



Arnold School of Public Health

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior NEWS AND KUDOS ~ April 2025



Message from the Chair

Dear HPEB, Congratulations to all of our Graduates! We look forward to celebrating you at the upcoming hooding ceremony! And congratulations to everyone on your achievements featured in this newsletter! Thank you for the focus, energy, and creativity you brought to your work this past year. Through your collaborative spirit, you are not only advancing public health but also strengthening the vibrant community that defines our department.

As I prepare to step out of the chair role later this summer, I feel a pot pourri of emotions: immense gratitude, great pride, an overwhelming sense of nostalgia, and disbelief at how quickly (most of) the time has flown by. Serving in this role has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my career because of you. Your commitment to each other and to our mission is what makes this place so extraordinary. It's the kind of place that pulls you in. There are days I find myself driving to the office even when I've meant to head somewhere else! As I've shared recently with some dear colleagues – let's keep striving to build the kind of environment we'd all want to walk into on our worst day.

What I'll carry with me always is how this department shows up for each other - for our students, colleagues, and the communities we serve. We are also deeply grateful for our partners whose collaborations on health promotion research, education, and practice not only bolsters our work but enriches us through shared insights and mutual growth. Those partnerships remind us that important progress happens when we take the time to listen and learn from one another.

While change is bittersweet, I feel tremendous excitement and hope for what lies ahead for this department. HPEB is filled to the brim with momentum, brilliance, kindness, and possibility. Thank you for trusting me in my role, for living out our shared collaborative vision each day, and for encouraging me to (try to) appreciate squirrels. HPEB will always be my favorite department. Every other department is a close second. *With love and appreciation, Daniela*

Congratulations!

Dr. Deeksha Gupta is recipient of the 2025 Christopher Peter Aluah Doctoral Student of the Year Award.

Ashley Thurber is recipient of the 2025 HPEB Masters Student of the Year Award.

Mallory Gedeon is recipient of HPEB's 2025 Undergraduate Student Researcher Award.

Abdul-Hanan Saani Inusah, HPEB doctoral student, received the Spring 2025 Butterfoss Community-Based Research Endowed Fellowship.

Bria Singleton, HPEB MPH student, received the Spring 2025 Ann Cassady Endowed Fellowship.

Halide Aydin, HPEB doctoral student, received four post-doctoral offers and will be joining Dr. Martin Binks' research team at George Mason University.

Instructor Kersten Cope received a 2024-2025 Two Thumbs Up Recognition from the Student Disability Resource Center for her meaningful work in providing access for and serving students with disabilities.

Carrie Draper, senior research associate, will be attending the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences this fall for her PhD in Translational Health Sciences.

Dr. Jim Thrasher has been named an Academic Analytics Top Scholar based on distinction in scholarship compared to R1 peers. Dr. Thrasher is also the inaugural recipient of the Excellence in Scientific Leadership and Collaboration Award from the Mexican National Institute of Public Health. [LINK](#)

Dr. Leila Larson was featured on an episode of *The Blood Project* podcast discussing iron deficiency anemia and pica. [LINK](#)

Dr. Jennifer Mandelbaum, HPEB alum, was selected as the Society of Behavioral Medicine's 2025 Health Policy Advocacy Award recipient.

Marjan-E-Khadijah Akbar Nathani, undergraduate public health student in Dr. Amanda Rebar's research lab, was selected to participate in the 2025 Summer Institute of the R25 Big Data Analytics Emerging Scholar Program.

Dr. Atena Pasha, HPEB postdoctoral fellow, is the recipient of a full scholarship from the American Psychiatric Association to attend the 2025 annual meeting in Los Angeles in May. She will present two in-person posters and provide evaluation and feedback on mHealth and AI utilization in healthcare sessions. Dr. Pasha also received the South Carolina Women in Higher Education Conference Scholarship for her dedication and service to higher education.

HPEB in the News

Dr. Edward Frongillo was quoted in a *Science* report regarding a commentary published in *Nature* discussing the consequences of dismantling USAID. The report highlighted the USAID Integrated Nutrition project in Nepal for which Dr. Frongillo led an impact evaluation and three HPEB doctoral students contributed research. [LINK](#) Dr. Frongillo's [ScholarGPS](#) research impact is ranked at #1 in lifetime citations in Food Security and #9 in Nutrition in the last 5 years globally.

