

October 2026



Research in Action

Updates from the **Arnold School of Public Health** Office of Research

A NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

One of the things I've enjoyed most this semester is visiting seminars and lectures across the Arnold School and learning more about your research. I love hearing the questions you're asking and seeing how engaged you are in each other's work. In one ASPH unit, panel discussions about AI trends and applications as well as the changing funding landscape have given me a lot to think about and reminded me how proud I am to be part of this school.

Hearing how you're turning challenges into opportunities and embracing new strategies is exciting. So is the passion you bring to your work and your commitment to keeping each other motivated. I've appreciated your openness in acknowledging that we don't always have the answers. Through PH GLIDE, I'm also learning how much common ground we discover when we take time to reflect and share our experiences. Our recent Pull Up a Chair fireside chat between Dean Joshi and Dean Sabo-

Attwood offered another welcome opportunity to connect and learn together. Dean Joshi's visit has kept my wheels turning about new ideas to explore. Please keep making time and space for such meaningful conversations among students, staff, and faculty members. They help us move forward together!

Congratulations on an incredible year so far of making a difference, submitting grant proposals, securing funding, winning awards, and exploring innovative ways to do our work. Behind each of these efforts are people who make them possible. This week I ask each of you to pause what you're doing and thank those who support your research, from developing proposals to keeping project teams moving forward.

Thank you for all you bring to our research community and for the ways you support one another. Wings Up, ASPH!

Daniela



UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM OUR OFFICE

So far in **FY2027**, the ASPH has...

98

Grant Awards

\$23.4 M

in Research Funding

122

Publications

Congratulations to the following ASPH faculty/staff who received new grant awards in the months of August and September!

August		September	
Adlof, Suzanne	Liu, Jihong	Baalousha, Mohammed	Nolan, Melissa
Anderson, David	Matchin, William	Byers, Megan	Olatosi, Bankole
Andrews, Christina	Natafqi, Nabil	Chen, Brian	Pate, Russ
Bornstein, Marta	Neils-Strunjas, Jean	Crouch, Elizabeth	Pellegrini, Christine
Clay-Gilmour, Alyssa	Nolan, Melissa	Fridriksson, Julius	Pope, Holly
Crouch, Elizabeth	Olatosi, Bankole	Friedman, Laura	Potter, Elizabeth
Decho, Alan	Ostermann, Jan	Ghattas, Hala	Rudisill, Anne
Fitton, Lisa	Pellegrini, Christine	Ghosal, Rahul	Sabo-Attwood, Tara
Fridriksson, Julius	Sabo-Attwood, Tara	Gillam, Pamela	Smithwick, Julie
Friedman, Daniela	Smithwick, Julie	Hebert, James	Thrasher, James
Frongillo, Edward	Stewart, Jill	Hirsch, Katie	Wilcox, Sara
Hardin, James	Thrasher, James	Hogan, Abigail	Wright, Brad
Hebert, James	Wang, Yuan	Hung, Peiyin	Yang, Chih-Hsiang (Jason)
Hung, Peiyin	Weaver, Glenn	Kanyangarara, Mufaro	Yeargin, Susan
Jilling, Andrea	Wilcox, Sara	Klusek, Jessica	Zhang, Jiajia
Kim, Yesil	Wright, Brad	Li, Xiaoming	
Langan, Laura	Yang, Chih-Hsiang (Jason)	Liese, Angela	
Liese, Angela	Zhang, Jiajia	Liu, Jihong	

- **Publications:** The ASPH had 40 new publications in [August](#) and 39 new publications in [September](#). This brings our total to 122 for FY2027 so far.
- **The ASPH [research budget template](#)** has been updated! Please make sure you are using the most recent version on your projects.

