

2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT



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WELCOME



Dear Colleagues:

I'm so happy to share with you the second Annual Report of the Vanderbilt Center for Research on Inequality and Health. As you know, we are part of Provost C. Cybele Raver's visionary Discovery Vanderbilt initiative which aims to unite and amplify cross-cutting scholarship on society's major issues, including inequality and health. Ours is a novel collaboration between Vanderbilt's College of Arts and Science and School of Nursing.

If the theme of last year's report was the immense possibility and promise of our new endeavor, I hope the theme of this year's report is realized progress and continued momentum amidst some unexpected challenges. As you will see in the following pages, we grew in so many important ways: new faculty and trainee affiliates, a new internal Advisory Board, new major externally funded awards, a new conference sponsorship, and new research shared with us by world leading experts. In addition to all of this new growth, we also continued some fun and productive traditions, including our social outing and our weekly professional development and grant feedback sessions.

In 2024-25, we also navigated unexpected challenges to the federal funding landscape, which inserted significant uncertainty into our efforts to expand the reach of our external portfolio. Thankfully, the strong foundation that we built over the past 24 months allowed us to navigate these challenges together, and we will continue to do so in the coming year.

Thank you so much for spending some time with us and our second Annual Report. We are proud of what we've accomplished and excited about the years ahead. As always, we welcome your ideas and partnership.

Sincerely,

Kitt Carpenter

Director, Vanderbilt Center for Research on Inequality and Health

E. Bronson Ingram University Distinguished Professor of Economics and Health Policy

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2024-25



Secured over **\$13.7 million** in newly awarded external grants

United **87 faculty and student/trainee affiliates** across numerous Vanderbilt departments

Awarded **12 internal grants** to Vanderbilt students and faculty for research and travel



Welcomed **8 world-leading experts** to Vanderbilt to share their research with the Center



Curated **6 mock review panels** providing grant/research feedback to Vanderbilt investigators

Sustained **1 shared vision** to propel Vanderbilt's research impact in inequality and health



NEW ADVISORY BOARD



**Julie Ward
(MHS)**



**Kate Clouse
(Nursing)**



**Rachel Donnelly
(Sociology)**

New this academic year was the creation of our Internal Advisory Board for the Vanderbilt Center for Research on Inequality and Health. Composed of key faculty affiliates who have been highly active in Center events, our Advisory Board meets once per semester to advise the Center's leadership on establishing strategic priorities, addressing challenges, and charting future directions.

We are incredibly grateful for the time and expertise of our inaugural 2024-25 Advisory Board members: Kate Clouse (Nursing), Rachel Donnelly (Sociology), and Julie Ward (Medicine, Health, and Society).

CENTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25



In 2024-25 the Center for Research on Inequality and Health continued to provide numerous professional development sessions to the broader campus community. We hold these during our weekly standing meeting time of Wednesdays from 12-1pm where we share lunch and conversation about a variety of professional development topics. On September 4, 2024 we kicked off the series with our annual "Grants 101" session which covers the who, where, what, why, and how of grant writing and grant getting at Vanderbilt. On September 11, 2024 the Center held an interactive Q&A session with Ludmila Tahai, the Director of the new Vanderbilt University IRB. On October 16, 2024 the Center hosted the College of Arts & Science grants team as well as the university's Research and Development Support team for a presentation and interactive discussion. On October 23, 2024 and January 22, 2025 we had two panels of recently awarded Principal Investigators discuss "How My NIH Grant Was Funded". These sessions illustrated the very heterogeneous paths that PIs took to land their recent awards, highlighting that there is no one way to be a successful grant writer. On February 12, 2025, Center affiliates participated in an open discussion about the most recent developments at NIH. Overall these professional development sessions offered faculty, students, and trainees numerous different opportunities to build specific skills, ask important questions, and share grant-related experiences, successes, and challenges.

To sign up for Center announcements, please email inequalitycenter@vanderbilt.edu.



CENTER GRANTS FEEDBACK SESSIONS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25

A key pillar of the Center for Research on Inequality and Health's standard Wednesday meetings is grant feedback. Faculty affiliates generally workshop specific aims or parts of a grant narrative one week before their targeted feedback session. Center affiliates are encouraged to approach the grant proposal as a prospective reviewer, helping the PI understand what arguments are/are not landing, what is/is not clear, what disciplinary jargon might be problematic, and the like. Then, we convene in person and faculty affiliates offer these comments and suggestions, often times building on the comments of others in real time. We were able to provide constructive and critical feedback to five faculty affiliates and one postdoc trainee this academic year: Anyah Prasad (MHS postdoc), Lijun Song (sociology), Lawrence Stacey (sociology), Julie Ward (MHS), Bianca Manago (sociology), and Bri Castro (sociology).