Dr. Jennifer Mandelbaum, Dr. Venice Haynes, and Doug Taylor, HPEB alum, were featured on the Arnold School website as a part of the *50 Careers for 50 Years* initiative. [LINK](#)

Dr. Amanda Rebar was featured on the Arnold School website in December for her study in the *Journal of Sleep Research* and its connection to New Year's resolutions. [LINK](#)

Dr. Brie Turner-McGrievy was recognized on the Arnold School website for being the 2025 recipient of the USC Educational Foundation Research Award for Health Sciences. [LINK](#)

Dr. Joel Williams, HPEB alum, was featured in the Clemson News for his recent appointment to Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for the College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences. [LINK](#)

Dissertation and Practice Experience Presentations

Congratulations to the following students who defended their final dissertations:

Fahmida Akter, *Perinatal maternal attachment in Bangladesh: Understanding determinants and impacts of enhanced nutrition and cash transfers*

Abdullah Khan, *From pregnancy to postpartum: A longitudinal analysis of maternal depressive symptoms and hemoglobin concentration in Uttar Pradesh, India*

Congratulations to the following students who defended their dissertation proposals:

Tremaine Dunbar, *Lived experience of homeless black men at risk of poor mental health in Columbia, SC: Perspectives of homeless black men and social service providers*

Kim Le, *Mission possible: A mixed-methods study for improving male recruitment into digital physical activity promotion research using social media advertisements*

Congratulations to the following students who presented their applied practice experiences:

Kimberley Elliott, *Service assessment for special population: Using satisfaction surveys to identify strengths and gaps in program*

Taliah Ferguson, *A fact forward intern experience: Exploring faith based organizations and their role in adolescent reproductive health*

Lirinda Hajdini, *Mobilizing the next generation: Increasing blood donations in college students through the Red Cross*

Beatrice Hernandez-Morales, *Bridging communities and care: Tailoring public health tools to empower Latine youth and survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking*

Morgan Joly, *Expanding reproductive educational resources for South Carolinian educators*

Cate Jones, *Evaluating the impact of childcare scholarships on parental outcomes: A mixed-methods study with South Carolina First Steps families*

Winnie Ni, *Empowerment: Qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses for reproductive health promotion and education among local communities*

Chelsea Seawright, *Fostering effective visitation processes and cultural competency in the intensive care unit at Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital*

Ashley Thurber, *A needs assessment of FoodShare SC*

Louis Yu, *Data analysis of dire being used to assess opioid tolerance among Prisma physicians*

Congratulations to the following students who defended their MPH thesis:

Ashley Thurber, *Experiences of adolescent and young mothers through pregnancy and motherhood, and the influence of stressors and support*

Student Funding News

Julia Budiongan, HPEB doctoral student, received a SPARC grant to help fund her dissertation, "Between sips and sheets: Relations between college students' sex-related alcohol expectancies and risk behavior."

Adebusola Ogunnaike, HPEB doctoral student, received SPARC funding for her project, "A qualitative study among traditional and nontraditional stakeholders to advance policies that reduce tobacco farming in Zambia"

Publications & Presentations

Adams, S.A., Workman, L., Sakhuja, M., Yelton, B., Wickersham, K.E., Fairman, C., Eberth, J., Heiney, S., Hebert, J.R., King, J.R., Hucek, F.A., Schaurer, L., & Friedman, D.B. (2025). Reflecting on partnerships established and sustained over four cycles of a federally funded cancer prevention and control research program: Lessons learned for community-academic networks. *Frontiers in Public Health (Public Health Education and Promotion)*, 12, 1384588.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1384588>.

Anderson, M.E., McGowan, J., Escobar-DeMarco, J., Bose, S., Frongillo, E.A., & Ferguson, L. (2024). Advocating for paid maternity leave and workplace lactation policy reform and implementation: Lessons learned from Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines and Vietnam. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, e13784. <http://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13784>

Austin, M.E., Ingram, L.A., McCollum, Q., Levkoff, S.E., & Friedman, D.B. (2024). A dual approach to addressing gaps in scholar diversity in aging research. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2024.2343876>

Dowda, M., Frongillo, E.A., Saunders, R.P., McLain, A.C., Cordan, K., & Pate, R.R. (2024). Early life, environment, and demographic factors associated with toddlers' objectively measured sedentary behavior between 18 and 36 months. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 42(24), 2361-2367.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2024.2430919>

Friedman, D.B., Ek, C., Neils-Strunjas, J., Tanner, A., Hebert, J.R., Donelle, L., Levkoff, S.E., Hucek, F.A., Yelton, B., & Porter, D.E. (2025). "Courtesy, respect, and follow through": A mixed methods evaluation of faculty members' experiences, needs, and approaches to research collaborations.

