



Rutgers Equity Alliance
for Community Health



POVERTY, EQUITY & THEIR INFLUENCING FACTORS



9:00 A.M.

OPENING REMARKS

Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, *Principal Investigator,
Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health*

Jonathan Holloway, PhD, *President, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*
Amber Randolph, *Associate Vice President, New Jersey Department,
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

9:45 A.M. CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Food Insecurity and Adequate Access

Jackie Bavaro, MPH, *Senior Program Manager, Food Resource Action Center*
Jeanine Cava, MS, *Lead Facilitator, NJ Food Democracy Collaborative*
Rucha Gadre, *Senior Advisor Food Security/Innovation, NJ Economic Development
Authority*

Cara L. Cuite, PhD, *Associate Extension Specialist/Associate Professor, Rutgers
University*

Moderator: Sara Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN, *Department Chair/Associate Professor,
Department of Family & Community Health Sciences, Rutgers Cooperative Extension*

What is a Livable Wage? Income Equity Issues

Lorraine Minnite, PhD, MPhil, MA, *Associate Professor, Rutgers University*
Ronsha Dickerson, *Executive Director, Camden Parent & Student Union*
Stephanie Hoopes, PhD, *National Director, United for ALICE*

Mary Celis, MPP, *Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Passaic County*

Moderator: Kevin Callaghan, MS, *Newark Liaison, Council of NJ Grantmakers*

Economic Mobility: Barriers and Strategies

Margaret Koller, MS, *Executive Director, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy*
Yarrow Willman-Cole, MA, *Workplace Justice Program Director, New Jersey
Citizens Action*

Robert Asaro-Angelo, MPP, *Commissioner, NJ Dept. of Labor & Workforce
Development*

Lasheema Sanders-Edwards, MS, *Wellness and Recovery Regional Coordinator
Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey*

Moderator: John J. Sarno, Esq., *Counsel, Robinson Miller LLC, Distinguished
Executive in Residence, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation*

Innovative Approaches to Health Equity

Teri Lassiter, PhD, MPH, *Assistant Dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion for Education, Rutgers School of Public Health*

Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, PhD, *Associate Professor of Health Sciences Research, Columbia University School of Nursing*

Diana Candeledo, MPA, *Assistant Vice President, FQHC Relations, RWJBarnabas Health, Community Health*

Moderator: Erin Comollo, EdD, *Family & Community Health Sciences Program Development Administrator, Rutgers Cooperative Extension*

10:45 A.M.

BREAK

11:00 A.M. CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Policy Recommendations and Implications on Social Determinants of Health

Cara Cuite, PhD, *Associate Extension Specialist/Associate Professor, Rutgers University*

Rafael Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH, *Associate Dean, Community Engagement and Public Health Practice, Rutgers School of Public Health*

Nora Hyland, PhD, *Associate Dean, Rutgers Graduate School of Education*

Chester Spell, PhD, *Professor of Management, Rutgers Camden School of Business*

Moderator: Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, *Principal Investigator, REACH*

The Role of AI in Sustainable Employment

Dan Rhoton, *Executive Director, Hopeworks*

Onna Jones, LAC, NCC, *Director, Community Partnerships, Hopeworks*

Terri Griffith, PhD, ICD.D, *Professor, Director, Author, Keynote Speaker, Simon Fraser University*

Sam Caucci, *Founder, Chief Executive Officer, 1Huddle*

Moderator: Wendy Melendez, MA, *Vice President of Programs, La Casa de Don Pedro*

Using Research and Policy to Address Housing Instability and Homelessness

Luis Ulerio, *Director, Newark Office of Homeless Services*

Jeff Olivet, MA, *Senior Advisor, Initiative on Health and Homelessness, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health*

Vincent Reina, PhD, MBA, *Professor of Urban Economics and Planning, Faculty Director of the Housing Initiative at Penn, University of Pennsylvania*

Jonathan Tew, JD, *Policy Director, New Jersey Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services*

Moderator: Dan Treglia, PhD, *Instructor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy*

Collaborative Solutions: Building Community Partnerships

Amanda Medina-Forrester, MA, MPH, *Executive Director, Office of Minority and Multicultural Health, NJDOH*

Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, EdD, RDN, *Associate Professor, School of Health Professions, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies*

Mariam Merced, MA, *Director, Community Health Promotion, RWJBarnabas Health*

Moderator: Diane Hill, PhD, *Assistant Chancellor, Rutgers Newark*

12:00 P.M.