Recipients of the grants feedback offered very positive reviews:



Lawrence Stacey said, "Workshopping a draft of my Specific Aims page was incredibly helpful to hear what folks found interesting and exciting ... and also identify what was unclear and what areas needed some more work. After the session, I had a clearer sense of how I could expand the project in new directions and had a renewed excitement for the project."

Julie Ward noted changes made in response to the feedback, telling us: "We ended up adding a new introduction to more clearly and succinctly articulate the unique merits of the proposal upfront, and we also reorganized aims a bit based on methodological feedback. Our Inequality Center colleagues offered great insight, both on content and on form, that helped us to put some compelling finishing touches on an already strong proposal." Professor Ward's revised proposal was successful!



SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25

SEPTEMBER 18

Natalie Benda

Re-centering AI and Clinical Decision Support for Maternal Health Towards Patients

Columbia University

OCTOBER 2 (Nursing Annex 167)

Shannon Monnat

States' COVID-19 Mitigation Policies, Drug Overdoses, and Suicides among U.S. Working-Age Adults

Syracuse University

DECEMBER 4 (Nursing Annex 167)

Tiffany Veinot

Towards Equity-Centered Design and Evaluation of Patient-Facing Health Technologies

University of Michigan

FEBRUARY 26

Danny Schneider

A Fair Work Week: Raising the Floor on Precarious Scheduling

Harvard University

SEPTEMBER 23

Center Bldg. Room 200

Samantha Simon

Before the Badge: How Academy Training Shapes Police Violence

University of Arizona

NOVEMBER 13

Joel Mittleman

Gender Inequality Beyond the Gender Binary: Adolescent Gender Norms and the Changing Gender Gap in American Education, 1960-2012

University of Pennsylvania

JANUARY 15

Ylva Moberg

Changing legal gender with or without mandated sterilization — Impacts on transgender health and earnings

Stockholm University

APRIL 16

Bianca Frogner

Do We Have a Shortage? Understanding Ongoing and Emerging Health Workforce Challenges

University of Washington



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25

SEPTEMBER 4

*The Who, Where, What, and Why of
NIH and Federal Grants (Targeted at
newer investigators and trainees, led
by Kitt Carpenter and Tara McKay)*

SEPTEMBER 11

*The New Vanderbilt IRB for Social,
Behavioral, and Educational
Research - A Discussion and Q&A
with Director Liudmila Tahai*

OCTOBER 16

*Presentation and Discussion with
College of Arts and Science Grants
Team and Research Development
and Support Team*

OCTOBER 23

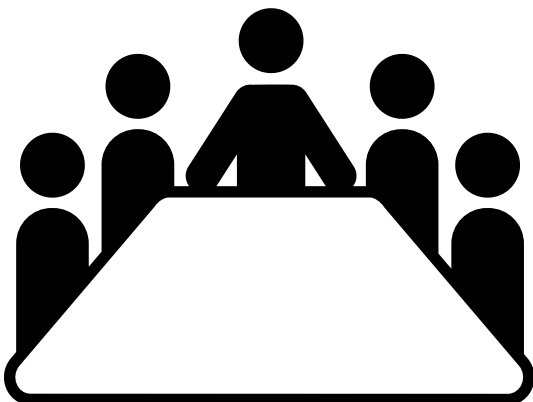
*How My NIH Grant Was Funded
(with Lijun Song, Jess Perkins, and
Kate Clouse)*

JANUARY 22

*How My NIH Grant Was Funded
(with Lucie Kalousova, Kirsty Clark,
and Kitt Carpenter)*

FEBRUARY 12

*Discussion of Recent NIH
Developments*



ANNUAL HEALTH ECONOMICS CONFERENCE



Center Supports the Annual Health Economics Conference

On Thursday and Friday March 27 and 28, 2025, the Center was pleased to co-sponsor the Annual Health Economics Conference (AHEC) (jointly with the Vanderbilt Department of Economics). Organized by Assistant Professor of Economics and Center Faculty Affiliate Marcus Dillender, AHEC is a premier invite-only annual conference addressing critical economics topics in health care delivery and health outcomes. This conference rotates across institutions and most recently was at Stanford and University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Dillender worked with a team of leading scholars from across the country to create a high quality program of 12 papers on topics ranging from the effects of federal pandemic funding to identifying fraud in health care delivery. Scholars also presented research on the effects of welfare payment time limits on mortality and on quality failures in the generic pharmaceutical market. Approximately 40 scholars from top academic institutions across the US participated in the event which also included extensive networking opportunities and a group dinner. It was a wonderful way to highlight Vanderbilt's deep expertise in health economics among faculty affiliates at the Center and to welcome top scholars to our beautiful campus.



