

Understanding Our Vision & Goals for New Mexico



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Dr. Lisa Cacari (*kakari*) Stone returned to UNM in 2008 after finishing her post-doctoral work at the Harvard School of Public Health and Congressional fellowship with the Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee under Senator Edward Kennedy. New Mexico has been her home since 1989 and her work in the New Mexico/Mexico border region around health disparity is well-known and respected for over two decades.

As Assistant Professor of Health Policy, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Director of the Community Engagement Core for the Health Disparities Center and senior fellow with the RWJF Center for Health Policy at UNM, she is well positioned to be a leader-scholar-activist in New Mexico. Where does this motivation come from?

Dr. Cacari Stone reflects on her working class Chicana upbringing- “my father was a machine mechanic with John Deere Harvester and my mother an upholsterer. They were my best teachers, instilling values of hard work and social responsibility.” She attributes these to influencing her work today as “publicly engaged research and education”-much of which focuses on finding health systems and policy solutions for Latino, immigrant and border communities.

When asked why mentoring is important? She answers “As people of color, we often find ourselves being the first in our families who have completed a graduate education. This is both a source of ‘orgullo y dolor’- our families are *proud* of our achievements and expect that we use them for doing good. But, then we have to deal with university policies which are based on self-and career- promotion towards tenure. We get to be a member of the academic community if we pour countless hours into writing grants and manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals. It’s *painful* to see none of the fruits of our labor helping our communities with their immediate needs-food, housing, work, education and health care.” Lisa has encountered many under-represented students facing these same dilemmas, even more so in this tough economy.

Thus, she is passionate and dedicated to “mentoring in research” on both health sciences and main campuses including undergraduates with the Ronald E. McNair program and Undergraduate Pipeline Network (UPN), master’s students with the Public Health Program and doctoral fellows with the RWJF Center. As a mentor, she provides opportunities for students to learn the value of “education and research in-service to our communities.” Under-represented students often need guidance in navigating the maze of higher education and support in integrating their cultural and personal values into their own scholarship and career path. She states that “students need a community of mentors and safe and respectful spaces in the academy to gain the confidence and momentum to

creatively express alternative scholarship and ways of knowing.”

The McNair and UPN programs work to mentor minority students in research. Students have hands-on opportunities to work side-by-side with some of the country’s leading researchers based here at UNM. These programs “give students the opportunity to start their research careers earlier, rather than struggling through it later in life like I did.”

As Director of the Community Engagement Core (CEC) for the New Mexico Cares Health Disparities Center, Lisa focuses on building better relationships between community and academic researchers so that our research is solutions focused and actually benefits our state. Using Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Intercultural Communications and Conflict Resolution methods UNM researchers learn to work in partnership with a community when conducting health disparities research. Currently, the CEC team is working in four distinct areas of the state: the southern border region (Dona Ana, Luna, Grant & Hidalgo Counties), the Navajo Nation (Shiprock area), northern New Mexico (Española & Santa Clara), and in the Albuquerque metro area (South Valley & Martineztown).

On a recent trek down to Las Cruces, Lisa brought along graduate student Jeanette Mora with the public health program, to participate in the New Mexico Border Health Research Workgroup comprised of over 20 key organization and institutional leaders that convened to identify and discuss health equity/ health disparity research priorities for grants development. Jeanette will be working with Dona Ana County Health and Human Services and Memorial Medical in evaluating a promotora de salud model for managing diabetes with Spanish speaking residents as part of her public health practicum.

Dr. Cacari-Stone’s charismatic smile is infectious. Her motto for working with her students, colleagues and communities is simple: “developing trusting relationships so that we can create scholarship that contributes to the public good.”

For more information about the NM CARES Health Disparities Center, our Speaker Series, Research Resources, and/or the Undergraduate Student Pipeline, please contact Miria Kano at mkano@salud.unm.edu, at 505-272-3876, or check out the links below.

Links:

Undergraduate Pipeline Network:

http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/brep/pipeline_overview.shtm

NM CARES Health Disparities Center:

<http://hsc.unm.edu/programs/nmcareshd/index.shtml>