

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

2021
2022

**Alumnus
oversees
behavioral
healthcare
services
for veterans**

PLUS

Social Work alumnus works to meet needs of incarcerated women

Love Your Neighbor Coalition

SBH graduate enters nationally-recognized fellowship program



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UNIVERSITY

School of
Behavioral Health

SCHOOL OF
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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From the Dean

The many challenges of the last two years have given special meaning and appreciation for the work you do in caring for others.

The pandemic, racial and social injustices, as well as violence at home and around the world have made it clear that mental health is an essential component of overall health and wellbeing, and that mental health issues are common and treatable.

As a result, and perhaps more than ever before, the importance of effective mental health interventions—provided by highly trained professionals like yourself—is acknowledged worldwide.

You have continued to serve with the same compassion and resolve that originally influenced you to become a mental health professional, despite how you have been personally and professionally affected over the past two years.

Through it all you've never lost your dedication to improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, organizations, and communities—providing hope and healing to those in need.

You are our heroes! So, on behalf of all of us at Loma Linda University and the School of Behavioral Health, we all say thank you:

Thank you for the countless hours you've spent serving others.

Thank you for your understanding of needs and your flexibility to modify practice in real time.

Thank you for your selflessness and sacrifices.

Thank you for your courage and strength.

Now, as you continue to serve, please remember to give time and attention to your own resilience and self-care. It is both important and well-deserved. Take time to reflect on the gratitude you feel for all the people in your life—family, friends, those you work with, those you work for, and those who work for you.

Finally, let's choose to move forward with hope. As we do, I want to leave you with something I recently read in the devotional book *Streams in the Desert*, by L. B. Cowman (original printing 1925, reprinted 2013): *following destruction are times of calm...and beneath the fallen rocks are cool streams of water that quench the thirst of the earth and promote new growth* (paraphrased, p. 176).

May God continue to bless you in all you do.

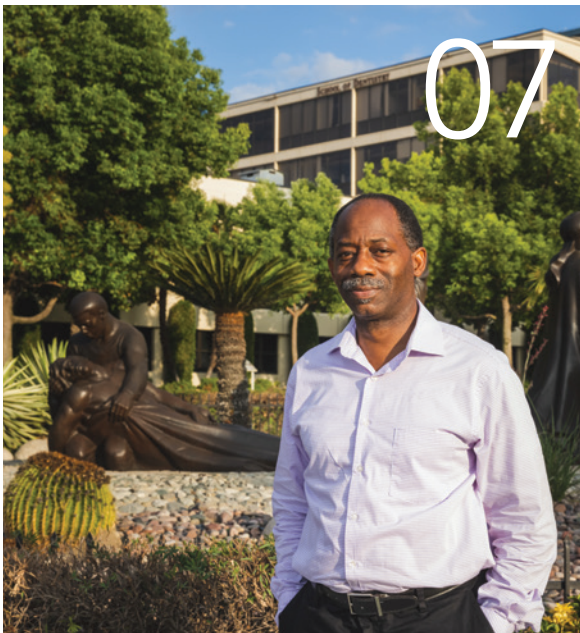
Dr. Beverly Buckles, Dean
School of Behavioral Health

Take time to reflect on the gratitude you feel for all the people in your life—family, friends, those you work with, those you work for, and those who work for you.

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Mission

The mission of the School of Behavioral Health is “to provide a spiritually supportive context for teaching, clinical practice, and research innovation that pursues integrative behavioral health aimed at reducing health disparities and promoting social justice in a global context locally and globally.” The mission of the School of Behavioral Health is underpinned by Loma Linda University’s commitment to the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ to transform lives through whole person care.



Alumnus oversees behavioral healthcare services for veterans

Dr. Luther Davis says his experiences at the School of Behavioral Health created a strong foundation for his military and veterans careers

Luther Davis, PhD, has served as a United States Air Force psychologist, deployed in Southwest Asia, and currently oversees mental health services for more than 3,000 veterans. By any measure, Dr. Davis (SBH '06) has enjoyed a unique career journey focused on integrity, advocacy, and excellence. But he says the amazing opportunities that have come his way would not have been possible without the foundation established during his graduate program at Loma Linda University.

Dr. Davis's career journey began with a commission into the United States Air Force and an internship in clinical psychology within the service. He says that the opportunities available to psychologists and other mental health professionals within the military setting are unique.

"Clinically I was trained in health psychology, integrated primary care, general mental health, substance abuse treatment, trauma treatment, and a variety of other areas," Dr. Davis said. "But beyond those opportunities, military mental health professionals work

in unique settings. Military work pushes a clinician into increasing levels of administrative responsibility."

Dr. Davis's steady career growth included a 2009 deployment to Southwest Asia to support Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Joint Horn of Africa.

"That time remains one of the most interesting professional experiences of my career," Dr. Davis said. "It was truly remarkable working within the military to foster resiliency, promote recovery, and empower others to protect the freedoms we readily enjoy in the United States."

Dr. Davis returned to Southern California after leaving the Air Force in 2014 and accepted a position as a health psychologist at the Loma Linda Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. Nine months after his arrival, Dr. Davis became the Psychology Executive, becoming responsible for multiple behavioral health programs and the professional practice of psychologists within VA Loma Linda. A self-described lifelong learner, Dr. Davis also completed several professional

“Beyond technical expertise, Loma Linda University reinforced value-based professional practice, a strong sense of ethics, and a commitment to social responsibility. If anything, these core values are perhaps the most important thing anyone can take from a graduate school experience.”

education programs that prepared him for increasing administrative and leadership responsibilities.

Dr. Davis is currently Deputy Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Mental Health, which has proven both challenging and rewarding over the past year.

“We oversee 386 clinical and administrative staff, approximately 60 health professions trainees, and multiple programs to provide a full spectrum of mental health services to around 23,000 Veterans annually,” said Dr. Davis. “My job offers variety and challenges in multiple professional roles—clinical practice, administration, process improvement, healthcare analytics, human resources, budget/finance, education, and leadership competencies.”

The foundation for Dr. Davis’s diverse career came about through his interactions with colleagues and mentors during his time as a School of Behavioral Health graduate student. His arrival at LLU came after a somewhat frustrating search for a graduate program in psychology after completing his bachelor’s at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Texas.

“I wasn’t sure if I wanted to be a psychologist, a computer scientist, a business person, or something else, so I started exploring graduate school opportunities across multiple fields,” Dr. Davis said. “While visiting or calling many different universities in Southern California across different programs of study, I received the same basic

response from all of them: ‘Looking at your resume, grades, and involvement, you would be a great candidate for our school, but unfortunately you need to have applied about eight months ago. I didn’t want to wait another 6-12 months to start school.’”