Frontiers in Education (Higher Education), 9, 1493313. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1493313>

Frongillo, E.A., Escobar-DeMarco, J., & Bose, S. (2025). Assessment of four essential features of the Alive & Thrive initiative to improve maternal, infant, young child, and adolescent nutrition. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, e13800. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13800>

Gresh, A., Van Damme, A., Billings, D.L., Rising, S.S., Ibrahim, S., Ajibola, A., Chirwa, E., Don-Aki, J., Donoho, N., Hindori, M., Jiddawi, N., Kanebi, E., Kapito, E., Kay, C., Kinra, T., Molliqaj, V., Oyeledun, B., Rijnders, M.E.B., Wiseman, O., ... Patil, C.L. (2025). Integrating postnatal care into the redesign of group care beyond birth. *Arch Public Health*, 83(34). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-025-01508-4>

Hackworth, E.E., Petillo, S.L., Sun, Y., Vidaña-Pérez, D., Moodie, C., Niederdeppe, J., Hammond, D., & Thrasher, J.F. (2024). Pre-post implementation policy support for warnings on cigarette filters in Canada among adults who smoke cigarettes. *Tobacco Control*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tc-2024-059007>

Horn, A., Orgill, M., Billings, D. L., Slemming, W., Van Damme, A., Crone, M., Gwele, M., Leister, N., Hindori-Mohangoo, A.D., Beeckman, K., Bradley, S., Hindori, M.P., Abanga, J., Ryan, J., Bucinca, H., & McCourt, C. (2025). Belonging: A meta-theme analysis of women's community-making in group antenatal and postnatal care. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1506956.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1506956>

Isanovic, S., Sanoe, M., Wooten, S., Frongillo, E.A., Yousafzai, A.K., Blake, C.E., Kanyangarara, M., Swan, M., Rodger, N., Murray, M., & Larson, L.M. (2024). Integrated child nutrition, parenting, and health intervention in rural Liberia: A mixed-methods feasibility study. *PLOS One*, *19*(12), e0311486. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0311486>

Jahanaray, M., & Pasha, A. (2025, April). *Comparison of logistic regression and IRT residuals in differential item functioning of dichotomous items* [Oral presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Denver, CO, United States.

Jahanaray, M., & Pasha, A. (Upcoming 2025, May 17–21). *Mood, language, and the brain: A neurocognitive journey of bipolar disorder in language learning through ERP* [Poster presentation]. American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting (APA) 2025 Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, United States.

Jahanaray, M., & Pasha, A. (Upcoming 2025, August 7–9). *Burnout and psychological distress in US graduate students: A meta-analysis approach* [Poster presentation]. 2025 American Psychological Association (APA) Annual Convention, Division 09 - Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), Denver, CO, United States.

Jahanaray, M., & Pasha, A. (Upcoming 2025, August 7–9). *Validating a short form of BDI-II using exploratory graph analysis: A network analysis* [Poster presentation]. 2025 American Psychological Association (APA) Annual Convention, Division 05 - Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, Denver, CO, United States.

Keseko, E.A., Bell, A., & Turner-McGrievy, G.M. (2025). Behavioral and dietary strategies for weight loss and weight loss maintenance among Black/African American adults and the potential role of media: A narrative review. *Nutrients*, *17*, 617. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu17040617>

Li, K., Ghosal, R., Zhang, D., Li, Y., Lohman, M. C., Brown, M. J., Merchant, A. T., Yang, C. H., Neils-Strunjas, J., Friedman, D. B., & Wei, J. (2025). The associations of sensory impairment with 10-year risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease: The Health and Retirement Study, 2010-2020. *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology*, *38*(2), 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08919887241275042>

Lee, J., West, D., Pellegrini, C., Wei, J., Wilcox, S., Neils-Strunjas, J., Rudisill, C., Friedman, D.B., Marquez, D., Dzwierzynski, J., Balls-Berry, J., Gajadhar, R., & Yang, C-H. (2025). Walking interventions and cognitive health in older adults: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08901171251328858>

Leedom, V.O., Rasmussen, S.A., Kirby, R., Scott, G.I., Porter, D.E., & Friedman, D.B. (In press). Barriers to preventive care and medical screenings among children with Down syndrome in South Carolina as described by parents. *Families, Systems, & Health*.

