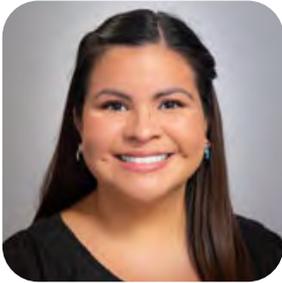
**19** Pilot Projects

**20** Pilot Project PIs

**266** products including:

1		Published book
2		Research reports
4		Policy briefs
5		Published book chapters
6		Diverse media products
22		Funded grants linked to TREE Center focus areas
60		Peer-reviewed journal articles
83		Community and academic presentations

# Growing Our own with Community: Pilot Projects



## **Melody Avila, DNP, RN, FNP-BC**

Transforming Health Services for Youth in Protective Services: An Integrated Family Navigation Model



## **Melanie Baca, MD**

ADAPT (Adolescent Disparities and Preventing Teen Pregnancy) Development of a Multi-Level Intervention Framework to Reduce Disparities in Unintended Teen Pregnancy among Hispanic Adolescents



## **Thomas Chávez, PhD**

UndocuResearch: Qualitative Analysis of Mental Health and Educational Attainment Among Undocumented and Mixed Status Youth in New Mexico

Corazones Familiares: Latinx Immigrant Family Trauma and Health Narratives



## **Aijuan Cun, PhD**

Empowering Asian Immigrant Families Through a Literacy and Health Project During the COVID-19 Pandemic



## **Shiv Desai, PhD**

Hurt People Hurt People: Utilizing Ethnic Studies to Heal Student Trauma by Addressing the Mind, the Body, and the Spirit



## **Jaelyn deMaría, PhD**

Shifting Narratives for Behavioral Health Justice: The #NMspeaksCrisis Campaign.

Digital Storytelling through Indigenous Art: A Community Model for Behavioral Health Action



## **Lucia Darlach, PhD**

Comparative Analysis of Baseline Characteristics of The National Guard in Three Rural States Towards Implementation of Proactive Case Management



## **Cindy Gevarter, PhD**

The Effects of Short-Term, Naturalistic Intervention Training Program for Early Intervention Providers and Latino Parents of Children with Early Signs of Autism



## **Julia Hess, PhD**

Abriendo Mis Alas: Adaptation and Implementation of a Group Navigation Model to address Mental Emotional Health Equity (MEH) for Spanish-Speaking Latinas



## **Kimberly Huyser, PhD**

Sentencing Policies, Access to Substance Use Treatment, and Health Disparities Among Native Americans: A Comparative Study of Three Court Systems

# Growing Our own with Community: Pilot Projects



**Ralph Klotzbaugh, PhD,  
RN, FNP-BC**

Utilizing Gender Minority Perspectives to Describe and Operationalize Affirming Behavioral Health



**Jongwon Lee, PhD, RN**

Lived Experience of Anti-Asian Racism and Micro Aggression Among Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) Living in New Mexico



**M. Crystal Lee, PhD, MPH**

A Global Profile of Indigenous Adolescents and Young Person's Health



**Noah Painter-Davis, PhD**

Sentencing Policies, Access to Substance Use Treatment, and Health Disparities Among Native Americans: A Comparative Study of Three Court Systems



**Monique Rodriguez, PhD,  
LPCC**

Transforming Health Services for Youth in Protective Services: An Integrated Family Navigation Model



**Pilar Sanjuan, PhD**

Project SuM (Support for Maternity) Providing Expanded Continuous Labor Support to Pregnant Women in New Mexico with Substance Use Disorders



**Shannon Sanchez-Youngman,  
PhD**

Adapting Evidence-Based Knowledge and Practice to Increase the Capacity of a Community Health Coalition to Reduce Suicide Risk Factors in Rural New Mexico



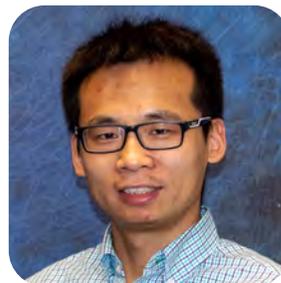
**Tiffany Otero, PhD**

Addressing the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences Through School-Based Programming in a Diverse Community



**Vincent Werito, PhD**

Developing Community Partnerships Through Research to Define Community Well-Being from a Diné-centered Perspective with Three (Diné) Navajo communities in New Mexico



**Shixi Zhao, PhD**

Empowering Asian Immigrant Families Through a Literacy and Health Project During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lived Experience of Anti-Asian Racism and Micro Aggression Among Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) Living in New Mexico

# Advancing Team Science with Communities



The trunk of TREE Center research efforts are its two core research projects:

- Integrating Intergenerational Cultural Knowledge Exchange with Zero Suicide (Cultural Knowledge and Zero Suicide)
- Addressing the Social-Structural Determinants of Mental Health through Adaptation of a Transdisciplinary Immigrant Well-being Project. An ecological intervention mode for Latinx immigrants.