Driving through the Inland Empire, Dr. Davis saw a freeway sign for Loma Linda University. Knowing LLU had a medical school, Dr. Davis wondered about what other graduate programs LLU might offer. Entering a building with no sign on the outside, Dr. Davis asked where he could find the Graduate School of Psychology. That building happened to house the SBH psychology department. Ann Bradshaw, at that time the psychology department’s administrative assistant, greeted Dr. Davis.

“We talked about my undergraduate program and my interest in psychology, and Ann told me she thought I sounded like a great candidate,” Dr. Davis said. “Then she added I should have applied eight months ago.”

However, Ann Bradshaw went on to introduce Dr. Davis to Dr. Louis Jenkins, the program director at that time. Dr. Jenkins shared with him that a previously accepted PhD candidate had dropped out of the program and that there was one opening for fall quarter, which was to start in three weeks.

“We agreed that if I completed all of the application materials, the GRE and Psychology GRE, and met admission standards, then I could be considered for the vacant

position,” Dr. Davis said. “That is how my connection to LLU began, and despite the serendipitous nature of how I arrived, enrolling in LLU is a decision I would unhesitatingly make again in hindsight.”

Dr. Davis says his time at Loma Linda University was a period of great personal and professional growth.

“Undoubtedly, my best memories inevitably entail laughter, working together, and sharing experiences on a day-to-day basis with both classmates and mentors,” Dr. Davis said. “Loma Linda University was definitely a formative experience. I have no shortage of good memories from LLU.”

Dr. Davis can point to a number of experiences that still influence how he does his work today. He says Loma Linda University provided him a remarkable foundation in understanding the biopsychosocial-spiritual model of care and looking at the whole person.

“The program helped me think about the importance of interdisciplinary care, not just within the healthcare system, but also through leveraging community, family, and faith-based resources in meeting patients where they are,” Dr. Davis said. He also says his School of Behavioral Health experiences helped prepare him for his work as a healthcare administrator.

“Training for psychology uniquely qualifies a person to be an effective leader, administrator, and professional across a variety of different fields. Beyond technical expertise, however, Loma Linda University reinforced value-based professional practice, a strong sense of ethics, and a commitment to social responsibility. If anything, these core values are perhaps the most important thing anyone can take from a graduate school experience.”

Dr. Davis went on to share his insights on what strengths students considering a psychology career would find at the School of Behavioral Health.

“Expect a challenging academic environment, diverse perspectives, a commitment to whole person care, and a common foundation of service to mankind,” Dr. Davis said. “Loma Linda University’s education will challenge your thinking, push you to reflect upon your values, and will prove transformative in your development as a person and professional. I may not have realized all of this as a graduate student, but the passing of time brings perspective.”

“I am ever thankful that I walked into the Department of Psychology one hot summer day,” Dr. Davis said.

Social Work alumnus works to meet needs of incarcerated women

Every day School of Behavioral Health (SBH) alumni quietly and persistently address the needs of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Dorrence Hamilton, a 2001 graduate of the Master of Social Work program, now works as a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) with the California Institution for Women (CIW), a women's state prison located in Chino.

At the CIW Mr. Hamilton has a reputation with inmates for listening and providing support, helping women address issues that led to their incarceration. He supports the inmates through their therapeutic journey by joining them—not going before them. While the women have to do the emotional work, Mr. Hamilton is there to support them through the process.

"My goal is to help the women inmates see potential in themselves," Mr. Hamilton said. He admits his work is often difficult—many of the women he works with have committed murders, including infanticide. "Some are not very likable," he adds, "but as a therapist you gain new perspectives when you find out what these women have experienced."

Mr. Hamilton recalls that when he started the MSW program he felt like a “fish out of water.” But as he reflects on the support he received from the faculty and his student peers, Mr. Hamilton says, **“Being part of the MSW program was like being in a family.”**

Mr. Hamilton’s dream to serve others began as early as junior high, where he was known as a kind and attentive listener, and was often sought out by his peers for support. Even in those formative years he realized he would pursue a career in supporting individuals to address their emotional needs if given the chance.

After graduating from Oakwood College with a bachelor’s in Religion and a minor in Psychology, Mr. Hamilton moved his family to Southern California to work full time for the Riverside School District in maintenance. He also began looking for graduate programs where he could continue to follow his dream.

Loma Linda University (LLU) was not his first choice, because to attend LLU at that time would have required him to complete two to three years of prerequisite courses. However, after talking to Professor James Dyer, then the Program Director of the MSW program, Mr. Hamilton knew that the mission of the program fit with his dream of serving others.

Attending graduate school part time while continuing to work full time was difficult. When asked if there were particular experiences that occurred while he was completing his MSW that were most meaningful, Mr. Hamilton thoughtfully begins to reminisce. He recalls that when he started the MSW program he felt like a “fish out of water.” But as he reflects on the support he received from the faculty and his student peers, Mr. Hamilton says, “Being part of the MSW program was like being in a family.”

In particular, he reflects on the emphasis the faculty placed on being thorough and professional. In one such incident he muses about being nervous to make presentations, when Dr. Craig Jackson told him—“others don’t care if you are nervous, so don’t worry about that—focus on the content of what you are presenting—being nervous doesn’t stop you from being professional.”

Mr. Hamilton also recalls the importance the program placed on students being able to conduct biopsychosocial-spiritual assessments. He initially found this type of assessment difficult, but with the extra support and time provided by Dr. Victoria Jackson, along with additional study, he succeeded in learning how to complete thorough assessments. Ultimately Mr. Hamilton received one of the highest scores on the program’s qualifying exam, a requirement to advance to Candidacy.

Mr. Hamilton remembers how he felt as he neared the completion of the MSW program. As graduation approached, Dr. Dianna Simon reminded him that when he graduated he would have the same degree as her. Professor Terry Forrester told the 2001 graduating class that as graduates they would represent not only LLU but the Social Work profession as well.

Finally, Mr. Hamilton recalls the day he received the Professional Recognition Award at the MSW Hooding Ceremony. He pauses and then recites the words on his award, “In recognition of professional integrity and behavior which exemplify the inherent values of social work (June 8, 2021).” He shares his advice for current and future students—“make sure you persevere to be the best you can be. You never know who is watching you.”

