Message from the Chair

Dear HPEB, Welcome and Welcome Back! I wish you a wonderful year ahead and it is a privilege and joy to share it with you. When you walk across the stage for graduation in two to four short years from now, you will not only leave here with greater research and practice experience and skills, but you will have made meaningful friendships and professional relationships. I am confident you are going to take the world by storm.

I’ve been thinking a lot about comeback stories. We often think of these when it comes to athletes and celebrities returning to the spotlight and making national or international news due to some incredible accomplishment after being on hiatus for a while. I’d like us to think about these comeback stories at the local level. We may not be on ESPN, but we also experience these types of comebacks that deserve a high five and a medal. It’s tough to be on all the time. We may have great success writing a paper for one class and feel stuck on a deliverable for another. We may be batting a thousand getting manuscripts accepted for publication one year and then we may need to resubmit a paper several times the next year before finding it a home. That letter of intent we’ve drafted may not get any traction with one funding agency and then we reframe it slightly and … we get asked to submit the full proposal. The most senior researchers get rejections and still need to pick themselves up and try again using strategies developed over time – the ones that work for them. The process definitely keeps it interesting, and it is educational. Everybody does academia a little bit differently and that is absolutely okay!

There is one sports-related story that has drawn me in over the past year. I wouldn’t necessarily call it a comeback story since this athlete has been the G.O.A.T. (greatest of all time). I am referring to Simone Biles, champion gymnast extraordinaire. After withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympics to focus on her mental health, she returned to the sport recently to win her eighth U.S. gymnastics all-around title. There was a beautiful opinion piece written about Simone’s struggles and triumph and how she changed the narrative about what it means to be a champion. I encourage you to read the complete article. For now, I will share some (well, many) relevant sections: “Beyond gymnastics, Biles offers us something else to embrace: the lesson that we have the power to change restrictive narratives that do not serve us. Expectations about ‘how things are supposed to go’ in our careers can help us, but they can also limit us.

Biles insisted on leaving her sport to take care of herself before coming back on her own terms — ignoring the rules about how things should be done. In the process, she honored her own individuality and her own humanity. That’s been a game-changer for her personally and for gymnastics. It’s been a great lesson for those of us outside the sport as well. … Putting it in her own words: ‘We have to protect our minds and our bodies and not just go out and do what the world wants us to do … We are not just athletes, we’re people at the end of the day, and sometimes you just have to step back’ … This moment showed us what it looks like to trust others and give them the support they deserve. It is how we change the narrative: When someone tells us what they need, we should trust them.”

I anticipate major wins, setbacks, and comeback moments for all of us over the next year and throughout our careers. Supporting each other through these events - as we always do in HPEB – makes us the champions … always.

Have a beautiful year, HPEB.
– Daniela Friedman
Congratulations are in Order!

Congratulations to Dr. Brie Turner-McGrievy who received the award for Leadership in Public Health and Health Disparities Research at the Spring 2023 Clyburn Health Equity Lecture.

Dr. Kara Davis, HPEB alum, is starting a new position at USC Upstate as Assistant Professor of Community Health & Community Health Coordinator in the Department of Human Performance and Health within the College of Education, Human Performance, and Health.

Congratulations to Erin Looney, HPEB masters student, who was recipient of the New Investigator Poster award at the Spring 2023 Clyburn Health Equity Lecture.

Ally Hucek, third-year HPEB doctoral student, was selected to represent the Arnold School of Public Health as a This is Public Health Ambassador. This role is a one-year term through the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health. She will serve alongside 82 other graduate ambassadors who will represent public health programs from across the country.

Kimanh Le, HPEB doctoral student, completed the USC Center for Teaching Excellence certificate in Fostering Proactive Learning Environments. She also completed the 2023 Close Family Emerging Leaders Program.

The South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health in partnership with the South Carolina Department on Aging released a new task force report: Addressing Social Isolation in Older Adults as a Determinant of Health — which includes state-specific recommendations to reduce social isolation among older adults. The task force has recommended the development of a new coalition, which will be based in the Arnold School’s Office for the Study of Aging. Co-director Megan Byers in HPEB is a member of the task force and will lead efforts for development of the coalition.