Maura Coughlin (Rice University) discusses a paper



Nicholas Tilipman (John Hopkins University) presents his research



Center Affiliate Analisa Packham, Conference Organizer Marcus Dillender, and Center Director Kitt Carpenter



Haizen Lin (Indiana University) asks question during Q&A



AHEC Conference guests enjoy private dinner at Adele's

DANIEL SCHNEIDER



Center Hosts Renowned Sociologist Daniel Schneider

On Wednesday, February 26, 2025, the Center hosted a lecture by Dr. Daniel Schneider on the topic of shift work and inequality. Dr. Schneider is the Malcolm Weiner Professor of Social Policy and Professor of Sociology at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. He is Co-Director of The Shift Project, an innovative data collection effort recruiting participants from targeted internet advertisements that has surveyed individuals working for large companies in the United States (e.g., WalMart, Trader Joe's, McDonald's, Costco, and others) about unpredictable work schedules and their relationship to family outcomes, health, and social inequality broadly defined. His lecture described these novel data and how they have been used to uncover previously unknown relationships between schedule predictability and health. The lecture drew interested attendees from across campus, including Arts & Science, Nursing, Medicine, Education, and Law. The lecture was a wonderful opportunity for a broad range of researchers working on topics in social and economic inequality and health to hear from one of the world's leading experts in this field.



Left to right: Associate Director Shelagh Mulvaney, Daniel Schneider, Associate Director Tara McKay, and Director Kitt Carpenter



Center Affiliate Lijun Song (Sociology) asks a question during Q&A

Guest speaker Daniel Schneider presents his research



Lecture attendees enjoying Professor Schneider's lecture

EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

The Center's Faculty Affiliates garnered more and larger awards in 2024-25 in their roles as Principal Investigators. Congratulations to these outstanding scholars!

Panka Bencsik (MHS and Public Policy Studies)

\$275,500 award from Arnold Ventures

Title: The Impact of the 988 Crisis Helpline on the Use of Emergency Services and Hospital Visits

Description: The federal government in 2022 rolled out an easy to remember, three-digit number, 988, to reach mental health crisis support. This study uses emergency response, hospital visit, and advertising data to estimate the impact of various forms of care seeking after the national rollout of 988 and the localized awareness campaign related to the helpline.

Kitt Carpenter (Economics and Health Policy)

\$3.2 million R01 award from the National Institute of Mental Health

Title: Effects of Marriage Policy on Mental Health: Evidence from Linked Administrative Data in New Zealand

Description: This grant will examine how legal access to marriage affected marriage take-up and health disparities among vulnerable populations using unparalleled linked administrative data on pharmaceutical prescriptions, vital statistics, health care utilization, morbidity, and mortality. Dr. Carpenter presented this grant at one of our professional development lunches at the Vanderbilt Center for Research on Inequality and Health.

Vanderbilt Co-Investigators: Kirsty Clark, Marcus Dillender, Gilbert Gonzales, Tara McKay, Lawrence Stacey

Kirsty Clark (MHS, Public Policy, Psychology and Human Development)

\$2.5 million R01 award from National Institute of Mental Health

Title: Measuring and Mapping Trajectories of Risk and Resilience for Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors in Sexual and Gender Minority Preteens

Description: This grant has three goals: (1) execute a modified Delphi process with diverse experts to develop best practices for involving sexual and gender minority (SGM) preteens in suicide research; (2) create a developmentally appropriate measure of preteen stigma-related stress and resilience; (3) assemble a prospective cohort of SGM preteen-parent dyads and follow them over a 2-year period to assess risk and protective factors of suicidal ideation.