Leroy, J.L., Angel, M., & Frongillo, E.A. (2025). Adoption or placement in foster care and catch-up in linear growth and development: A meta-analysis of individual participant data. *Advances in Nutrition*, *100395*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.advnut.2025.100395>

Leroy, J.L., Brander, R.L., Frongillo, E.A., Larson, L.M., Ruel, M.T., & Avula, R. (2025). Can growth monitoring and promotion accurately diagnose or screen for inadequate growth of individual

children? A critical review of the epidemiological foundations. *Advances in Nutrition*, 16(3), 100367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.advnut.2025.100367>

Pasha, A., Jahanaray, M., Esu, I., Li, X., & Qiao, S. (Upcoming 2025, May). *Body image and its associated factors among people living with HIV: A comprehensive systematic review and implications for integrated care* [Oral presentation]. AIDS Impact International Conference, Casablanca, Morocco.

Pasha, A., & Jahanaray, M. (Upcoming 2025, May 17–21). *Body image, personality, and emotion regulation in people with rheumatoid arthritis: A structural equation modeling approach* [Poster presentation]. American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting (APA) 2025 Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, United States.

Pasha, A., Tehrani, S.S.P., Alipour, A., Afrooz, G., & Lavasani, M. G. (2025). Structural model of body image and personality traits: The mediating role of emotion regulation in rheumatoid arthritis. In *Annales Médico-psychologiques, revue psychiatrique*. Elsevier Masson. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amp.2024.12.006>

Sanghvi, T.G., & Frongillo, E.A. (2025). Similarities in socioeconomic disparities and inequalities in women's nutritional status and health care in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, and Nigeria. *Global Health Action*, 17(1), 2439165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2024.2439165>

Sanghvi, T.G., Homan, R., Nguyen, T., Mahmud, Z., Nersesyan, M., Preware, P., Frongillo, E.A., & Matheson, R. (2025). Expenditures on strengthening large scale breastfeeding counseling programs in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Vietnam. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, e13811. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13811>

Weiser, S.D., Sheira, L.A., Weke, E., Zakaras, J.M., Wekesa, P., Frongillo, E.A., Burger, R.L., Mocello, A.R., Thirumurthy, H., Dworkin, S.L., Tsai, A.C., Kahn, J.G., Butler, L.M., Bukusi, E.A., & Cohen, C.R. (2024). An agricultural livelihood intervention is associated with reduced HIV stigma among people with HIV. *AIDS*, 38(10), 1553-1559. <https://doi.org/10.1097/QAD.0000000000003928>

Wende, M., Lohman, M.C., Friedman, D.B., McLain, A.C., Whitsel, E., Crandall, C.J., Cauley, J.A., Allison, M., Shadyab, A.H., Sealy-Jefferson, S., Garcia, L., Follis, S., Cannell, B., & Kaczynski, A.T. (In press). How neighborhood socioeconomic status, green space, and walkability are associated with risk for fracture among postmenopausal women: The Women's Health Initiative. *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research Plus (JBMR Plus)*.

Zosel, K.L., Leal, D.F., Westrick, R.B., Turner-McGrievy, G., Yang, C.-H., Daigle, K.K., & Monroe, C.M. (In press). *Patterning of musculoskeletal injuries in the U.S. Army: A sociocentric social network analysis*. *Military Medicine*.