These exemplify successful responses to central community and scientific challenges currently facing national health equity research and practice efforts. Those challenges include the dearth of effective evidence on community and culturally centered multi-level interventions; racial trauma, grief and depression among Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other intersectional communities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, and urgently unmet needs for improving knowledge translation of research to practice and policy.

To build a compelling evidence base, the TREE Center core research projects focused on adapting, implementing, evaluating and disseminating multi-level intervention evidence with long-term community partners. Cultural Knowledge and Zero Suicide partners with Pueblo of San Felipe leaders and youth.

The Immigrant Well-being Project partners with four Albuquerque metro area immigrant-focused organizations. The extensive, deliberative, structured engagement within these partnerships has led to successfully integrating community and academic knowledge, community-centered and supported intervention processes, multiple key co-dissemination products and additional funding.



# The Immigrant Well-being Project

The Immigrant Well-being Project (IWP) partnered with four New Mexico community-based organizations (Centro Sávila, Encuentro, the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center and the New Mexico Dream Team) to engage Latinx immigrants and university students to collaboratively address social-structural determinants of mental health. IWP's strengths-based intervention approach has been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of emotional distress and highlights the critical potential of community-based organizations and university partners to beneficially shape immigrant experiences. This study adapted and tested multilevel, transdisciplinary intervention approaches that address social-structural determinants of mental health, are culturally appropriate, and build upon Latinx immigrants' strengths. The IWP study, led by UNM Professor of Sociology Jessica Goodkind along with Co-Investigators Cirila Estela Vasquez Guzman and Julia Meredith Hess, has met major data collection goals, completed preliminary analyses, and disseminated initial findings.



**Jessica Goodkind, PhD**

Principal Investigator, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Sociology, UNM, Co-Director, DEI Curricular Development, School of Medicine



**Cirila Estela Vasquez Guzman, PhD**

Co-Investigator, Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine, Oregon Health & Science University



**Julia Meredith Hess, PhD**

Co-Investigator, Research Assistant Professor, Prevention Research Center, Department of Pediatrics, UNM

**Access to  
community  
resources**

**Learning  
opportunities  
for newcomers**

**Mutual learning  
for newcomers  
and Americans**

**Valued social  
roles and social  
support**

**Empowerment  
and integration**

**Communities'  
responsiveness**

# The Immigrant Well-being Project

As a partnership, the Immigrant Well-Being Project has produced three intervention-specific peer-reviewed manuscripts, two community research briefs in both English and Spanish, and multiple presentations and diverse media products with community and academic partners. These include a podcast with the makers of NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Building on the IWP partnership, the team also obtained NIH/NIMH R01 funding for a new study, “Multilevel Community-Based Mental Health Intervention to Address Structural Inequities and Adverse Disparate Consequences of COVID-19 Pandemic on Latinx Immigrants and African Refugees” (R01MH127733) accompanied by a competitive diversity supplement, “Gendered Pandemic-Related Disparities in Latinx Immigrant Mental Health: Understanding the Social Context of Caregiving Roles, Social Support, and Access to Resources.”

## IWP Products

3 intervention-specific peer-reviewed manuscripts [4 in progress]

Community research briefs in English & Spanish

Presentations, podcasts, and diverse media products with community and academic partners



### Latinx/@ Immigrant Inclusion Trajectories: Individual Agency, Structural Constraints, and the Role of Community-Based Organizations in Immigrant Mobilities

### NVivo Podcast - Between the Data

Qualitative research has the power to positively impact people's lives. Join Dr. Stacy Penna, NVivo Community Director, as she talks to qualitative researchers to discover their innovative research methods, applied practices and passionate insights. Whether you are a student, new to qualitative methods or a published qualitative researcher, this is the podcast for you.