- **Graduate students and faculty:** apply for Office of the Vice President for Research internal funding programs!
 - The following competitive funding opportunities are now accepting applications:
 - Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity (**SPARC**): due by 5 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2026. [Learn more and apply.](#)
 - Advanced Support for Innovative Research Excellence (**ASPIRE**): due by 5 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2027. [Learn more and apply.](#)
 - **The Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) Phase III on Dietary Supplements and Inflammation (CDSI)** funded by NIH is pleased to announce an open call for Pilot Project grant proposals. The scientific mission of the CDSI is to investigate how compounds derived from botanicals and natural products can attenuate inflammation as well as to understand the mechanisms that trigger chronic inflammatory diseases. For more information, click [here](#).
 - **External Funding Opportunities**
 - The latest round of funding opportunities at the **American Cancer Society** are now open! All applications are due 12/1/2026. For more details, click [here](#).
 - The **American Heart Association** also has several funding deadlines coming up in December! Click [here](#) to explore the full list.
 - The **National Cancer Institute's** (NCI) Intramural Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (iCURE) program is accepting applications through November 30, 2026, for fellowships beginning in September 2027. For more details, click [here](#).
 - **NIH and the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP)** Research Security Subcommittee released an [FAQ document](#) on Co-authorship and Foreign Components. The FAQs are based on questions and answers provided during the session "Co-authorship and Foreign Components: A Discussion with NIH Extramural Leadership" held on September 15, 2026, as part of FDP's virtual meeting.
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The Arnold School Office of Research Presents the

Student Research Poster Contest



Do you have a research poster that you have presented in the past year?

Each month, an undergraduate and graduate poster will be selected and displayed outside of the Office of Research and featured in their bi-monthly newsletter. Selected students will also receive a certificate and a gift card. Open to all undergraduate and graduate students within the Arnold School of Public Health.



Link: <https://tinyurl.com/5aeb7ysu>

Or use the QR code to upload your submission!

Fall 2026 - Spring 2027



Undergraduate Winner: September 2026

JACOB DAGENHART - Public Health Major

Testing the Early Warning Potential of Wastewater-Based Epidemiology to Monitor West Nile Virus in South Carolina

View Jacob's poster [here](#).

Graduate Winner: September 2026

ISHAN SUTHAR - PhD Candidate in Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Causal Decision Modules in the EHR: Sequential Target Trials for Care in Acute Decompensated Heart Failure



View Ishan's poster [here](#).



Undergraduate Winner: October 2026

ZOE MAY - Exercise Science Major

Perceived Competence and Its Influence on Pain and Physical Activity

View Zoe's poster [here](#).

Graduate Winner: October 2026

MEGHAN SAVIDGE - PhD Candidate in Exercise Science

Differences in Elementary-Aged Children's Meal Timing Between School and Summer. 3-Year findings from the What's Up (Undermining Prevention) with Summer Observational Cohort Study.



View Meghan's poster [here](#).



OFFICE OF RESEARCH STAFF SPOTLIGHT: OLIVIA BURNITZ

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Olivia joined the Office of Research in January 2026, bringing a diverse background in healthcare and higher education. A two-time Arnold School alumna, she earned both her bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and her Doctor of Physical Therapy before spending three years working as a physical therapist in critical care. She later returned to USC, serving as a program lead for Galen Health Fellows in Student Affairs before transitioning to the Office of Research. In her current role, Olivia coordinates the office's *Voices in Leadership* initiative and its subcomponents, manages office communications, and helps track and share research activity across the Arnold School. She also supports student engagement through research mentor matching and undergraduate resume development. While her responsibilities vary from day to day, one thing remains consistent: plenty of coffee!

For Olivia, one of the most rewarding aspects of her role is discovering new ways to contribute to public health. "This role has given me a much greater respect for the amount of behind-the-scenes work that is required to make research happen. I love knowing that the work I do enables faculty to grow as researchers and leaders, and helps broaden the ASPH's impact locally and globally," she shared. Outside of work, Olivia enjoys spending time with her family, running, yoga, and playing Dungeons and Dragons.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT-FACULTY RESEARCH MATCHING SURVEY

Undergraduate students - Please fill out [this interest survey](#) if you would like to get involved with ASPH research initiatives. Once completed, the OoR will help you explore opportunities and connect to potential mentors.

- If you would like resume help prior to submitting your request, email Olivia Burnitz (rutledgo@mailbox.sc.edu) to set up an appointment.