LUNCH

1:15 P.M.

KEYNOTE

Understanding Poverty and its Contributing Factors

Matthew Desmond, PhD, *Maurice P. Daring Professor of Sociology, Founder of The Eviction Lab, Princeton University*

Introduction: Prabhas V. Moghe, PhD, *Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*

2:45 P.M.

BOOK DISTRIBUTION AND BREAK

3:15 P.M.

CLOSING PANEL

Who's in the Room – Our Collective Actions Toward Poverty in NJ

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD, *Senior Counsel, Economic Justice Program, NJ Institute for Social Justice*

Reverend Dr. Robin Tanner, DMin, *Executive Director of Beacon Hope and Equity Center*

Charlene Walker, *Executive Director, Faith in New Jersey*

Moderator: Davarian L. Baldwin, PhD, *Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of American Studies, Trinity College*

4:15 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS AND CALL TO ACTION

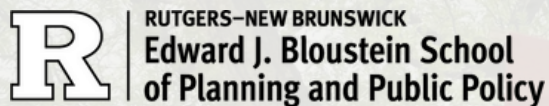
Diane Hagerman, MA, *Executive Director, REACH*

4:30–5:30 P.M.

RECEPTION

THANK YOU

CO-SPONSORS



**Rutgers Health Office
of Population Health**



CO-HOST

REACH Employment Collaborative Learning Table

Onna Jones, LAC, NCC, Assistant Director of Community Partnerships, Hopeworks

Wendy Melendez, MA, Vice President of Programs, La Casa De Don Pedro

John (JP) Miller-Purrenhage, PhD Candidate, Public Policy and Community Development Program, Rutgers Camden

John Sarno, Esq., Distinguished Executive in Residence, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation

Chester Spell, PhD, Professor of Management, Rutgers Camden School of Business

REACH is primarily and generously funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with additional support from the Rutgers University Office of the President and the four University Chancellors.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, *Principal Investigator, REACH*

Sarah Allred, PhD, *Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education for Arts and Sciences, Associate Professor in Psychology,*

Rutgers University Camden

Milton Ellis, BA, *Associate Director of Finance and Administration, REACH*

Diane Hagerman, MA, *Executive Director, REACH*

Denise Hien, PhD, ABPP, *Senior Vice Provost for Research,*

Chancellor's Office, Director of the Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies, Helen E. Chaney Endowed Chair in Alcohol Studies &

Distinguished Professor in the Graduate School of Applied & Professional Psychology

Shawna Hudson, PhD, FSBM, *Vice Chancellor of Dissemination and Implementation Science, Associate Director,*

New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science (NJ ACTS), RWJMS Senior Associate Dean for Population Health

Henry Turner, PhD, *Vice President for Academic Initiatives, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Nyeema Watson, PhD, *Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Inclusion, and Civic Engagement*

Housing Collaborative Learning Table

Stephanie Kusi Bamfo, *Graduate Student, School of Social Work*

Richard Cammarieri, *Director, Special Projects New Community Corporation*

Pilar Hogan Closkey, PE, PP, AICP, *Executive Director, Saint Joseph's Carpenter Society*

Stephen Danley, DPhil, *Director of the Center for Urban Research and Education, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Administration, Rutgers Camden*

David Dante Troutt, JD, *Distinguished Professor of Law, Director, Center on Law, Inequality and Metropolitan Equity, Rutgers Newark*