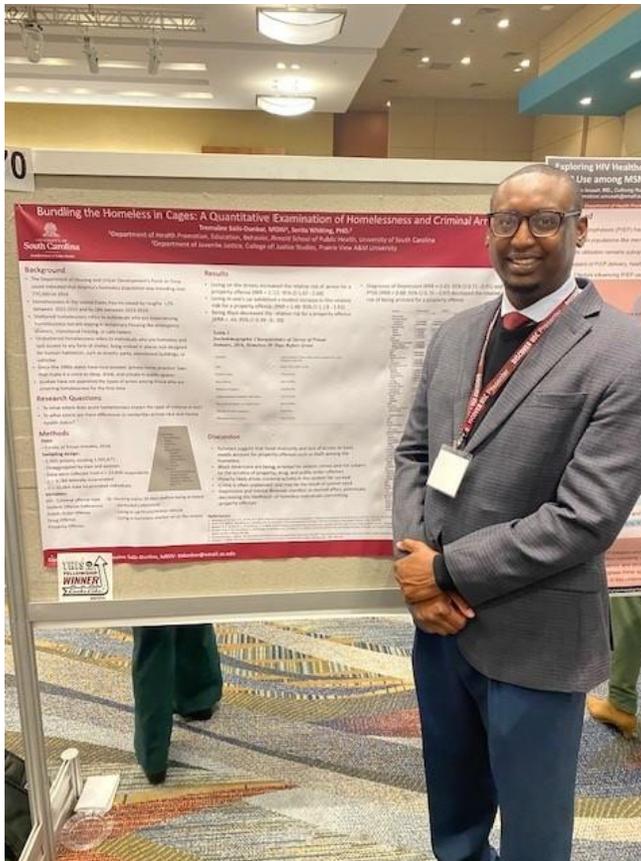
HPEB Photo Gallery

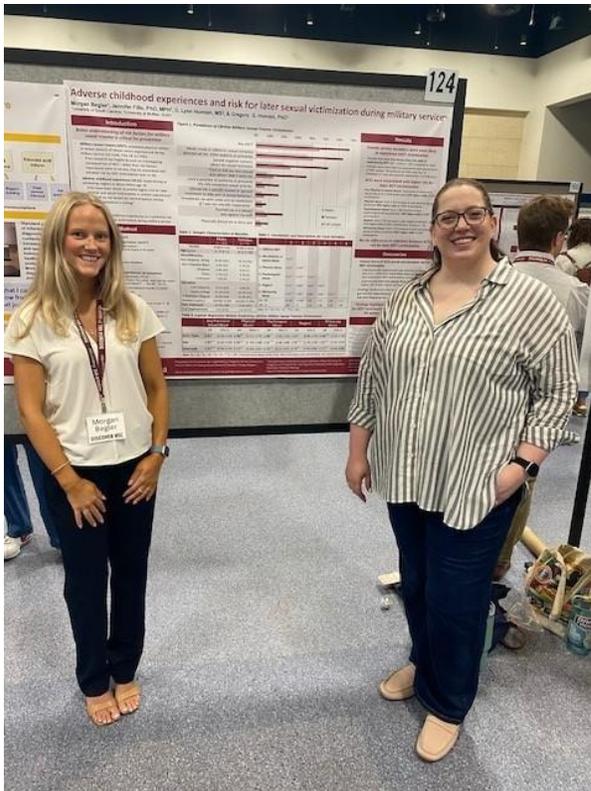
Celebrating Awards, Collaborations, Promotions, & Joy

(and look closely, you may see squirrels & a cat)



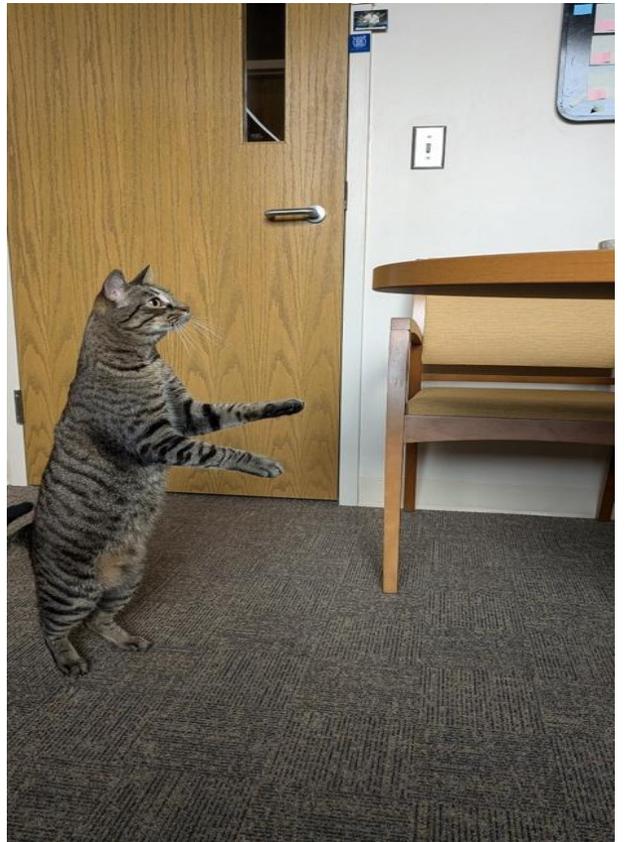












**Please send submissions for *News and Kudos* to Pam Metz so that
we can share and celebrate your work!**

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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](#)

Who to Contact in HPEB:

[Daniela Friedman, PhD](#) – Department Chair

[Andy Kaczynski, PhD](#) – Interim Associate Chair

[Christine Blake, PhD](#) – Doctoral Graduate Director

[Edena Guimaraes, PhD](#) – MPH Program Director

[Casey Giraudy, EdD](#) – Academic Programs Coordinator

[Pam Metz](#) – Office Manager

[Wendy Clemmer](#) – Business Manager

[Bria Singleton](#) – Student Office Associate