Dr. Edward Frongillo and Dr. Alex McClain (EPID/BIOS) were recognized for their role in developing analytic methods used for estimating overweight and stunting trends among children around the world in the 2023 edition of the Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates released by UNICEF, WHO, and World Bank Group. LINK

Keren Herran, HPEB doctoral student, earned the USC Center for Teaching Excellence Certificate on Integrative and Experiential Learning and she was selected for the role of Presidential Fellows Outreach Liaison as part of The Graduate School’s Presidential Fellowship program.
HPEB in the News!

Drs. Ellen Stowe and Akeen Hamilton, HPEB alum, have been selected as 2023 Presidential Management Fellows. [LINK](#)

Brooks Yelton, HPEB research associate, was selected to participate in a Health and Human Services Behavioral Health Policy Summer Internship through the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) program.

Catherine Christian, HPEB masters student in the professional online program, was featured as part of the Arnold School's *I Am Public Health* series. [LINK](#)

Ashley Thurber and Yvonne (Maggie) Massey, HPEB masters students, are recipients of the 2023-24 Arnold School of Public Health Vernberg Fellowship. The Vernberg Fellowship is named for Dr. Winona Vernberg, who was instrumental in establishing the School of Public Health at USC and served as its dean until 1996.

Atefeh Aghaei, HPEB doctoral student, received an Olga I. Ogoussan Doctoral Research Award in Summer 2023.

Dr. Minji Kim was featured on ABC Columbia News for her expertise on the dangers of vaping advertisements. [LINK](#) Dr. Kim’s research on marketing used by e-cigarette manufacturers to target youth was also featured on the Arnold School website. [LINK](#)

Dr. Rachel Davis was selected to be a standing member of the NIH Health Promotion in Communities (HPC) Study Section (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2027).

Dr. Jennifer Fillo is the new co-chair of the Society of Behavioral Medicine’s Military and Veterans’ Health Special Interest Group. More information about this special interest group can be found at this [LINK](#).

Jaron King, HPEB doctoral student, has started a new position at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control as the Director of Research & Planning in the Cancer Division.

Dr. Tracey Thomas, HPEB alum, has accepted a new position as Research Data Analyst for Oregon Health & Science University’s Oregon Rural Practice-Based Research Network.

Dr. Morgan Hughey, HPEB alum and faculty member at the College of Charleston, was promoted with tenure to associate professor. She was also the recipient of the William V. Moore Distinguished Teacher-Scholar Award. [LINK](#)

Dr. Frances Ashes-Goins’s Letter to the Editor on Social Security benefits and the 88th anniversary of the program was published in The State newspaper on August 13, 2023.
Mike Leonard, Certificate of Graduate Study in Aging student and research associate in the College of Social Work (COSW), and Dr. Shaun Owens, HPEB alum and COSW associate professor, were featured on the USC website for their Age Ready Series in partnership with the Richland Library that is helping older adults maintain independent living. [LINK]

**Funding News**

Tremaine Dunbar, HPEB doctoral student (Mentor Dr. Hala Ghattas), was selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to be a Health Policy Research Scholar. Designed for doctoral students from historically marginalized backgrounds and populations underrepresented in specific disciplines, the Health Policy Research Scholars program helps students from all fields apply their work to policies that advance equity and health while building a diverse network of leaders who reflect our changing national demographics. As a member of the program’s newest cohort, Tremaine will focus his scholar grant on understanding the relationship between religion/spirituality and mental health disparities among African-American men.

Rochelle Altman and Camryn Garrett, HPEB doctoral students, received a Graduate Teaching Assistant -Teaching Resource Development Grant from the Center for Teaching Excellence to support the development of resources focused on enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for undergraduate student learning at USC. [LINK]

Dr. Emily Mann received a grant from the National Science Foundation to examine the Biomedicalization of Advanced Maternal Age.

Dr. Minji Kim received an ASPIRE grant from the USC Office of the Vice President for Research for a project focused on validating efficient and effective anti-smoking message evaluation measurement using volumetric choice experiment (VCE).