Education Collaborative Learning Table

Ronald Chaluísán Batlle, MEd, MA, *Principal, Bricolage Design Works*

Jonathan Garr, *Chief Program Officer, Camden Education Fund*

Nora E. Hyland, PhD, *Associate Dean, Graduate School of Education*

Dionne Phillips, EdD, *Intervention Specialist, Education in Teacher Leadership*

Michelle S. Redd, RDH, *Education Chairperson, NAACP, New Brunswick Area Branch*

Population Health Collaborative Learning Table

Kristin August, PhD, *Director, Graduate Program in Prevention Sciences, Rutgers Camden*

Anita Karr, MPH, *Research Project Coordinator, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health*

Brian McGovern, MPH, *Chief Executive Officer, North Jersey Community Research Initiative*

Nicole Mendoza, PhD Candidate, *Health Communications*

Mary O'Dowd, MPH, *Executive Director, Health Systems and Population Health Integration, Rutgers Health*

Mariam Merced, MA, *Director, Community Health Promotion, RWJBarnabas Health*

Mary Pelak, MSW, LSW, *Senior Program Manager, Camden Coalition*

Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH, *Associate Dean, Community Engagement and Public Health Practice, Rutgers School of Public Health*

Food Access and Security Collaborative Learning Table

Jennifer Apostol, *Director, REPLENISH*

Cara L. Cuite, PhD, *Assistant Extension Specialist, Department of Human Ecology*

Tobias Fox, *Founder and Managing Director, Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.*

Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, EdD, RDN, *Program Director, School of Health Professions, Rutgers Health*

Daniel Tomé, EdD, MEd, *Director of Community Engagement, Rutgers Camden Office of Civic Engagement*

Jonathan Wetstein, MS, *Sustainable Food Systems Advocate, Pinelands Preservation Alliance*

Keynote Speaker



Dr. Matthew Desmond

MacArthur “Genius” and Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond has transformed our understanding of poverty in the US with his instant #1 New York Times bestseller *Poverty, by America* and the 2017 Pulitzer Prize winner *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Praised as “an extraordinary feat of reporting and ethnography” by The Washington Post, *Evicted* draws on the stories of eight real families living on the edge of eviction to help readers better understand the causes and conditions of deep poverty.

Poverty, by America, has been praised by the New Yorker as “urgent and accessible” and by Esquire as “another paradigm-shifting inquiry into America’s dark heart.” Drawing on history, research, and original reporting, the book reimagines the debate on poverty, and makes a new and bracing argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it. Desmond is the Maurice P. During Professor of Sociology and the founder and principal investigator of The Eviction Lab (www.evictionlab.org) at Princeton University. Desmond is a New York Times Magazine contributing writer, and his writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New Yorker and The Chicago Tribune.

Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP

Dr. Denise V. Rodgers is the Principal Investigator for Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health. She is also the Vice Chancellor for Interprofessional Programs at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, and a Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at RWJ Medical School. Dr. Rodgers has devoted much of her career to working with and caring for underserved patients and communities. She is currently Chair of the Greater Newark Health Care Coalition Board of Directors.



Jonathan Holloway, PhD

Jonathan Holloway, who was appointed the 21st president of Rutgers in 2020, is an eminent historian specializing in post-emancipation United States history with a focus on social and intellectual history. Dr. Holloway is the author of several books, most recently *African American History: A Very Short Introduction*, published in 2023. Prior to accepting the presidency of Rutgers, Dr. Holloway was provost of Northwestern University from 2017 to 2020 and a member of the faculty of Yale University from 1999 to 2017. At Yale, he served as Dean of Yale College and the Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, History, and American Studies.



Amber Randolph

Amber M. Randolph joined the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in 2024 as its first associate vice president, New Jersey. Amber's work in RWJF's home state is dedicated to advancing health equity by addressing structural racism as a root cause of inequities. Under Amber's leadership, RWJF's New Jersey department is devoted to advancing comprehensive, equity-promoting policies to ensure everyone has a fair and just opportunity to live their healthiest life possible.



Jackie Bavaro, MPH



Jackie Bavaro, MPH joined Food Research & Action Center in August 2023 and serves as the senior program manager of the New Jersey Food Security Initiative (NJSFI). In this role, she is responsible for facilitating community-centered and collaborative efforts to increase food security and advance health equity in New Jersey through grantmaking, technical assistance, and capacity building activities. Bavaro previously worked with the NJ YMCA State Alliance managing their SNAP-Ed, SNAP Navigator, and other community food programs.