Vanderbilt Co-Investigators: Krista Mehari (VU), Melissa Cyperski (VUMC), Jinyuan Liu (VUMC)



Kate Clouse (Nursing)

\$1,695,390 MPI R01 award from National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities

Title: Understanding the relationship between individual, social, and structural determinants of health, mobility, and HIV outcomes among adolescents and young adults living with HIV in Tennessee

Description: This five-year study aims to understand how social and structural determinants of health influence mobility patterns among adolescents and young adults living with HIV in Tennessee, and how these patterns influence HIV care outcomes. Dr. Clouse discussed this grant at one of our professional development lunches at the Vanderbilt Center for Research and Inequality and Health.

Vanderbilt Co-Investigators: Jessica Perkins, April Pettit (VUMC), Bryan Shepherd (VUMC), Peter Rebeiro (VUMC), Steve Wernke

Lucie Kalousova (MHS and Sociology)

\$600k K01 grant from the National Institute on Aging

Title: Structural inequality in employment as a pathway for gender disparities in ADRD

Description: This grant will examine the role of labor market policies in ameliorating gender disparities in later life cognitive outcomes.

\$600k Evidence for Action award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Title: Eliminating Racial Disparities in End-of-Life Care and Death Quality through Policy Action.

Description: This grant will examine the systemic and structural roots of racial disparities in end-of-life experiences of Black and White adults using mixed methods.



Tara McKay (MHS)

Y1: \$620,425

R33 award from National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Title: A Multimethod Assessment of the Clinical, Economic & Social Impact of the Rejection of Federal HIV Prevention Funds in Tennessee

Description: This study evaluates the effects of a 2023 policy change regarding HIV prevention funding in Tennessee.

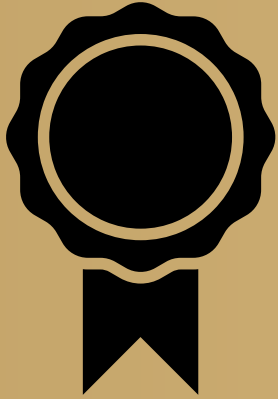
Analisa Packham (Economics)

\$279,995 from Arnold Ventures

Description: This grant will allow us to test whether the effects of LARC-focused interventions are more muted in a policy environment with greater health care access and private coverage of contraceptives. In the first arm of our proposed project, we will estimate effects of the newest, and largest, state-funded contraceptive initiative: the Virginia Contraceptive Access Initiative (CAI) on childbearing and infant health. In the second arm of our proposed project, we aim to better understand how the effectiveness of state-level initiatives can be boosted or hampered by baseline LARC take-up and related health policies by estimating causal effects of other similar state-run programs and putting these estimates into context.

Vanderbilt Co-Investigators: Jessica Kiser (PhD student)

MORE EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS



Jessica Perkins (Peabody)

\$2.5 million R01 award from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Title: Perceived Norms About Alcohol Use and HIV/STI Prevention among Adolescents and Young Adults in Rural Uganda

Description: The proposed research is relevant to public health by developing novel intervention strategies to reduce heavy alcohol use and increase HIV/STI prevention behaviors among adolescents and young adults in an HIV-endemic setting.

Lijun Song (Sociology and MHS)

\$1.3 million R56 award from the National Institute on Aging, NIH

Title: National Study of Older Never-Married Adults (NSONMA)

Description: This grant will support our efforts to design and conduct the first-ever pilot nationally representative survey of older never-married adults, in partnership with Gallup. The Vanderbilt Center for Inequality and Health provided direct financial support to Dr. Song to develop this project, and Dr. Song also received detailed feedback on questionnaire development at one of the Center's weekly professional development sessions.

Vanderbilt Co-Investigators: Cindy Qinghua Chen (VUMC), Tara McKay



Julie Ward (MHS)

\$570K grant from the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research

Title: Preventing unintended consequences: A mixed methods analysis of county-level ERPO use and incidence of injurious shootings by police in Florida 2015-2021

Description: This study will examine variation in Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) implementation rate, agency processes, and respondent characteristics across 67 counties in Florida and its relationship to the incidence of injurious shootings by police, firearm homicides, and firearm suicides. Dr. Perkins discussed this grant at one of our professional development lunches at the Vanderbilt Center for Research and Inequality and Health.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS: STUDENTS/TRAINEES

Joshua Martin (Economics) will join the University of West Georgia this fall as an Assistant Professor of Economics.

Laura Nettuno (Economics) accepted a position as an Associate Economist at RAND, published a paper in the *Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, and had a paper accepted in *AEA Papers and Proceedings*.