# Cultural Knowledge and Zero Suicide

“Integrating Intergenerational Cultural Knowledge Exchange with Zero Suicide” is an innovative study in partnership with the Pueblo of San Felipe that focuses on implementation of Zero Suicide and a culturally derived youth resiliency program, the Katishtya Intergenerational Cultural Knowledge Seminar (KICKS), with the goal of building youth resiliency and decreasing suicidality. Previous research indicates an 82% decrease in suicide deaths when Zero Suicide was integrated into primary care settings. However, other studies have found that suicide prevention interventions are only effective to the extent that they recognize and integrate Native American cultural values, traditional practices and cultural identity development into programming. Additionally, there is evidence that increasing resiliency may be even more effective at preventing suicide with Native American youth than reducing risk factors. Thus, our study aims to integrate this evidence-based Zero Suicide model with a culturally grounded cultural knowledge exchange between youth and elders.



## Katishtya Intergenerational Culture Knowledge Seminars (KICKS)

Started by developing the model and pilot testing the curriculum several years prior to the study

Intergenerational program to promote resiliency and positive connections between youth and elders

Elders share traditional culture, language, lifeways, and history with youth in an eight-week summer seminar

KICKS was developed to improve resiliency through exposure to intergenerational cultural teachings

Preliminary data indicates that over 90% of youth felt they acquired substantial knowledge of each of the traditional activities

# Cultural Knowledge and Zero Suicide

With a culture- and-place-based approach to build youth resiliency and capitalize on strengths-based strategies, this project accomplished its goals of developing a tribally approved, culturally grounded clinical treatment manual and training community and clinical partners in research protocols. While intervention delivery was strategically paused due to COVID-19 impacts, implementation is currently ongoing.

As a partnership, the Cultural Knowledge and Zero Suicide project has produced three peer-reviewed manuscripts on their work together, given 11 presentations and trainings, including an Indian Health Service Suicide Prevention Webinar, and obtained more than \$15 million in new grant funding from federal sources, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The PI and co-PI of this core research project are Deborah Altschul of UNM and Esther Tenorio of the Pueblo of San Felipe.



**Deborah Altschul, PhD**

Professor and Vice Chair, Community Behavioral Health Research, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, School of Medicine, UNM



**Esther Tenorio**

Project Director, San Felipe Systems of Care, Health & Wellness Department, Pueblo of San Felipe

## Products

**3 peer-reviewed manuscripts [4 in progress]**

**Over \$15 million in new grant funding [SAMSHA & CDC]**

**2 Manuals developed (KICKS and CBT-SP)**

**Ongoing engagement in significant research and evaluation mentorship**

**11 Presentations, including two Indian Health Service Suicide Prevention webinars and several national webinars and cross system training**

# TREE Center Supplemental Grants

In addition to core, pilot and partnered research projects, the TREE Center was competitively awarded three NIMHD supplement grants in the 2018-2022 time period to forge multi-disciplinary team science on health disparities across diverse populations. These three supplement grants together leveraged an additional \$700,000 and included a project led by a TREE Center Pilot Program PI.

## **1** Illuminating the Sociopolitical Contexts of Cognitive Decline among AIAN & Latino Older Populations in Rural/Frontier Contexts. Lisa Cacari Stone, Steve Verney, Gabriel Sanchez & Kasim Ortiz (3U54MD004811-07S1).

This project successfully integrated multiple complex data sets incorporating policy and socio-contextual variables with health outcomes, generating new insights into intersectional AIAN and Latinx elder health. In addition, this supplement included an innovative training component, engaging 14 emerging scholar trainees in its in-person arm and eight emerging scholar trainees in its web-based arm.

## **2** Examining the Variable State and Local Policy Impacts of COVID-19 on Racial, Ethnic and Rural Health Disparity Populations. Lisa Cacari Stone, Yiliang Zhu, Blake Boursaw & Carlos Linares Koloffon (3U54MD004811-09S1).

Our “Policy Impacts of COVID-19” project also took an intersectional approach, finding that pre-existing contexts of inequity significantly shaped not only the strength, but also the observed direction of impacts of policy actions on COVID-19 case levels throughout the initial phase of the pandemic from outbreak to first vaccine administration in 2020.

## **3** Addressing the Social-Structural Determinants of Mental Health and Suicide through Digital Storytelling and Youth Advocacy for Rural Latino Youth. Shannon Sanchez-Youngman (3U54MD004811-09S2).