Mr. Hamilton’s accomplishments during and with the completion of his MSW degree made him realize that his efforts had paid off. He had worked hard and would soon be implementing his dream to help others.

Amrita Rai – 2022 SBH Alumna of the Year

Amrita Rai (SBH'00) was one of the first students to complete the Advanced Standing MSW program at Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health.

Following graduation, Ms. Rai was hired by the Loma Linda University Health Behavioral Medicine Center (BMC), initially working in the children's unit and later as a lead therapist in adult services. After working at the BMC for 10 years, she secured a position as Chief Executive Officer of the Riverside Hospital for Behavioral Medicine. In 2013, Ms. Rai was hired by Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), the largest not-for-profit Medicare-Medicaid plan in the country, where in 2018 she became their Clinical Director of Behavioral Health and Care Management.

In her current position at IEHP, Ms. Rai is responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and overseeing a comprehensive behavioral health program for 1.5 million IEHP members in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

For exemplifying excellence in her varied roles—administrator, clinician, and colleague—and the values underlying Christian education, the School of Behavioral Health has named Amrita Rai as the School Alumna of the Year.



Loma Linda University Health

homecoming

Thursday, March 2 - Monday, March 6, 2023

For more information about all of this year's virtual Homecoming events visit

llu.edu/homecoming



**Researcher Aarti Nair, PhD,
assistant professor of psychology**

Neurodevelopmental Applied Imaging Intervention Research

Brain connectivity issues relating to social communication and executive functioning begin in persons with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at a much earlier age than previously believed. Research at the Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health shows that these issues can begin in early infancy.

Researcher Aarti Nair, PhD, assistant professor of psychology, says early intervention to help individuals with ASD begins as early as age three. Dr. Nair's findings suggest a need for intervention designed to help individuals with ASD need to begin earlier, even in infancy, for improved developmental trajectories and better outcomes long term.

"Working with children with ASD clinically fascinates me," Dr. Nair says. "While many of them are cognitively very smart, all of them have social challenges." Dr. Nair became curious about those issues, and began research and clinical activities to

address the social challenges faced by those with ASD.

Part of Dr. Nair's research includes the use of sophisticated imaging technology to see how ASD affects brain physiology. ASD is understood to be a disorder of aberrant brain connectivity, often with underlying genetic causes.

"How these microstructure level differences in the brain might be related to ASD symptomatology is important," Dr. Nair says. "Part of my research will explore if this type of neuroimaging is an important tool to explore brain changes after targeted interventions." Dr. Nair also hopes to explore whether social skills intervention might lead to long-lasting brain changes in youth with ASD.

Dr. Nair founded the Neurodevelopmental Applied Imaging Intervention Research Lab in the School of Behavioral Health to support her research. SBH students are part of the research team, where they have the opportunity to perform diagnostic and cognitive assessments of youth with ASD and early-onset psychosis. Students also learn to provide social skills interventions to these youth, and analyze the neuroimaging data collected.

"Psychology students have outstanding opportunities to train clinically in pediatric neuropsychology and provision of social skills intervention through their work in the lab," Dr. Nair says. Grants from Autism Speaks, Autism Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Mental Health support the research.

Moving forward, Dr. Nair hopes to identify specific intervention therapies that are most effective in changing the brain connectivity patterns for individuals with ASD. She is also interested in examining whether sleep disruptions experienced by people with ASD relate to their behavioral and cognitive outcomes.

Dr. Nair joined the SBH Psychology Department because of the productive research emphasis culture, saying the department and the school have offered significant support for her research and clinical efforts since she joined the faculty.

"The research environment fostered by SBH is very important, particularly for an early career faculty member like myself," says Dr. Nair.

Ulysses Medal for Leadership in Refugee Health

Qais Alemi, PhD, associate professor in the School of Behavioral Health's Social Work and Social Ecology department, has received the Ulysses Medal for Leadership in Refugee Health from the University of California Davis. This prestigious honor was presented as part of the tenth anniversary of the Ulysses Refugee Health Project, a collaborative effort of UC Davis, University of Barcelona, California State University East Bay, Loma Linda University, and representatives of refugee communities in Northern California.

Dr. Alemi's research focuses on refugee mental health issues. His interest in the issue began when he was a refugee himself, coming to the United States from Afghanistan in 1981.

"Being uprooted from our homeland meant that my parents had to leave everything behind, not just their material possessions but more importantly their culture and way of life—the very things that make up their identity," Dr. Alemi says. His refugee family sought to adapt to life in the United States economically and culturally while maintaining many of their home country's values.

"My parents made great sacrifices during those post-resettlement challenges," Dr. Alemi says. "I continue to see those challenges in my community, and I hope I can work toward solutions through my research."

Dr. Alemi has authored more than 30 papers on the Afghan refugee issue. He has uncovered some common issues faced by the population whether they are refugees in the United States or in Afghanistan.

"While the two populations essentially live in different civilizations, one in Afghanistan and the other here in the United States,

what is striking is that hopelessness, lack of optimism, and uncertainty operate congruently to plague people's lives and hinder their ability to adapt to change," Dr. Alemi says. He adds that both populations are stressed because of unmet basic needs, and that this lack of food security, employment, or proper housing can even exacerbate the stresses of traumatic war experiences.

Dr. Alemi uses both qualitative and quantitative techniques in his research efforts. He has found that simply listening to a person's story can be therapeutic and impactful.

"Narratives are powerful in terms of understanding pressing social issues and for shaping future research," Dr. Alemi says. He also looks at how health and mental health scales used in the United States can be culturally validated for Afghan refugees, allowing better understanding of their mental health symptoms and needs.

Because any discussion of refugees quickly becomes politicized, Dr. Alemi faces challenges in maintaining objectivity within his research.

"Discussions around 'who qualifies as a refugee' and 'who is deserving of protection from persecution' come to the fore, which news media propagate," Dr. Alemi says. "Keeping up with current events is important when it comes to populations affected by political violence. These discussions can bias attitudes towards the very populations we seek to better understand."

Dr. Alemi says the Ulysses Medal award came about as a result of his partnerships with Northern California universities and colleagues there. He hopes to build on the attention from winning the award to bring awareness to the needs of populations affected by political violence.

"I am optimistic that my research will inform policies and clinical practice related to addressing the needs of those living in politically unstable regions and for those escaping persecution," Dr. Alemi says. "I also envision that my work will inspire future research, and will assist in the training of future behavioral scientists."