Jeanine Cava, MS

Jeanine Cava has been a dedicated practitioner and advocate for regional and community food systems for 17 years. She has worked across multiple sectors—including healthcare, local farmers' associations, and emergency food services—to expand access to fresh, healthy food. In 2020, Jeanine co-founded the New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative, driven by a deep commitment to strengthening local food supply chains in New Jersey. As executive director, her work is rooted in community-led, grassroots initiatives that aim to re-localize food systems while prioritizing economic and racial equity.



Rucha Gadre



Rucha Gadre serves as the Director of Food Security at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA). She is deeply committed to fostering healthy, vibrant food systems, understanding that food connects people, culture, health, the environment, and economic development. Throughout her career, Rucha has held leadership roles in both the non-profit and government sectors, where she has designed equitable, scalable initiatives aimed at empowering individuals, businesses, and communities. At NJEDA, Rucha leads programs focused on improving food access and security across New Jersey's most underserved communities.

Cara L. Cuite, PhD

Cara Cuite, PhD serves as an associate extension specialist/associate professor and the undergraduate program director in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers University. She is a health psychologist who studies food security and risk communication. She leads the research program on basic needs insecurities among Rutgers students and works closely with community partners on food security projects across New Jersey. She serves as lead for REACH's Food Access & Security Collaborative Learning Table. Her risk communication research and outreach focus on food safety, genetically engineered foods, and weather-related emergencies.



Sara Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN

Sara Elnakib, PhD is associate professor and chair of the Department of Family & Community Health Sciences at Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Her research focuses on the use of policy, systems, and environmental approaches to promote child health equity and environmental stewardship, primarily in school and community settings. Dr. Elnakib has received research funding from the USDA, EPA, NJDEP and Horizon Foundation to study the intersection of nutrition literacy, environmental education, and healthy eating.



Lorraine Minnite, PhD, MPhil, MA

Lorraine C. Minnite, PhD teaches courses on community development, public policy, and voting rights. A political scientist by training, her research is concerned with issues of inequality, social and racial justice, political conflict and institutional change. She is the author and co-author of two books on electoral rules and race and class politics in the U.S., and a recognized national expert on voter fraud and vote suppression. In addition to her expertise in these subjects, Dr. Minnite has experience working with community organizations on survey research projects in which she trains local residents to design and conduct surveys for the benefit of their organizations and communities.



Ronsha Dickerson



Ronsha A. Dickerson is a dynamic community organizer, public speaker, education advocate, and labor and delivery community doula whose work has transformed countless lives. For over two decades, she has served as a Cultural Ambassador and Education Advocate, organizing initiatives that celebrate and empower the youth of Camden, New Jersey. She is a co-founder of the Camden Parent Union, a coalition of parents, caregivers, and community leaders dedicated to securing education equity, fair funding, local governance, and the recruitment and retention of Black and brown teachers in Camden's public schools.

Stephanie Hoopes, PhD

Stephanie Hoopes, PhD, is the National Director of United For ALICE and Chief Research and Impact Officer at United Way of Northern New Jersey. She has a doctorate degree from the London School of Economics and developed the ALICE (Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed) measures which are now viewed as one of the most accurate measures of financial hardship across the country. The research and partnerships continue to grow and Her research has garnered the attention of local, state, and national media, most recently appearing on Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien.



Mary Celis, MPP



Mary Celis, MPP has more than 20 years of experience as a social impact and community investment leader with experience designing innovative programs and investments leading to improved outcomes for low-income communities. She is proud to serve as the CEO of the United Way of Passaic County and lead the strategic vision of the organization. She previously served as the Director of Health Initiatives at the United Way of Passaic County, where she led the health impact department and convened a cross-sector coalition to impact the social determinants of health, supported by United Way's grantmaking program.