This \$146,000 project engaged 35 youth participants in three digital storytelling workshops in 2021 and 2022 and focused on co-developing youth-led policy dialogues with critical social media awareness and advocacy. A key takeaway from this project was that the intervention approach is a feasible strategy to identify and disrupt sociocultural risk and build resilience among Latinx youth.



# Advancing Knowledge for Health Equity Policy Change

Sound policies require solid evidence, yet significant gaps persist between research, policy and practice. The Equity in Policy Institute is a unique three-day training that includes nine modules with ongoing technical assistance, culminating in a half day of policy dialogues. These dialogues foster equitable policy development, contribute to good governance and democracy and increase engagement of affected communities. The training addresses the need for decolonized and racial justice approaches to policy analysis and leveraging research and place-based networks to promote sound policies for health equity. By challenging power dynamics and amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, the Institute strives to produce knowledge from diverse perspectives and equalize power differentials.

Led by Lisa Cacari Stone, PhD, the Equity in Policy Institute was collaboratively designed with CSPAC members and launched in 2020. It integrated TREE Center pilot project, core research project and community of practice for dissemination partners and scholars. A total of 14 teams with more than 100 partners participated, producing 12 policy briefs, bringing in the epistemic advantages of racial/ethnic and oppressed communities to name, prioritize, design and use various forms of “evidence” in the deliberative co-production of policy innovations and strategies. Together, the Equity in Policy Institute creates a practical policy model for democratizing knowledge for social change and racial justice.



In 2021, the Equity in Policy Institute expanded to integrate digital storytelling, aiming to activate communication power by supporting community teams to build place-based, solutions-centered multimedia stories. Digital stories for policy change shift messages about communities that are consistently misrepresented and marginalized in mainstream narratives by emphasizing cultural assets and resilience and by identifying strategies for systems and policy action. Equity in media production redistributes power. The use of digital stories is an important communication strategy for sharing knowledge and elevating community voices. Six digital stories were produced and are currently available, along with community-produced policy briefs, at [equityinpolicy.org](https://equityinpolicy.org)

Evaluations for the Equity in Policy Institute testified to its overall broad mission and success. A total of 91 individuals attended the Policy Dialogues, and at least two-thirds of 61 Policy Dialogue evaluation respondents gave a “Strongly Agree” rating for six of seven evaluation items, and mean scores for each of these items exceeded 4.5 on a 1-to-5 scale. A majority of attendees indicated, in the remaining evaluation item, that there could have been more time given to discussion of each compelling policy solution. Participating teams also strongly endorsed the effectiveness of the Institute, with self-rated knowledge and skills showing statistically significant, large effect size increases within each focal learning module, moving, overall, from an average of 2.7 to an average of 4.0 on a 1-to-5 “low” to “high” scale.

## DIGITAL POLICY STORIES

- **Mobilizing Culture, Sovereignty and Community for Tribal Health in all Policies**
- **Advancing Rights and People-Centered Approaches: Equity Policy for New Mexicans with Disabilities**
- **Implications of the Public Charge Rule for Albuquerque’s Asian Pacific Islander (API) Community**
- **Hispanic/Latinx Suicide: Structural Causes and Policy Solutions**
- **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**
- **Closing the Digital Divide and Advancing Health Equity in the Border Colonias**

# Health Equity in Action: From Innovation to Impact

In September 2022, leveraging funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the TREE Center with the UNM Health Sciences Center and Health System, co-led a statewide Health Equity Summit held in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The two-day summit convened 300 diverse partners from across New Mexico in order to understand historical patterns of racial injustice across communities, to share community-centered solutions and to create a common vision for tackling intersectional systems and policy changes for advancing health equity for all.



Evaluations testified to the Health Equity Summit's success. A resounding 97% of evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the summit was successful in convening a diversity of stakeholders and offering opportunities to map historical injustices, highlight the assets from within New Mexico, co-share community-centered equity strategies and prioritize systems and policy actions. In addition, a solid 86% of evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the summit facilitated action planning in support of the alignment of key health equity solutions with legislative priorities and resources. Evaluation comments also pointed to key topics to consider in future gatherings.