Research proposed to slow the spread of HIV in Inland Empire



A School of Behavioral Health faculty member is combining his interests in HIV prevention and behavioral economics into a unique research study examining how primary care physicians can contribute to preventing the spread of HIV cases in the Inland Empire.

Alex Dubov, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Interdisciplinary Studies, was a graduate student when he became interested in the field of behavioral economics as pioneered by Dr. George Loewenstein at Carnegie Mellon University. He wanted to better understand how and when people make errors in judgment.

“Lessons from behavioral economics can be used to create environments that ‘nudge’ people toward better decisions and healthier lives,” Dr. Dubov said. “I had an opportunity to study with one of the field’s prominent experts. Much of my work with him informed my dissertation research on the use of nudges in end-of-life care.”

At the same time, Dr. Dubov became fascinated with the then-newly available medication to prevent HIV infection known as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, or PrEP. His interest in implementing PrEP led to his acceptance into a postdoctoral program at Yale University.

“I conducted my work in my home country of Ukraine, studying at-risk populations and designing a national HIV prevention program,” Dr. Dubov said. “Both NIMH and USAID supported this research, and ultimately I was able to present the results to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health.”

Recently Dr. Dubov has prepared a grant application that combines his research interests, and intends to look at why, nearly 10 years after approval by the FDA, people who can benefit from PrEP are still not able to easily access this medication.

Dr. Dubov says PrEP requires prescription and monitoring by a healthcare provider. While most Infectious Disease physicians are very knowledgeable about PrEP, patients who need PrEP are usually seen by primary care providers (PCPs).

“Primary Care Physicians may lack time, competence, and comfort to initiate discussions with their patients about PrEP,” Dr. Dubov said. “There is also a ‘purview paradox’ described in several studies, where Primary Care Physicians consider PrEP to be beyond their purview. At the same time, HIV care specialists tend to work in contexts where patients already live with HIV.”

As a result, Dr. Dubov said, only 9% to 17% of all PCPs in the US have ever prescribed PrEP. His research will seek approaches to enhance PrEP usage through nudging physicians and shifting tasks.

“We hope to nudge Primary Care Physicians through two approaches—comparing their PrEP prescriptions with the number prescribed by their peers; and incentivizing them to make prescriptions through charitable donations on their behalf,” Dr. Dubov said.

He adds that the task-shifting aspect will look at expanding the role of Medical Assistants in the area of screening eligible patients and initiating PrEP usage for those eligible and willing to start the medication.

“While the task-shifting may be more significant in improving PrEP rates, combining that with physician nudging should produce the greatest improvement in PrEP uptake rates,” Dr. Dubov said.

Dr. Dubov’s grant proposal received positive comments during NIH review and is waiting on the council’s decision/potential funding at the time of writing.

Love Your Neighbor Coalition

By Talolo Lepale



In 2018 the Love Your Neighbor Coalition (LYNC) was established with the goal of eliminating homelessness in the City of Riverside. LYNC brought together the efforts of the social work field education programs at Loma Linda University, La Sierra University, and California Baptist University partnered with the City of Riverside Mayor's Office, Corona Community AME Church, Faith Lutheran Church, Calvary Presbyterian Church, Hope Community Church, Sandals Church, Riverside Community Church, La Sierra University Church, Faith in Motion, Care Portal, Today's Urban Renewal Network, 211 Community Connect, County of Riverside, Riverside Community Hospital, and Path of Life Ministries. Each of the LYNC members significantly and collectively contributed to addressing three objectives:

1. Network the efforts of city government with religiously affiliated organizations (RAOs) and local CSWE-accredited graduate and undergraduate social work programs to end homelessness;

2. Establish a micro, mezzo, macro social work internship model to address the learning needs of graduate and undergraduate students, while simultaneously addressing the needs of homeless individuals and families as well as persons at risk of homelessness; and

3. Develop practice guidelines to support the expanded voluntary engagement of post-degree social work professionals in the programs provided by RAOs.

During LYNC's initial phase, referred to as the City of Riverside Mayor's Pilot Social Work Internship Program or simply the 'Pilot', partners developed a multi-component strategy to enhance their organizational capacities in order to address the health disparities of homeless

persons and persons at risk for homelessness—and provide a structured practicum experience for students. A key aspect of this phase was to identify and alleviate systemic barriers and gaps in the delivery of health and social services that could potentially hinder successful outcomes. To support this effort and students' learning, a three-tiered micro, mezzo, macro internship framework was implemented.

With a framework in place, at the beginning of the 2018-2019 academic year 15 social work students from Loma Linda University, La Sierra University, and California Baptist University were assigned to complete practicum experiences with LYNC. As such, students were placed at each of the partnering RAOs to provide services for homeless individuals and families, as well as those persons and families at risk of becoming homeless.

At the micro (individual) level, students worked with the assigned partner RAO, under the supervision of a designated Field Supervisor, to provide services to homeless persons and at-risk populations. Students at each site followed the same protocols to assess and address the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of persons seeking services. Students linked those seeking services with medical and/or mental health services, substance use interventions, assistance with housing and utilities, and job readiness assistance.

At the mezzo (organizational/community) level, students worked with their assigned RAO to serve as liaisons between the larger LYNC initiative, their RAO, and a local nonprofit organization. Whereas specific needs varied from site to site, at this level students participated in linkages between community support programs ranging from supporting existing food/

meal programs and other outreach services, to bridging counseling and related services. Regardless of the type of service students were assigned to support, all students participated in evaluating the effectiveness of the assigned programs and resulting linkages. As part of the evaluations, students participated in providing recommendations for improvement. One example of this mezzo level assignment was a program that bridged the outreach of the Calvary Presbyterian Church with services provided by the Riverside Community Hospital. The resulting program provided a referral bridge between the outpatient/ER services of the Riverside Community Hospital with the social services provided and coordinated by the Calvary Presbyterian Church. This service bridge substantially minimized the time lapse between discharge and receipt of much needed follow-up services. As a result, both post-hospitalization psychosocial need-seeking distress and the hospital readmission rates of homeless persons were reduced.