Kevin Callaghan, MS

Kevin Callaghan, MS began serving as the Newark Philanthropic Liaison in 2016. In this cabinet-level position, Callaghan works directly with the mayor and his senior cabinet to leverage private and government assets to support the mayor's agenda in areas such as public safety, summer youth employment, workforce development, economic development, health and wellness, education and literacy, immigration, and neighborhood and place-based initiatives.



Margaret Koller, MS

Margaret Koller, M.S. is executive director at Rutgers Center for State Health Policy. Serving as chief operating officer, she oversees the development and management of the Center's research portfolio, compliance with financial and data use agreements, and communication and dissemination strategies. Currently, she directs the implementation of the NJ Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD) Project in New Jersey, which will use linked data to inform population health research and improve the efficiency of state government programs.



Yarrow Willman-Cole, MA

Yarrow Willman-Cole is the Workplace Justice Program Director at New Jersey Citizen Action and convenes the NJ Time to Care Coalition. She received her master's degree in management and labor relations from Rutgers University and is bilingual in English and Spanish. For the past 10 years, she has helped to lead the *NJ Time to Care Coalition*, a diverse group of organizations focused on advocacy around paid leave for workers to care for loved ones. Through this work, she helped to pass the state's first Earned Sick Leave law and expanded the state's Paid Family Leave program, and is considered an expert in those policies.





Robert Asaro-Angelo, MPP

Robert Asaro-Angelo, MPP was nominated by Governor Phil Murphy to serve as the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development in January 2018. As Commissioner, Asaro-Angelo is proud to oversee the state's diverse services to New Jersey workers. In recent years, Congress has called upon the Commissioner multiple times to testify about labor-related topics, including the state's innovative efforts to develop apprenticeship programs, increase access to paid family and medical leave, and combat unemployment insurance fraud.

Lasheema Sanders-Edwards, MS

Lasheema Sanders-Edwards, M.S. is the Wellness and Recovery Regional Coordinator at Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey (CSPNJ), where she leads efforts to support people who are unhoused and in need of mental health and recovery support using CSPNJ core values. A writer and advocate, Sanders-Edwards holds a certification as a peer recovery specialist. As someone who has experienced homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse, she uses her lived experience to connect with, support, and empower clients. Her passion for advocacy led her to a role on the PAIMI advisory council, where she works to protect individuals with disabilities.



John J. Sarno, Esq.

John J. Sarno, Esq. is counsel at Robinson Miller, LLC in Newark where he consults on all aspects of federal and state court litigation and advises business and nonprofit leaders on complex and confidential management issues. In his former role as president of the Employers Association of New Jersey, Sarno and his expert staff provided executive and strategic HR leadership to over 1,000 employers. During the 2020–2022 public health emergency, he helped direct critical support to essential businesses and guided employers through the complex health and safety landscape.

Teri Lassiter, PhD, MPH

Teri E. Lassiter, PhD, MPH is assistant dean for Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education and assistant professor in Urban-Global Public Health. Dr. Lassiter collaborated with others in the Rutgers Health community to develop the RBHS Strategic Plan and the Universitywide Diversity Strategic Plan, and is at work on integrating an anti-racism curriculum into the school's six core courses. She is a member of the Chancellor's Diversity Leadership Council and the Anti-Racism Task Force, which has created initiatives around curricula, training and certificate programs, and ongoing dialogues about race.



Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, PhD

For over a decade, Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, PhD has been developing research programs aimed at reducing health inequities. She has served as principal investigator of nine NIH-funded interventions and co-investigator on several others, designing and delivering in-person and mobile health interventions for organizations and individuals. Dr. Lelutiu-Weinberger currently serves as Margaret Conrad Associate Professor of Health Sciences Research at the Columbia University School of Nursing.



Diana Candeledo, MPA

Diana Candeledo, MPA serves as assistant vice president of FQHC Relations, Community Health at RWJBarnabas Health, the largest, most comprehensive academic health care system in New Jersey. In this role, Candeledo promotes access to care and services through Federally Qualified Health Center partnerships, local hiring, local supplier diversity, and economic development investments that positively impact the overall wellbeing of the communities served. She is responsible for forging strategic alliances, ensuring that economic power and resources reach the local communities most in need.