Dr. Jennifer Fillo received an ASPIRE grant from the USC Office of the Vice President for Research to examine intersecting risk factors for alcohol misuse among student service members and veterans.

Dr. Xiaoming Li and team received an R56 grant from the NIH/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for work that will involve visualizing and predicting new and late HIV diagnosis in South Carolina using big data.

Carrie Draper, HPEB senior research associate, received a Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program’s Produce Prescription Grant (GusNIP PPG) program, funded by the South Carolina Hospital Association Foundation/USDA.

Drs. Xiaoming Li, Jiajia Zhang (EPID/BIOS), and Bankole Olatosi (HSPM) and team have secured an R25 grant from the NIH/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases which will fund a new Data Analytics Emerging Scholar Program for Underrepresented Minority Students. [LINK]

Dr. Shan Qiao and colleagues have secured an R01 grant from the NIH/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to study disruptions to HIV-related care during the COVID-19 pandemic. [LINK]
Dissertation and Practice Experience Presentations

Congratulations to the following students who defended their dissertations:

Kara Davis, “Exploration of the association between obesogenic environments and childhood overweight/obesity rates in rural counties in the United States,” June 27, 2023


Congratulations to the following students who defended their dissertation proposals:

Emily Hackworth, “Internalizing mental health symptoms and tobacco and nicotine use patterns among adolescents in Canada, England, and the USA over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic”, July 24, 2023

Deeksha Gupta, “Impact of social determinants of health interventions on diabetes-related health outcomes and health service use,” June 16, 2023

Gabriela Armendariz, “Investigating narratives as a tool to communicate childhood obesity prevention messages with Mexican mothers living in the United States,” June 2, 2023

Publications & Presentations


Rampalli KK, Blake CB, Frongillo EA, Montoya J. Why understanding food choice is critical to transform food systems for human and planetary health. BMJ Global Health 2023; https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-010876


DISCOVER USC 2023 AWARDEES (undergraduate and graduate student winners): Check out highlights from Discover USC 2023 - DISCOVER USC, Sponsored by the Office of Research | University of South Carolina

JAMES E CLYBURN HEALTH EQUITY LECTURE, May 2, 2023 James E. Clyburn Health Equity Lecture - Arnold School of Public Health | University of South Carolina

Poster Session - Reproductive Health Disparities Post Roe v Wade: Impact of Criminalizing Abortion in South Carolina [Dr. Deborah Billings, HPEB; Dr. Natalia Deeb-Sossa, University of California at Davis; Muskaan Makkar, Public Health (major), Economics (minor) – Sophomore; Elliott Catoe-Griffis, Public Health (major), Interdisciplinary Studies (major) – Freshman]
Photo Gallery

Dr. Guimaraes and students in Costa Rica for the May 2023 Education Abroad Program
We love sharing Arnold School hooding photos all year round! These are from May 2023.

(How does Dr. Friedman end up in all of the photos?)
Youngest members of the HPEB family:

Malia (born July 2023, daughter of Kayla Adams, MPH student)

Bianca (born August 2023, daughter of Dr. Caroline Bergeron, PhD alum)
Incredible HPEB Representation at the American Society for Nutrition Annual Scientific Meeting

July 2023
Frances Ashe-Goins, PhD (hon), MPH, RN, FAAN, HPEB Affiliate, recognized as Public Health Expert by HEROES Inc.
Deeksha Gupta, PhD candidate, presenting research entitled, *Electronic medical records-based screening for social determinants of health in primary care practices: Lessons from early implementation in a large health system* at the 2023 AcademyHealth Conference. This study was a collaborative effort with HPEB faculty members (Dr. Rudisill and Dr. Macauda), Arnold School of Public Health, USC School of Medicine-Greenville, and Prisma Health.

Celebrating Dr. Leila Larson’s growing family!
HPEB knows how to have fun!

Please send submissions for *News and Kudos* to Pam Metz so that we can share and celebrate your work!

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Soon-to-be HPEB graduates and alumni, please continue to keep in touch with us! Please also ensure your contact information is current with the Arnold School by updating your information here: [Link](#)