Blake Powell (Sociology) won second place in the Sociology department's Best Graduate Student Paper competition for a project titled: "Structuralizing the Cancer Experience: Examining Cancer, State Policy, and Mental Health."

Anyah Prasad (MHS) had a paper explicating the associations between the structural and functional aspects of LGBT older adults' social relationships published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, and was appointed to the Editorial Board of the journal *Research on Aging*.

Cliff Ross (Sociology) presented research at the Population Association of America entitled: "Perceptions of Death Quality: Racial Disparities in End-of-Life Experiences and Hospice Use Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic" and submitted an NIH Loan Repayment Program grant.

Hasan Shahid (Economics) will join the University of Maryland, Baltimore County this fall as an Assistant Professor of Economics.

Zhe Zhang (Sociology) coauthored a paper in *Society and Mental Health* and won the Sociology department's Best Graduate Student Paper award.



Center welcome-back event at Tee Line Curling, September 2024

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS: FACULTY

Brian Beach (Economics) was awarded a 200k one-year grant (sub award for NIH U54) to study the contribution of waterborne lead exposure on Alzheimer's disease and dementia risk and was appointed co-editor of *Explorations in Economic History*.

Panka Bencsik (MHS, PPS) published a paper on community trust in law enforcement in the *American Economic Review: Insights*, and a paper on traffic congestion's impact on fast food consumption in the *Journal of Urban Economics*.

Kitt Carpenter (Economics) published a paper on earnings and health of transgender and nonbinary people in *American Economic Review: Insights*.

Mark Chin (Peabody) had a paper accepted on the impacts of political party government control on education finance and outcomes accepted for publication at the *Economics of Education Review*, was elected to the Board of Directors for the Association for Education Finance and Policy, and was awarded a 2025 NAEd/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Kirsty Clark (MHS) was awarded the Dean's Faculty Fellowship in Mental Health and appointed as an Associate Editor of *Archives of Suicide Research*, the official journal of the International Academy of Suicide Research.

Kate Clouse (Nursing) was awarded a 5-year R01 award (MPI with Dr. Aima Ahonkhai) from NIMHD titled Understanding the relationship between individual, social, and structural determinants of health, mobility, and HIV outcomes among adolescents and young adults living with HIV in Tennessee.

Rachel Donnelly (Sociology) published a paper on job insecurity and gray divorce in *Social Forces* and received the Outstanding Paper Award from the American Sociological Association Section on Aging and the Life Course.

Kayla Fike (HOD) presented her partnered work with MNPS' director of attendance services, Dr. Carol Brown, at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Denver as well as her paper in progress focused on the longitudinal effects of neighborhood racial segregation on health outcomes over the adult lifespan at the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) in Seattle.

Gilbert Gonzales (MHS) published research co-led by students and trainees in *JAMA Pediatrics*, *Health Affairs*, the *Journal of Population Economics*, and the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. He was also appointed as the incoming Faculty Head of Crawford House on The Ingram Commons.

Lucie Kalousová (MHS and Sociology) delivered the commencement address at the International Max Planck School on the Lifecourse held at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany.

Monica Keith (Anthropology) established the Anthropological Health and Data Science (AHDS) Lab and was awarded the Charles E. Gibbs Leadership Prize for the best paper published in *Women's Health Issues* in 2024.

Bianca Manago (Sociology) was awarded tenure and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. Her book that discusses best practices and strategies for preparing data for analysis is in press with Sage University Press as part of their series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences.

Michelle Marcus (Economics) published a paper on the effects of maritime emission regulation on air quality, health, racial disparities, and behavior at the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* and was appointed as Associate Editor at the *Journal of Health Economics*.

Tara McKay (MHS) was recognized by the National Institutes of Health and Vanderbilt's Office of the Chancellor for excellence in research.

Krista Mehari (Psychology and Human Development) was elected to the Board of the Directors of the Society of Prevention Research and was appointed as a guest editor for a special issue on Structural Approaches to Youth Violence Prevention: Addressing Racism and Discrimination in Prevention Science for the journal *Prevention Science*.

Lin Meng (EES) had a paper published in *Nature Cities*: "Artificial light at night outweighs temperature in lengthening urban growing seasons" and received a grant from DOE Oak Ridge National Laboratory on vegetation modeling.