Erin Comollo, EdD

Erin Comollo, EdD is program development administrator at the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS), Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Dr. Comollo's dissertation focused on the outcomes of working with educators to implement and evaluate a professional development program. Her role at FCHS includes coordinating and managing its New Jersey Healthy Communities Network, Healthy Corner Store Initiative, and School Meal & SNAP Dual Enrollment Pilot Program.

Rafael Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH

Dr. Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa studies the mechanisms through which historically and contemporary under-resourced populations experience health inequities by engaging in theoretically driven research that seeks to disentangle the effects of different social determinants of health. Most of his scholarly work focuses on public health issues related to HIV/AIDS prevention and care, substance use and abuse, harm reduction, mental health, and healthcare utilization. He uses different community-engaged approaches to study these issues, focusing on the interplay between behavioral, social, structural, and environmental factors that influence health systems in which inequities are embedded.



Nora Hyland, PhD

Nora E. Hyland is an Associate Professor, Associate Dean, and Faculty Director of Teacher Education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education (GSE). Dr. Hyland's commitment to equity and social justice in education was sparked during her ten years as an elementary school teacher in Brooklyn, NY. At the GSE, she manages all licensure programs' implementation, assessment, development, and accreditation. She has led several transformative GSE initiatives, including the Urban Social Justice Teacher Education Program, the Community-Engaged Anti-Racist Education Project, and the GSE Community School Partnership Network, through which GSE, local schools, and community-based organizations work together to address pressing issues in education.



Chester Spell, PhD

Chester S. Spell (Ph.D., Georgia Institute of Technology) is a professor of management at Rutgers University School of Business, Camden. Previous positions were at the University of Waikato in New Zealand and Washington State University. His major interests include the relationship between employment, behavioral health and well-being in organizations. Past research has focused on organizational justice as it affects employee mental health, the history and adoption of employee substance abuse programs, and relationships between social connections in work groups and health.



Dan Rhoton

Dan Rhoton has been working with youth for the past two decades in a variety of capacities: teacher, school administrator, and organizational leader. Starting with his work in juvenile justice, Dan has developed extensive expertise in the use of restorative practices and trauma-informed methodology both inside the classroom and in the larger community. At Hopeworks, Dan is responsible for overall implementation of the learning culture throughout the organization, managing all programs and staff, including Hopeworks' training program, residence, and social enterprises.



Onna Jones, LAC, NCC

Onna Jones, LAC, NCC is the Kensington Site Director at Hopeworks, where she leads the expansion of the site to accommodate more young adults, furthering Hopeworks' mission to propel young adults into long-term, living wage careers. Jones works to expand access to quality mental health care, navigate emergency housing resources, and support job placements for young adults. She has also fostered unique partnerships with school districts to develop innovative strategies for student success.





Terri Griffith, PhD, ICD.D

Terri L. Griffith, PhD holds the Keith Beedie Chair in Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business. Her research addresses how individuals and groups design, understand, and use new technologies in their work. Her most recent work uses large-scale methods to take a "bottom-up" approach to automation and the future of work, including artificial intelligence. Griffith serves as associate editor for the Academy of Management Annals, is senior editor for Organization Science, and served as associate editor for MIS Quarterly.

Sam Caucci

Sam Caucci, CEO of 1Huddle, founded this workforce tech company in 2015 on the belief that every worker deserves access to the job training, support, and mentorship needed to win on the job. Clients include the U.S. Air Force, UEFA, vineyard vines, Loews Hotels, ESPN, Audible, Novartis, Madison Square Garden, and the City of Newark, and more. Put simply, 1Huddle is making training more fun, effective, equitable, and accessible for the entire workforce. He is a board member of the City of Newark's Workforce Development Board and has delved into community, educational, and political initiatives that are making a social impact across the country.



Wendy Melendez, MA



Rosalina "Wendy" Melendez serves as Vice President of Programs at La Casa de Don Pedro, Inc. She has held leadership roles at La Casa for 30 years and has a deep personal commitment to La Casa de Don Pedro's mission and the Greater Newark community. In her current role, Melendez has oversight of 30 programs that provide holistic support for community members from the Greater Newark area. She supports a leadership team for La Casa's functional areas in community and economic development; community improvement; early childhood education and development; personal development; and youth, family and health services.