At the macro (institutional/policy) level of the practicum/service framework, partner RAOs along with educational institutions and their students worked with the City of Riverside Mayor's Office and relevant city departments to better understand and address institutional, legislative, and political issues that affect program development and continuation. Integral to this macro level of practice, attention was given to all partners and students understanding of the importance of inter-organizational communication, ways to improve community engagement, program expansion, grant writing, the importance of learning the essentials of navigating legislative/political processes, and the related importance of evaluation of program effectiveness. (LYNC members

made a five-year evaluation plan to assess the program's effectiveness in eliminating homelessness in the City of Riverside.) An additional component of this macro level dialogue was to address the barriers that limit post-degree professionals from volunteering their services to support the long-range continuity of the RAO programs. In response to this latter issue, LYNC initiated the development of guidelines for post-degree professionals to ensure that they understand that the ethical responsibilities and professional liabilities they encounter as volunteers in RAO-sponsored programs are the same as the ethical and professional responsibilities and requirements of paid employees. Though often the least appealing and most difficult practice level for students to appreciate, intentionally involving

interns at the macro level of practice implementation was a key component to providing interns with a full understanding of all aspects of program development, implementation, structured sustainability, and the relationship between policy issues and positive outcomes—all key knowledge areas that are essential for professionals post-graduation.

The LYNC members intentionally and successfully embedded an internship framework that supported their service delivery objectives with the learning needs of social work students. LYNC is an excellent example of what can happen when individuals with shared values partner through their represented organizations to creatively address difficult problems.



SBH graduate enters nationally-recognized fellowship program

Those recommendations, combined with the University's mission of serving the whole person, and its commitment to diversity in staff and student populations, led Huelett to enroll in the Systems, Families, and Couples PhD program.

Huelett has now entered a nationally prestigious fellowship program at the Chicago Center of Family Health (CCFH), an organization founded by the husband/wife team of Dr. John Rolland and Froma Walsh, pioneers in the Medical Family Therapy and Integrated Behavioral Health field.

Zephon Lister, PhD, associate professor in the Counseling and Family Sciences department and Huelett's clinical supervisor during her master's program, says Huelett's diligence, thoughtful approach, and collaborative nature, along with her outstanding academic and service accomplishments at SBH, make her particularly qualified to participate in the CCFH fellowship.

"Brittany demonstrated strong clinical skills and a robust understanding of core theoretical models and concepts," Dr. Lister said. "She connected well with both patients and providers and was well-liked by her peers and supervisors." Dr. Lister completed the CCFH fellowship earlier in his career, and is one of the many fellows from the program who have become leading figures in the Medical Family Therapy and Integrated Behavioral Health field.

Huelett says her School of Behavioral Health experiences prepared her well for the CCFH fellowship.

"Throughout my time in the program, several courses have assisted in my preparation," Huelett said, "from learning to work with clients from diverse cultural, spiritual, and socioeconomic contexts to learning about the field of Medical Family Therapy and how to work in an integrated care environment."

SBH faculty members continue to support Huelett through their mentorship.

"Dr. Jacqueline Williams-Reade, Dr. Susanne Montgomery, and Dr. Zephon Lister have each taken me under their wing, offered support, and provided me with tremendous opportunities in teaching, research, and authorship," Huelett says. "I am very fortunate to have these individuals in my corner, and each of them has played a role in my journey."

Huelett also says SBH and its Department of Counseling and Family Sciences provide fantastic opportunities to those interested in expanding their knowledge in the field of Medical Family Therapy.

"Faculty within the department are not only leaders in this field, but they are kind, supportive, and invested in the development of future clinicians," Huelett says. "Students who study at the School of Behavioral Health will be prepared to work with diverse clients in integrated care settings."

Brittany Huelett, PhD, will tell you that marital and family therapy was not on her radar as a career choice when she was finishing up her undergraduate college program. But the Human Development major found her life's calling during a senior year practicum at the Austin Family Institute (AFI), an Austin, Texas nonprofit offering mental health services.

"While I certainly was interested in human behavior and development, I wasn't sure how that would develop itself into a career," Huelett said. "The team of marriage and family therapists at AFI served as my early mentors. They introduced me to family systems concepts and theories. That was when it clicked."

While completing her fellowship at AFI, Huelett's mentors there spoke highly of the master's degree program at Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health.

Awards

KELLY R. MORTON

2022 SBH Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Kelly Morton joined Loma Linda University in 1993 as an Assistant Professor and Research Associate in the School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine. Two years later, she was asked to support the creation of the Department of Psychology, and subsequently began a joint appointment with both the Departments of Family Medicine and Psychology.

Highly successful in obtaining external funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and private sources, Dr. Morton has been awarded, and has assisted other researchers in receiving millions of dollars in funding for research, training, and the enhancement of clinical services. Dr. Morton is among the first faculty at LLU to obtain multi-million dollar HRSA funding to support the joint training of residents and Psychology doctoral students in integrated primary care.

Her contributions to research and professional literature are highly-regarded and enhance the delivery of clinical services with empirical evidence of the important relationship between mental and physical health. Dr. Morton teaches graduate courses and supervises research students in the LLU Department of Psychology, and

she tirelessly supports program development, as well as the APA accreditation processes for both the PhD and PsyD programs.

The School of Behavioral Health honors Dr. Kelly Morton with the 2022 School Distinguished Service Award.

This award was presented to her at the joint Conferring of Degrees for the School of Behavioral Health and the School of Religion.



SBH professor named LLU Distinguished Investigator



Dr. Susanne Montgomery, Associate Dean for Research in the School of Behavioral Health, received the 2020-21 Loma Linda University Distinguished Investigator Award. She is a Professor of Social Work and Social Ecology,

Public Health, and Preventive Medicine, and the Division Head of the SBH Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

Under Dr. Montgomery's leadership, SBH has become one of the leaders in LLUH research and extramural funding. She leads the behavioral health research engagement efforts for the University and enjoys both working with faculty on their own efforts to seek extramural funding and mentoring students in research.

Dr. Montgomery's own research focus is on hard-to-access, underserved populations and health disparities. She has been a Principal and Co-Investigator on several National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Foundation, and State-funded projects, has published more than 140 peer-reviewed articles, and serves as a peer reviewer for NIH, CDC, and several professional journals.

School Awards 2021

- President's Award – Nipher Malika
- Dean's Award for Doctoral Programs – Neilson Chan
- Dean's Award for Master's Programs – Susanna Bun
- Wil Alexander Whole Person Care Award – Eddie Lopez

Research Excellence Awards 2021

- Nicole Bennett
- Neilson Chan
- Natalie Wei-Mun Hsieh
- Hyo Jin "Jenny" Lee
- Nipher Malika

Hybrid and in-person commencement events celebrate classes of 2021 and 2022

Congratulations to all of our 2021 and 2022 graduates! What a wonderful time to celebrate all of your successes. In 2021 we held a hybrid drive-thru graduation and then transitioned back to a fully in-person graduation for 2022. This pandemic has shown us how resilient we are as individuals and communities. It has also clearly demonstrated the vital role that all of you will play in the health and wellness of our country. Welcome to the ranks of alumni of the School of Behavioral Health!