Shelagh Mulvaney (Nursing) and a multidisciplinary team from VUMC were awarded a 2-year ARPA-H grant titled: Human-Centered Design of an Ethical Evaluation Strategy for Chatbot Hallucinations in Healthcare, a Chatbot Accuracy and Reliability Evaluation (CARE) Exploration Topic (ET) Project.

Analisa Packham (Economics) was promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure), had a paper on Disability Insurance and health outcomes accepted for publication at *Journal of Health Economics* and was appointed as a Co-Editor at *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

Julia Phillippi (Nursing) had 6 peer-reviewed publications in 2025 about populations at risk for inequality in medical care and research. She was also inducted as a Fellow in the National Academies of Practice.

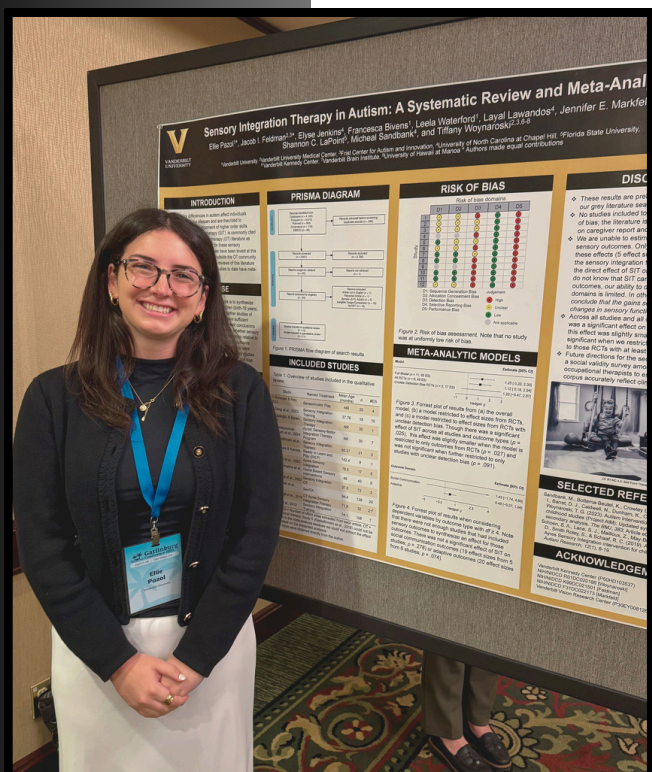
Lori Schirle (School of Medicine) had a paper published in *JAMA Psychiatry* investigating the potential of early opioid misuse in electronic health records, was awarded the Dean's Award for Outstanding Mentorship, and was selected to serve as Chair of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Foundation.

Lijun Song (Sociology) coauthored four publications—three journal articles and one book chapter—and delivered six invited talks at top universities, including University of Chicago, University of Toronto, and Washington University in St. Louis.

Lawrence Stacey (Sociology) was awarded a Dean's Faculty Fellowship, was named to the editorial board of *Sex & Sexualities*, and had a paper on childhood adversity and later life relationships with mothers accepted at *Social Forces*.

Julie Ward (MHS) was recognized with the 2024 Patricia Meador Lectureship by the Vanderbilt School of Nursing and received the Early Career Outstanding Science Presentation Award from the Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research.

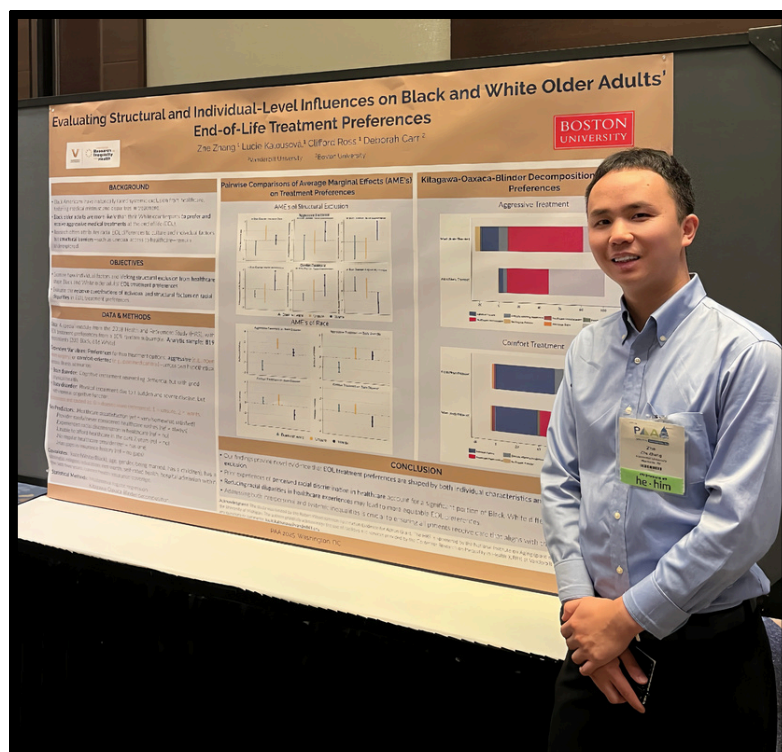
STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS



Ellie Pazol (Senior, MHS) presented at the 2025 Gatlinburg Conference on Research and Theory in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in San Diego.



Taylor Harman (Ph.D. Student, Anthropology) presented at the 2024 American Anthropological Association in Tampa.



Zhe Zhang (Ph.D. Student, Sociology) presented at the 2025 Population Association of America in Washington D.C.



Anne Schaller (Ph.D. Student, Economics) presented at the 2024 Southern Economic Association Conference in Washington D.C.

“In April, I traveled to Washington, DC to attend the Population Association of America’s (PAA) Annual Meeting. During the conference, the HEAL project presented a paper titled “Racial Disparities in End-of-Life Quality and Advance Care Planning: After the 2016 Medicare Incentive Reform.” In this paper, we explored racial disparities in health care at the end of life. We found that the 2016 policy change led to increased rates of advance care planning but did not reduce the racial disparities that persist in end-of-life planning.

Additionally, while in Washington, I participated in PAA’s Advocacy Day. During Advocacy Day, population scientists had the opportunity to meet with their congressional delegations and advocate for the importance of population research. I met with the offices of multiple policymakers from Tennessee and Missouri, including Marsha Blackburn, Andy Ogles, Josh Hawley, Eric Schmitt, and Eric Burlison. In these meetings, I emphasized the importance of the research currently being conducted at the Center for Research on Inequality and Health and the LGBTQ+ Policy Lab, and I emphasized the potential harm that current funding cuts could have on Tennesseans.”

Cliff Ross, MHS postdoc



**Cliff Ross (postdoc, MHS)
participated in PAA’s Advocacy Day**

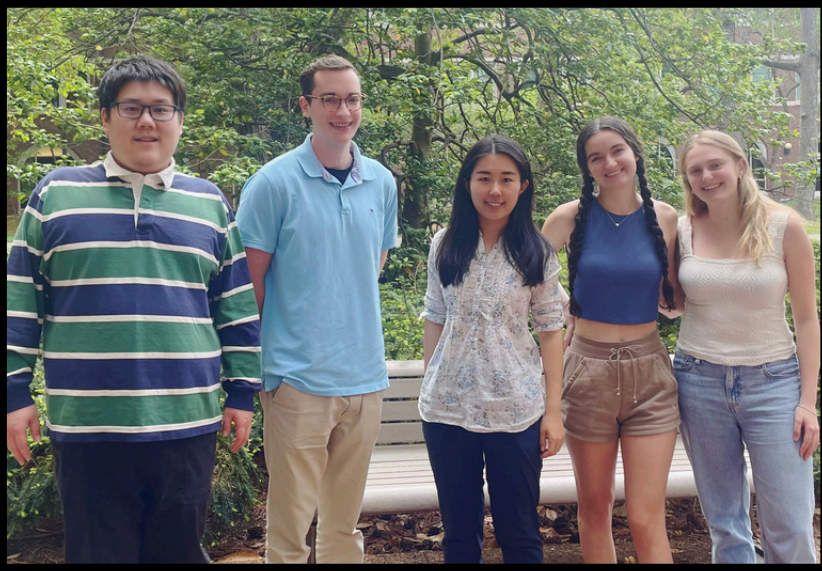
Research Summary:

Patients who engage in advance care planning (ACP) are able to better communicate their end-of-life treatment preferences and help ensure that they experience a death that is aligned with their wishes. However, there are stark racial disparities in the use and effectiveness of ACP leading to lower-quality deaths for Black and Hispanic Americans. In 2016 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) began reimbursement for physicians discussing ACP with their patients. Using HRS core and exit survey data, this study investigates whether these policy changes led to a change in racial disparities in end-of-life quality and planning. We found that race disparities in ACP were large and remained large throughout the 2012-22 study period.