Luis Ulerio

Luis Ulerio was appointed by Mayor Ras J. Baraka to lead the City of Newark's first Office of Homeless Services in early 2022. He oversees the office's programs and activities, and leads the Mayor's initiatives aimed at ending chronic homelessness in Newark. With input from all community stakeholders, Ulerio's office implemented a strategic plan that saw a 57.6% decrease in unsheltered homelessness in 2023. Born and raised in Newark, Ulerio has over 15 years of experience in government and nonprofit leading housing and homeless programs and initiatives.



Jeff Olivet, MA

Jeff Olivet, M.A. is an internationally recognized leader in public health and homelessness policy, with a deep focus on the intersection of housing, healthcare, and racial equity. As executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (from 2022–2024, he led federal efforts to address homelessness as a public health crisis, advocating for policies that integrate healthcare and housing solutions and that prevent homelessness before it starts. Olivet currently serves as a senior advisor to the Initiative on Health and Homelessness at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and a consultant to numerous other organizations.



Vincent Reina, PhD, MBA

Vincent Reina is a professor of urban economics and planning in the City and Regional Planning Department at the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design with a secondary appointment as professor of real estate at the Wharton School of Business. Reina is the founder and faculty director of the Housing Initiative at Penn, a research lab that works with localities to develop housing plans and design and evaluate housing solutions. Reina's research focuses on urban economics, housing policy, and health. Reina is editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal Housing Policy Debate.





Jonathan Tew, JD

As policy director in NJ DHS' Office of Policy and Innovation, Jonathan Tew, J.D. oversees the 1115 Comprehensive Demonstration, as well as other waivers of federal authority required to run NJ FamilyCare, New Jersey's Medicaid program. He is a lawyer by training and, prior to working at DHS, Tew was a senior program manager at the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and, prior to that, a legislative director in the Pennsylvania State Senate.

Dan Treglia, PhD

Daniel Treglia, PhD is an instructor at the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy and in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. Dr. Treglia is a social policy researcher with a focus on housing and income instability and homelessness, with experience in government and nonprofits to connect his research to on-the-ground policy and action. This work has offered a window into related and often intersecting systems, like child welfare, veterans affairs, and health care. Prior to joining the Center, he served as Deputy Director of Research and Evaluation for New York City's Department of Homeless Services and as an Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.



Amanda Medina-Forrester, MA, MPH

As the executive director of the department's Office of Minority and Multicultural Health, Amanda Medina-Forrester (MA, MPH) is charged with implementing health equity policies, practices, and programs to reduce and eliminate health disparities among diverse and marginalized populations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Medina-Forrester developed testing and prevention mitigation strategies for migrant and seasonal farm workers.

She established a vaccine implementation committee composed of community members, enhanced communication plans for specific populations, and engaged key stakeholders, community organizers and tribal leaders in the rollout of these measures.



Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, EdD, RDN

Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, EdD, RDN is fueled by a deep commitment to learning from others, amplifying underrepresented voices, and driving meaningful, collaborative action in health science research, evaluation, and education. After 20 years of nutrition practice in pediatric HIV at the Rutgers François-Xavier Bagnoud Center, Dr. Rothpletz-Puglia transitioned to a faculty role at the Rutgers School of Health Professions (SHP) in 2013. Her passion for mastering qualitative and mixed methods research—particularly participatory approaches—reflects her belief that the most impactful insights come from those closest to the issues.



Mariam Merced, MA

Mariam Merced, MA has been the Director of the RWJ Barnabas Health System- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Community Health Promotion Program for the past 33 years. In this role, she is responsible for the coordination of accessible quality preventive health care services and educational programs for communities in Middlesex County. She partners with houses of worship, health institutions and community-based organizations, in the design and implementation culturally appropriate community-wide health promotion initiatives.