—Dr. Adam Aréchiga, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs





School Awards 2022

- President’s Award – Hadley McGregor
- Dean’s Award for Doctoral Programs – Connor Nance
- Dean’s Award for Master’s Programs – Angel Rodriguez
- Wil Alexander Whole Person Care Awards – Brittany Huelett, Ashley Park

Research Excellence Awards 2022

- Angelica Chakos
- Melody Ezpeleta
- Brittany Huelett
- Hadley McGregor
- Connor Nance
- Sasha Trofimova

Research grant will support study of Full Plate Living Program online vs in-person instruction

Ardmore Institute of Health has funded Dr. Maud Joachim-Célestin, assistant research professor in the School of Behavioral Health, along with her research team, to develop an online version of the Full Plate Living Program. This eight-session lifestyle improvement program targets low-income mono- and bilingual Latino women (Latinas) living in the Inland Empire. According to Dr. Joachim-Célestin, Latinas have among the highest rates of obesity in the country, yet are least likely to benefit from available lifestyle programs.

The research team culturally adapted and offered the in-person Full Plate Living program to the community, successfully en-

gaging Latinas and resulting in weight loss, mental health improvement, and positive lifestyle changes. “Our results convinced Ardmore Institute of Health to fund the development of an online version, allowing us to expand our reach and compare the results of the in-person and online approaches,” said Dr. Joachim-Célestin.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for feasible lifestyle program alternatives for individuals at risk of chronic diseases, especially uninsured Latinas with limited resources. Because challenges of the in-person programming will continue, this study will answer critical questions about how best to reach this important group of women.



New research and practice innovation center in development

The development of the services and innovation that will occur at this new facility is a dream years in the making.

The School of Behavioral Health is currently developing a research and practice innovation center. Located at the University's Mountain View Plaza, the center emphasizes linkages that bridge translational research, practice excellence, and the provision of graduate behavioral health education. This new venture is comprised of three major divisions: 1) the *Research Administration Division*, overseeing the development and implementation of translation research as part of the School of Behavioral Health's Division of Interdisciplinary Studies; 2) the *Family, Adolescents, and Children Treatment and Research (FACTR) Division*, facilitating

the implementation of NIH and other externally-funded research studies; and 3) the *Behavioral Health Resiliency Clinic*, an academic faculty-student community-based training clinic.

The development of the services and innovation that will occur at this new facility is a dream years in the making. Once fully operational, students and faculty in all School of Behavioral Health professional degree programs will have exciting opportunities to work collaboratively, learning and developing innovative programs to better serve individuals and families experiencing behavioral health conditions.

We'll keep you posted!

Students being welcomed back to campus

The largest incoming class in the history of the School of Behavioral Health arrived on campus for the 2021-22 school year.

According to Dr. Adam Aréchiga, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, the School's faculty and staff are excited that so many new students have chosen Loma Linda University Health as their academic partner in success.

"For many students, both new and continuing, this Fall marks their first time on campus," Dr. Aréchiga said. "It was wonderful to meet with everyone during our orientation and Welcome Back Bash. Instead of running from this nation's mental health needs, our students felt a call to help those in need in our local and global communities."

To ease the students' transition back to campus, the School of Behavioral Health is maximizing flexibility in its programs by offering both online and face-to-face options as needed.

"We encourage everyone to actively engage in self-care throughout this time of adjustment," Dr. Aréchiga said. "The very presence of our students on campus is a sign of natural resilience, and I have no doubt that they can reach their professional goals."



STUDENT TODAY. HERO TOMORROW.

In this time of crisis, Loma Linda University is more than just a university. It is a training ground for healthcare heroes. Compassionate faculty teach more than 100 programs with an emphasis on faith. Students emerge confident they can face any storm, humble enough to know this is only possible together with the one who gives them strength. In Christ, heroes are made here.

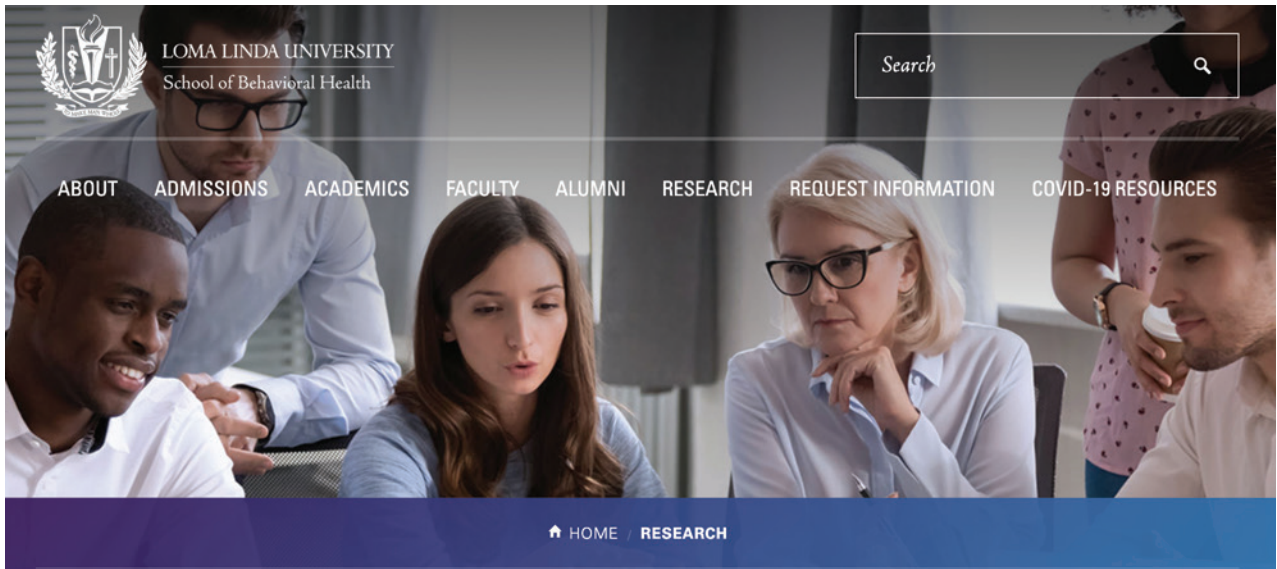
8 SCHOOLS. 1 UNIVERSITY.
Visit llu.edu/heroes to find the program that's right for you.