**Zheng Lian (Ph.D. Student,
Sociology) attended the
Population Association of
America where Dr. Ross
(above) presented
their joint research**

FACULTY SMALL GRANTS



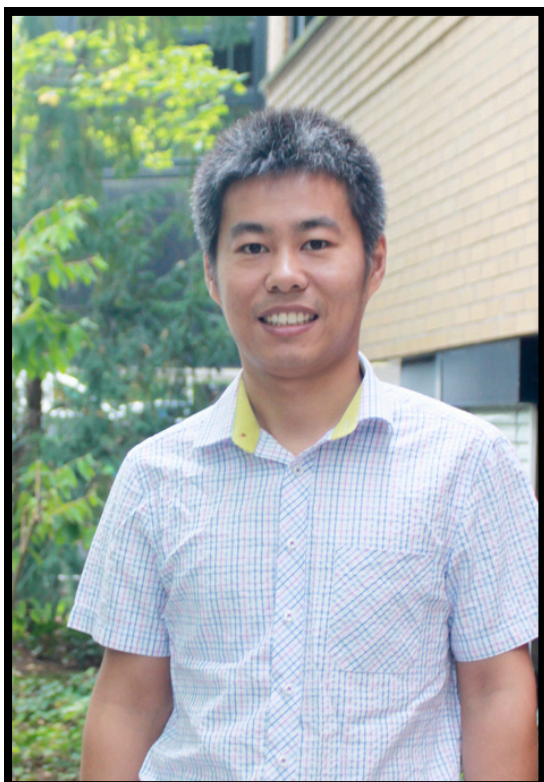
Hao Yin, Brandt Geist, Lin Meng (Assistant Professor, Earth and Environmental Sciences), Lauren Bishop, and Kameron Lloyd

Progress Report:

Understanding the Impact of Tree Inequality on Health Disparities in Tennessee

This project is partially supporting postdoctoral researcher Dr. Hao Yin and undergraduate student Kameron Lloyd in the Meng Lab.

“To date, we have compiled and harmonized multi-temporal datasets on tree canopy cover, social vulnerability indices, land surface temperature, and air quality across Tennessee. Preliminary spatial analyses reveal significant disparities in tree canopy cover among neighborhoods with differing levels of socioeconomic vulnerability. We are currently refining statistical models to better understand how social determinants mediate the relationship between tree inequality, heat exposure, air pollution, and chronic health outcomes. These early findings underscore the potential of urban greening strategies as equity-centered public health interventions, particularly in underserved communities. In addition, this work has enabled PI Dr. Lin Meng to get involved in the Nashville Metro Tree Advisory Committee and establish connections with local tree-focused organizations, including Urban Green Lab, the Tennessee Environmental Council, and Root Nashville, fostering broader community partnerships for future research and outreach.”



**Huidong Li, Assistant Professor,
Earth and Environmental Sciences**

Progress Report:

Investigating the Impact of Heat Exposure on Health Inequalities in Vulnerable Populations in the Southeastern U.S.

This project on the impact of long-term heat exposure on health inequalities in vulnerable populations fits directly into my broader research trajectory, which focuses on climate change, climate extremes, and public health.

“In this project, we examined the long-term effects of heat exposure on mortality in the Southeastern U.S., focusing on a predominantly Black and low-income population from the Southern Community Cohort Study. We calculated summer heat index—integrating temperature and humidity—using gridded climate data, and linked participants’ residential addresses to this dataset. Mortality outcomes were tracked over 13.5 years. Preliminary results indicate that higher heat exposure is associated with increased mortality risk, with notable differences in response patterns across racial and demographic subgroups. These results underscore the disproportionate vulnerability of marginalized populations to the health impacts of extreme heat, pointing to systemic environmental and social inequities. This work provides critical evidence for the long-term health burden of heat exposure and highlights the need for targeted public health interventions and heat adaptation strategies in historically underserved communities.”

MISSION:

The Vanderbilt University Center for Research on Inequality and Health aims to unite, generate, and amplify scholarship at Vanderbilt University on the causes and consequences of health inequalities. The Center is a trans-institutional collaboration between the College of Arts and Science and the School of Nursing. The center was born out of Discovery Vanderbilt, the university's ambitious effort to pursue bold new ideas through disciplined, rigorous inquiry.



Scan QR code to learn more about the Vanderbilt University Center for Research on Inequality and Health



Annual Report Design Credit: Mikey Pastrana