Diane Hill, PhD

Diane Hill, PhD is Assistant Chancellor for University-Community Partnerships at Rutgers University-Newark. For more than 15 years, Dr. Hill has administered the Office of University-Community Partnerships, which supports Rutgers University-Newark students, faculty, and staff as they expand, create, and promote reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnerships that align with the university's strategic engagement priorities. She serves as a faculty member in the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) and a core faculty member with the Rutgers Institute for Global Health. In collaboration with Rutgers University-Newark SPAA, Hill is founding director of the Center for Health Excellence and Community Engagement.



Prabhas V. Moghe, PhD



Dr. Moghe is Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Academic Officer, and Distinguished Professor at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Executive Vice President Moghe is an internationally recognized leader in higher education who drives strategic growth to strengthen academic excellence at the university, support faculty and student success, and foster global research partnerships. He is an advocate for elevating cross-disciplinary research in the humanities and the arts, information and computing sciences, and environmental, life, and health sciences at Rutgers. He also champions a thriving culture of inclusive excellence within and across Rutgers units.

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD leads the Institute's reparations advocacy. He was a member of the Reparations Narrative Lab and represented the Institute as a community fellow on the Rutgers-Newark Crafting Democratic Futures project, helping lead community dialogues on reparations. Prior to joining the Institute, Brutus worked at Legal Services NYC, where he represented Bronx tenants facing eviction as part of New York City's right-to-counsel program. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and earned his PhD and JD from Northwestern University.



Reverend Dr. Robin Tanner, DMin



Rev. Dr. Robin Tanner is a member of the lead ministry team at Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, NJ, and was formerly lead minister at the Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church in Charlotte, NC. She holds a master of divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School and a doctorate in ministry from the Pacific School of Religion. Tanner is an outspoken activist for religious freedom, racial justice, voting rights, raising the minimum wage, reproductive justice and marriage equality. She was part of a successful North Carolina effort to overturn restrictions on clergy members performing same-sex marriage ceremonies, and helped lead the fight against North Carolina's Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act.

Charlene Walker

Charlene D. Walker is a New Jersey native and a powerful woman of faith with a consistent record of fiercely advocating for racial, immigrant, economic, and social justice. She challenges leaders and institutions to better unite our social movements and to work towards dismantling systems of hate and oppression. As a firm believer that justice begins at our intersections, she reminds us that Black, Brown, differently abled, youth, and poor communities are empowered by working closely together, to achieve progress on issues that support the families of New Jersey. Walker's unique upbringing allows her to connect with people from all walks of life.



Davarian L. Baldwin, PhD

Davarian L. Baldwin is an internationally recognized scholar, author, and public advocate. He is Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of American Studies and founding director of the Smart Cities Research Lab at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. His academic and political commitments have focused on global cities and particularly the diverse and marginalized communities that struggle to maintain sustainable lives in urban locales. Baldwin is the award-winning author of several books—most recently, *In The Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities*—and served as consultant and text author for *The World of the Harlem Renaissance: A Jigsaw Puzzle* (2022).



Diane Hagerman, MA

Diane Hagerman joined REACH as Executive Director in April 2022, bringing her expertise in working with communities across the state to become healthier, more resilient, and more equitable. For 20 years prior, Diane served in several roles with New Jersey Health Initiatives, a statewide grant-making program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, most recently as Director. In her career at NJHI, Diane oversaw the program's communications functions while working directly with NJHI's grantees to ensure they realized the full potential of their projects.





Rutgers Equity Alliance
for Community Health

ABOUT REACH



The Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health is an initiative designed to improve the health and quality of life in three NJ cities by focusing on five key social determinants of health: education, employment, food access/security, housing, and population health. REACH leverages the expertise of community members and the research capabilities of Rutgers University faculty, staff, and students to create our Collaborative Learning Tables (CLTs), which are an essential component of the REACH initiative.

These CLTs support REACH's intentional shift in how Rutgers engages with and serves the state of New Jersey. By fostering meaningful relationships and collaborations, we aim to improve health outcomes through community-based health equity research, education, service, and programming. Members collaborate to share best practices and cultivate inclusive community-academic partnerships.

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