Faculty members - Are you interested in being added or removed from this survey? Email Olivia Burnitz (rutledgo@mailbox.sc.edu) for assistance.

A HEDGEHOG STORY: THE GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Hedgehog Fun Fact: Hedgehogs have over 5000 quills that can be raised and lowered to respond to threatening situations.

The [Hedgehog Model](#) explains how great organizations succeed by focusing on the intersection of three things: **what they are deeply passionate about, what they can be the best in the world at, and what sustains and supports their work.** Recently, the OoR asked the team at the Global Health Initiative to reflect on their "why" using this model. Here's what they had to say.



THE GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Health challenges rarely follow geographic boundaries, and neither do the solutions. Co-directed by Drs Hala Ghattas, James Thrasher, Mufaro Kanyangarara, and Edward Frongillo, the **Global Health Initiative (GHI)** is helping connect researchers, students, and communities to address public health challenges that affect populations around the world.

What are we passionate about?

For the GHI, improving global health starts with recognizing that communities around the world often face similar challenges, even when their circumstances differ. GHI brings together faculty, students, and international partners to exchange ideas, pursue new opportunities, and build relationships that support meaningful research and practice.

Beyond individual projects, the group is passionate about expanding the Arnold School's involvement in global health research. By encouraging collaboration and helping more faculty and students engage in international research, the GHI aims to strengthen the ASPH's contributions to addressing health challenges both locally and globally.

What can we be the best at?

One of the GHI's greatest strengths is its ability to bring people together. Rather than approaching global health challenges through a single discipline or perspective, the initiative connects researchers, educators, students, and community partners whose combined expertise can lead to more effective solutions.

Those collaborations are built on more than shared research interests. The GHI emphasizes relationships shaped by mutual respect, trust, and an understanding of the communities involved. This approach helps ensure that research is relevant to local needs and that international partnerships benefit everyone involved.

The initiative also plays an important role in making global health opportunities accessible across the ASPH. Through seminars, panel discussions, visiting scholars, and the Certificate of Graduate Study in Global Health, the GHI creates opportunities for students and faculty to engage with emerging issues and learn from experts working around the world.

The reach of this work is already substantial. **GHI's 64 faculty affiliates collaborate with organizations in 28 countries, with 44 projects attracting significant research funding.** These connections provide a strong foundation for expanding international partnerships and engaging more members of the ASPH community in global health research.

What sustains and supports our research?

Relationships are the foundation of the GHI's success. Longstanding collaborations with international institutions, community organizations, and global agencies allow researchers to combine resources and expertise while responding to the needs of the populations they serve.

These partnerships take many forms. In Lebanon, collaboration with the American University of Beirut has supported efforts to address health challenges intensified by economic instability and conflict. Projects have examined food insecurity, chronic disease, refugee health, and children's access to healthy foods, while also contributing to improvements in health data systems, humanitarian assistance, and community health programs.

In Mexico, more than two decades of collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health have contributed to research on tobacco control and nutrition policy. These efforts have included evaluating international tobacco reduction strategies and examining Mexico's front-of-package food warning labels, helping build evidence that can inform public health policy.

GHI's broader network also includes connections with organizations such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the International Food Policy Research Institute. Through these relationships, Arnold School faculty, staff, and students have opportunities to contribute to international research, evaluate public health strategies, and support programs that address community needs.

If captured in a single sentence, the group's Hedgehog Concept is:

The Global Health Initiative advances the health of vulnerable populations by building trusted, reciprocal partnerships that unite diverse expertise to develop contextually relevant solutions with strong potential for global impact.



Photo supplied by the GHI team - A woman irrigates crops in Western Kenya as part of *Shamba Maisha* ('Farm Life' in Kiswahili), an agricultural livelihood intervention designed to improve food security, health, and nutrition in HIV-affected communities through sustainable farming practices and economic empowerment.