**"How information is used in practice; concrete actions that colonizing organizations, including UNM, are taking to hold themselves accountable to community strength while disbursing unearned wealth."**

# "How different sectors of the community can work together to advance health equity. How to avoid silos."

Using a Health Equity Action Labs (HEAL) approach, the summit energized a collective vision for collective action that drew from lessons learned and best practices from diverse communities across New Mexico. Policy solutions were generated within the 12 HEAL focus areas:

## Action Labs

- Behavioral Health
- Community Health Workers
- Youth Leadership
- Language Access
- Health Care Workforce Development
- Broadband & Digital Inclusion

- Transportation Access
- Educational Advancement
- Racial Justice & Healing
- Insurance Coverage & Coverage
- Affordable Housing
- Environmental Justice

Those informed the creation of a Health Equity Community Toolkit, developed post-summit, through deliberative re-engagement.

**Equity Manifesto**  
*"What promise can you fulfill to assure that future generations inherit all they need to live healthy, in well-being and have equitable access to resources?"*  
 In response to this vision, New Mexican's created a CALL TO ACTION for advancing health equity for all.  
[Click Here for the Equity Manifesto](#)

**Health Equity Action Labs**  
 Health Equity Action Labs feature "solutions" and "best practices" that come the communities in New Mexico. The model was built using human-centered design principles, which puts the people most affected by the inequities, or the problems in a system, at the center of designing new solutions.  
 • Behavioral Health • Transportation Access  
 • Community Health Workers • Education Advancement  
 • Youth Leadership • Racial Justice & Healing  
 • Language Access • Insurance Coverage  
 • Healthcare Workforce • Affordable Housing  
 • Broadband & Digital Inclusion • Environmental Justice  
[Click Here for more Action Lab Presentations](#)

**Health Equity Conversations**  
 The purpose of the 2022 Statewide Health Equity Conversations was to create a meaningful opportunity for diverse stakeholders to connect to "why" equity matters to them, to collectively define what equity means and looks like in their local context and to set actionable goals for achieving health equity.  
[Click Here to Learn More](#)

**Health Equity Summit: Summary Report & Evaluation**  
 Weren't able to make it? We have a Report with summaries from the Action Labs and discussions that were held after each day of the summit.  
[View Summary Report Here!](#)  
[View Evaluation Report Here!](#)

**Intersectional Policy Challenges & Solutions**  
 Working across silos is critical for finding common root causes of structural inequities as well as identifying bold innovative policy strategies across issues. Click here to access the mapping of challenges and solutions across the 12 Health Equity Action Labs.  
[View our Findings Here!](#)

**Digital Policy Stories**  
 Drawing from a culturally centered place-based approach, community teams build technical skills to create solutions-centered multimedia stories systems and policy change.  
[Click Here to View Stories](#)

**2022 HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT**  
 SEPTEMBER 19-20

**NM HEALTH SCIENCES**  
 TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH, EQUITY & ENGAGEMENT CENTER

**The summit also produced an  
Equity Manifesto, guiding our  
future together:**

“We will unite our vision, voices and relationships to strengthen collaborative partnerships and sustain our cultural practices, values and beliefs for our next generation. We promise to teach the next generation and our communities about the history of inequity and resistance and how to be leaders that interrupt narratives and policies that are rooted in racism and oppression. These principles are imperative to expanding knowledge, increasing our collective critical consciousness and moving towards sustainable change that advances health equity for all.”

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our cherished partners and academic and community mentors who believed in our vision to “grow our own, advance knowledge for healing and social change and to improve the health of all New Mexicans.”

We also honor the peoples and land of New Mexico-Pueblo, Navajo, Apache, Ute and Genízaro. With grief, we humbly remember the history of slavery and colonization that comes with a legacy of inter-generational trauma and continued structural violence. Our “purpose” is to be of service to many peoples: Indigenous, Latino/a, Black, Asian American and intersectional communities of color, so all may be healthy and free of suffering.

Thus, the impact of our work from 2017-2023 is largely due to a collective force of dedicated leaders, scholars, practitioners, healers, policy makers and advocates who always believe in change. We deeply appreciate your talent, time, knowledge and mostly in your hope for our future generations. May we continue our path towards racial justice and health equity!



## Honorary Circle of Elders and Teachers

- Nadine Tafoya, MSW, LCSW
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- Lisa Cacari Stone, PhD

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- Gerilyn Antonio, MPH
- Hazel James
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- Sanjeev Arora, MD

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- Susan K. Wilger, MPAff
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## Equity in Policy Digital Lab

- Jaelyn de Maria
- Uriel Martinez
- Roberto E. Rosales

# TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER

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## **College of Population Health**

## **College of Pharmacy**



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