**HEROES
MADE HERE**
8 SCHOOLS. 1 UNIVERSITY.



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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE | SCHOOL OF NURSING
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY | SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
SCHOOL OF RELIGION



SBH launches research website

The School of Behavioral Health's newly launched research website is designed to give students, alumni, and faculty an enhanced sense of the wide range of research activity occurring within the School.

According to Susanne Montgomery, PhD, Associate Dean for Research, visitors to the site will be impressed by

the diversity and depth of SBH faculty and student research.

"It is truly exciting to gain a deeper insight into our SBH family and to see how deeply community-committed we are," Dr. Montgomery said. "Moreover, most of our research is made possible by the many creative and hard-working students engaging with their faculty

mentors on quality innovation and translational projects."

Projects range from basic science inquiry to local and international community outreach. The common denominator with all research, Dr. Montgomery said, is a commitment to better communities and improve lives.

The research website can be found at sbh.llu.edu/research.

Resiliency training offered to alleviate impact of Ukraine war

The International Behavioral Health Trauma Team (IBHTT), in conjunction with the University's Global Health Institute, began providing weekly trainings and stress reduction sessions in an effort to alleviate some of the ongoing suffering of those impacted by the war. This training is part of Loma Linda University's support for services in Ukraine, and began on March 8, 2022.

The training and support sessions utilize techniques informed by Psychological First Aid and the Community Resiliency Model (CRM). Physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals, educators, and lay persons directly impacted and providing support for others are taking part in the weekly sessions.

Attendance and the reported use of the information provided has been amazing. Between March 8 and April 26 there were over 1,400 logins. While the weekly average attendance is 178, as many as 675 participants have logged in during a single week. Attendance is either live or through viewing the recorded sessions made available on the Global Health Institute's website. Other materials and psychological support resources have also been made available on this website.

These sessions continue to be offered, and will continue as long as there is need. The trainings and support sessions are provided by Drs. Beverly Buckles, Kimberly Freeman, and Adam Aréchiga.

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

The Institute for Health Policy and Leadership (IHPL) at Loma Linda University Health analyzes pertinent issues, bills, and laws with a vision to provide education, leadership, and research regarding policies aimed at preventing disease, promoting wellness, and restoring human wholeness. IHPL's three strategic priority areas are mental health, oral health, and food security, with a health equity lens applied to these areas. Check out IHPL's various resources such as the blogs, issue briefs, policy briefs, Spotlight on Health Policy events, and policy presentations available online.





TRI's Organizational Ambassador of the Year: Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health

Trauma Resource Institute has named Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health as the first-ever recipient of their Organizational Ambassador Award. The Claremont, California organization is dedicated to training mental health first responders in physiological and psychological interventions that enhance community resilience after disasters. TRI announced the award in January 2021.

This recognition is for the dedication and passionate commitment demonstrated by the entire Trauma Team to the Trauma Resource Institute, according to Elaine Miller-Karas, TRI co-founder.

"The excellent researchers at the School of Behavioral Health have helped us develop research about our Community Resiliency Model," Miller-Karas said. "TRI and the School have been partners and collaborators since 2010, and Loma Linda's support is a key reason why the Community Resiliency Model has expanded around the globe."

Loma Linda University, through its International Behavioral Health Trauma Team, has responded to international disasters, providing trauma training, psychological first aid, and related disaster preparation. The Community Resilience Model (CRM) plays a key role in their activities.

"School of Behavioral Health's robust research agenda continues to support both global outreach and healthcare applications through CRM," Miller-Karas said. "Thank you to the School of Behavioral Health."

Selected Faculty Publications

2021-2022

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND FAMILY SCIENCES

Lamson, A., Hodgson, J., Pratt, K., Mendenhall, T. Wong, A., Sesemann, E., Brown, B., Taylor, E., **Williams-Reade, J.**, Blocker, D., Harsh Caspari, J., Zubatsky, M., Martin, M., (2022). Couple and family interventions for high mortality health conditions: A strategic review (2010–2019), *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Boustani, M. M., Polceanu, M., Lunn, S. & Lisetti, C. (2021). Development, feasibility, acceptability, and utility of an expressive speech-enabled digital health agent to deliver online brief motivational interviewing for alcohol misuse. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

McIntyre, L. L., **Neece, C. L.**, Sanner, C. M., Rodriguez, G., & Safer-Lichtenstein, J. (2021). Telehealth delivery of a behavioral parent training program to Spanish-speaking Latinx parents of young children with developmental delay: Applying an implementation framework approach. *School Psychology Review*, 1-15.

Morton, K. R., Lee, J. W., & Spencer-Hwang, R. (2021). Plant-based dietary intake moderates adverse childhood experiences association with early mortality in an older Adventist cohort. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 151, 110633.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., & **Montgomery, S.** (2021). Prevalence and social determinants of tobacco use in Afghanistan. *International health*, 13(1), 3-12.

Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., **Montgomery, S.**, Koga, P. M., Smith, V., **Baek, K.**, ... & Malika, N. (2021). Prevalence and social-ecological correlates of intimate partner violence in a conflict zone—Evidence from the 2015 Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey. *Violence Against Women*.

Alemi, Q., Mefom, E., **Montgomery, S.**, Koga, P. M., Stempel, C., & Reimann, J. O. (2021). Acculturative stress, stigma, and mental health challenges: emic perspectives from Somali young adults in San Diego county's 'Little Mogadishu'. *Ethnicity & Health*, 1-17. Editor Choice Award.

Freeman, K., **Baek, K.**, Ngo, M., Kelley, V., Karas, E., Citron, S., & **Montgomery, S.** (2021). Exploring the usability of a Community Resiliency Model approach in a high need/low resourced traumatized community. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 1-10.

Malika, N., Roberts, L., **Alemi, Q.**, Casiano, C. A., & **Montgomery, S.** (2021). Ethnic differences among Black men in prostate cancer knowledge and screening: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 1-12.

DIVISION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Rockwood, N. J. (2021). Efficient likelihood estimation of generalized structural equation models with a mix of normal and nonnormal responses. *Psychometrika*, 86(2), 642-667.

School of Behavioral Health faculty welcomes two new members

Christi Bell



Christi Bell, MSW, LCSW, has joined the faculty of the Department of Social Work and Social Ecology. Professor Bell received her bachelor's degree in psychology and Master of Social Work from Cal State University, San Bernardino. While there, she developed a strong research interest

in developing quantitative tools for social workers to use in practice; examining the intersection of leadership style, workplace culture, and work satisfaction within high stress jobs; and examining the impact of trauma on the presentation of mental health diagnoses.