ASPH SPOTLIGHTS:



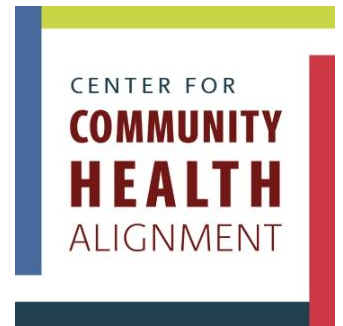
NABIL NATAFGI

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award

Dr. Nabil Natafghi was recently selected as a Fulbright Scholar to travel to the United Arab Emirates for a special project examining changes in chronic disease, healthcare utilization, financial protection, and patient experience. He will also establish the Population Engagement for Action, Research, and Learning (PEARL) studio at the University of Sharjah. To read more about this award and Dr. Natafghi's project, check out the [ASPH feature story](#). Congratulations, Dr. Natafghi!

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH ALIGNMENT (CCHA)

The CCHA recently published an article in the **American Journal of Public Health** entitled [*A Community Health Worker-Led Model of Training and Technical Assistance to Support National Community Health Worker Program Implementation for COVID-19 Response: United States, 2021–2025*](#). Four CCHA team members are included on the publication, including lead author Lisa Renee Holderby Fox. Amazing news, CCHA!



UPCOMING EVENTS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MCH Catalyst Luncheon

October 30, 2:30-3:30 PM

DISC 259 (click [here](#) for full details and to RSVP)

OFFICE OF RESEARCH MEETINGS

Brewing Success - Business/Grant/HR Manager Breakfast

December 11, 9:00-10:00 AM

DISC 503 (Office of Research Suite)

Chew on This - Business/Grant/HR Manager Brown Bag Lunch and Learn

November 9, 1:15-2:30 PM

PHRC 319

Research Advisory Council Meeting

December 17, 1-2:30 PM, DISC 259 (with center directors)

LEWIS-BURKE ASSOCIATES

Lewis-Burke Associates Federal Grant Update Calls for ASPH Faculty and Grants Staff

[December 7](#) from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM, [March 24](#) from 9:30-10:30 AM, [June 23](#) from 9:30-10:30 AM

Click date for meeting link.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FROM UNIVERSITY OFFICES

Additional updates, reminders, and resources you won't want to miss.

UPDATES & REMINDERS

- The **ASPH OoR** has updated the [budget template](#) to reflect increased insurance rates. Make sure you use the new version when you create a project budget.
- The **boilerplate** document for the ASPH can be found [here](#).
- The ASPH has a **BioRender subscription** available for use! To be added to the BioRender subscription, please contact Ally Hucek (fhucek@email.sc.edu).

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- **The VPR office** has created resources to help with the new requirements for the NIH Common Forms. Check out the [step-by-step guide](#) for linking your ORCID iD with eRA Commons, My NCBI, and SciNcv. There are also [on-demand videos](#) available to help walk you through the steps outlined in the guide.
- **Research and Grant Development Services** has guidance available on how to apply for [limited submissions](#). Limited submission opportunities are often relayed in [RESDEV emails](#) from the VPR's office.
- **The VPR's Research and Training Education Services** office provides comprehensive resources on USC grant processes. There is an especially useful [video on hiring RGP's](#) available for your reference.
- **The University Libraries'** [GitHub page](#) contains a repository of notebooks, code, and tutorials that can help researchers or students get acquainted with new tools. The notebooks support many dimensions of the research process including data analysis, visualization, and machine learning.
- **USC Libraries** has launched an AI-focused newsletter for the USC community. [AI updates for USC researchers](#) is a concise digest of recent developments in AI, curated by [Heather Heckman](#). Subscribe (click the Subscribe button in the upper right of the page) to receive it directly in your inbox.
- **USC Libraries** now offers access to **Candid Search** (formerly called Foundation Directory) an enhanced fundraising and grant platform that builds upon the capabilities of Foundation Directory. This platform offers more comprehensive resources for planning, research, and

implementation. USC Columbia-affiliated users can access [Candid Search](#) directly or through the Libraries' [database collection](#).



*Dr. Friedman, Dean Ashish Joshi, and Dean Sabo-Atwood at the inaugural **Pull Up A Chair** event.*



The ASPH Office of Research Team - coming to a faculty meeting near you!

Do you have an item you'd like featured in the next edition of *Research in Action*? Fill out [this form](#) to get connected with our team!



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