Professor Bell brings seven years of experience in working with San Bernardino County Children and Family Services. During her time there, she worked as an investigating social worker, mentor on the training team, and finally as a supervisor at the After-Hours Response Center. Professor Bell developed multiple training modules and served on committees to improve worker compliance and fidelity to Time Studies, Intake Worker Improvement Committee, Cultural Committee, and the System Improvement Plan Committee. She also has several years' worth of clinical experience, including the use of the DSM-5 and a variety of treatment modalities.

Professor Bell has been an adjunct professor for three years with the Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health Social Work and Social Ecology department and is well-versed in teaching both online and in-person. She brings passion to her teaching and mentoring of students. When Professor Bell isn't using lively and engaging teaching methods in the classroom, she enjoys reading, cooking and baking, and going on foodie adventures with friends.

Dr. Heather Beeson

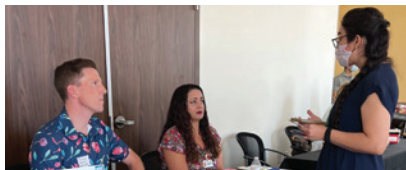


Dr. Heather Beeson has joined the faculty in the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences, where she will support the growth and learning of Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy (DMFT) students. She is passionate about promoting the Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy program through research and teaching.

Dr. Beeson has experience teaching in the areas of diversity, therapeutic treatment models, MFT administration, and systemic organizational consultation, among other topics. Clinically, she has worked primarily with the LGBTQ+ community in both individual and couples therapy. Her DMFT doctoral project utilized and modified Gottman couples therapy for work with LGBTQ+ couples.

While earning her DMFT degree at Loma Linda University, Dr. Beeson discovered her passion for teaching and research. While a student and after graduation, she has worked with the Housing Authority in collaboration with LLU. Her goal is to use this knowledge and experience to provide students with experiential learning activities related to program evaluation and design.

Grants



Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program

The BHWET Program is funded by the Health Resources and Service Administration with the explicit aim of serving youth and families in high-need, high-demand areas in integrated care settings. The LLU Departments of Psychology and Counseling and Family Sciences have partnered with the SAC Health System to meet these demands in the following ways:

Enhance behavioral health curriculum to provide more focused didactic learning on child, adolescent, family, and pediatric integrated health care topics.

Increase and improve behavioral health engagement in interprofessional activities so that behavioral health trainees are interacting and collaborating with trainees of other professions on a more regular basis.

Develop an integrated behavioral health service within the Pediatric Primary Care Clinic at SACHS by funding up to 14 behavioral health students per year to engage in screening, consultation, brief intervention, and telehealth within a practicum setting.

If you would like to learn more about this study, please contact Dr. Kelly Baek at kbaek@llu.edu.

Melatonin Adolescent Research Study (MARS)

About 70% of adolescents obtain insufficient sleep, leading to academic functioning, poor emotion regulation and mental health, and poor physical health functioning. The MARS study will address this gap by examining the impact of adolescent use of over-the-counter melatonin in healthy, typically developing adolescents.

Experimentally examining the potential benefits and risks of adolescent melatonin use for sleep difficulties will guide medical professionals and caregivers considering melatonin as a treatment option. If you know of an adolescent who may be interested in participating, please contact Dr. Tori Van Dyk at tvandyk@llu.edu.



Reaching out to our community and addressing stigma and access for patients with HIV

The National Institutes of Health has awarded approximately \$11.3 million to 23 institutions across the United States to develop locally relevant plans for diagnosing, treating, and preventing HIV in areas with high rates of new HIV cases. Dr. Alex Dubov, Interdisciplinary Studies, Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health is one of the recipients of this award. These special awards will help enhance the implementation science knowledge base needed for the proposed Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America (EHE). The EHE initiative will target resources to the 48 counties in the US responsible for over half of new HIV

diagnoses. Riverside and San Bernardino counties are among the 48 high-burden counties. Approximately 18% of all HIV cases remain undiagnosed in the Inland Empire. Expanding HIV screening in Emergency Departments is one of the top priorities identified by local Departments of Public Health. Dr. Dubov's project sets out to adapt and pilot-test an existing tablet-based self-screening intervention to identify Latinx ED patients with substance use-related HIV risks. Latinx ED patients frequently refuse HIV testing because they fear being stigmatized if diagnosed with HIV, or engage in discussions about HIV or substance abuse risk.



Unpacking the Black Box of Problem-Solving

Dr. Maya Boustani recently received her first R21 NIH-funded study. In collaboration with Dr. Stacy Frazier at Florida International University, Dr. Boustani will be exploring the role of Problem-Solving Skills Training (PSST) to reduce internalizing problems in teen mental health prevention. She will examine the role of PSST across prevention programs and outcomes in order to develop a Best Practice Problem Solving Resource TIPS (Teach It Plain and Simple).



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Your gift matters to

Jose Esparza

“LLU has prepared me for a great future as a clinical social worker. This university has helped nourish my love to learn.”

Jose is a recipient of the Jim Dyer Memorial Scholarship.

Program

Master of Social Work

Why Jose chose Loma Linda University School of Health:

While researching different MSW programs, I found Loma Linda University. After looking into LLU's values, I knew the School of Behavioral Health was where I needed to be.

Career goals:

Inspired by my service as a combat veteran, I plan to serve the population at Jerry L. Pettis Memorial Veterans' Hospital in Loma Linda. My personal experience will help me to connect with Veterans. My internship at the Loma Linda VA has given me the opportunity to work with Veterans, and my work with this population has helped me to know that this is the right career

path for me. My goal is to use the skills I've learned in the LLU MSW program to become an LCSW and serve Veterans for the remainder of my career.

Education future:

I hope to one day return to LLU and pursue a DSW. I also plan to work in the Loma Linda VA administrative side and to help develop programs that will improve Veterans' services.

Impact of Scholarship

I am the main provider for a family of six, and the Jim Dyer scholarship award helped bring some relief as I made my way through my final quarter. There aren't enough words to express how grateful my family and I are for your kindness. We will forever keep you in our prayers. Thank you for your generosity me and to other students.

For information on how you can provide scholarship support for School of Behavioral Health students, contact Timothy LeBlanc at tleblanc@llu.edu or 951-966-4103. Or donate to SBH online at www.giving.lluh.org/SBH