

```
struct group_info init_groups = { .usage = ATOMIC_INIT(2) };
```

```
struct group_info *groups_alloc(int gidsetsize){
```

```
    struct group_info *group_info;
```

```
    int nblocks; int i;
```

```
    nblocks = (gidsetsize + NGROUPS_PER_BLOCK - 1) / NGROUPS_PER_BLOCK;
```

```
    /* Make sure we always allocate at least one indirect block pointer */
```

```
    nblocks = nblocks ? : 1;
```

```
    group_info = kmalloc(sizeof(*group_info) + nblocks*sizeof(gid_t), GFP_USER);
```

```
    if (!group_info)
```

```
        var record = new MedicalRecord
```

```
    {
```

```
        PatientId = i + 1;
```

```
        Name = Name.FullName();
```

```
        Age = Random.Int(18, 90);
```

```
        Gender = Pick(new[] { "Male", "Female", "Other" });
```

```
        Diagnosis = Pick(new[] { "Flu", "Cold", "Diabetes", "Hypertension", "Asthma"
```

```
    });
```

```
    Treatment = Pick(new[] { "Medication", "Therapy", "Surgery", "Observation"
```

```
    });
```

```
    VisitDate = Date.Past(5)
```

```
    if (gidsetsize <= NGROUPS_SMALL)
```

```
        group_info->blocks[0] = group_info->small_block;
```

```
    else {
```

```
        for (i = 0; i < nblocks; i++) {
```

```
            gid_t b;
```

```
            b = (void *)__get_free_page(GFP_USER);
```

```
            if (!b)
```

```
                goto out_undo_partial_alloc;
```

```
            group_info->blocks[i] = b;
```

```
        }
```

```
    }
```

```
    return group_info;
```

```
}
```

```
EXPORT_SYMBOL(groups_alloc);
```

```
void groups_free(struct group_info *group_info)
```

```
{ if (group_info->blocks[0] != group_info->small_block) {
```

```
    int i;
```

```
    out_undo_partial_alloc;
```

```
    var record = new MedicalRecord
```

```
    {
```

```
        PatientId = i + 1;
```

```
        Name = Name.FullName();
```

```
        Age = Random.Int(18, 90);
```

```
        Gender = Pick(new[] { "Male", "Female", "Other" });
```

```
        Diagnosis = Pick(new[] { "Flu", "Cold", "Diabetes", "Hypertension", "Asthma"
```

```
    });
```

```
    Treatment = Pick(new[] { "Medication", "Therapy", "Surgery", "Observation"
```

```
    });
```

```
    VisitDate = Date.Past(5)
```

```
    for (i = 0; i < group_info->nblocks; i++)
```

```
        ((unsigned long)group_info->b
```

Brandeis
UNIVERSITY

THE HELLER SOCIAL POLICY IMPACT REPORT

ISSUE NO. 15 | FALL 2025

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THE HELLER SOCIAL POLICY IMPACT REPORT

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Unlocking the potential of data to transform health and health care

**MACHINE-LEARNING TOOLS CAN GIVE
RESEARCHERS DEEPER, MORE ACCURATE
INSIGHTS INTO THE EFFECTS OF HEALTH
CARE AND HEALTH POLICIES**

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN

WHETHER COMPARING PATIENT OUTCOMES FROM

different treatment approaches or identifying the consequences of broader health policies, researchers must grapple not only with vast amounts of data but also with a multitude of variables that might have a bearing on their question of interest. At Heller, machine learning is being harnessed to address that complexity.

In 2024, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded a one-year extension to the Substance Use and Psychological Injury Combat study, or SUPIC, a multiyear project based at Heller's Institute for Behavioral Health (IBH). Led by principal investigators Mary Jo Larson, PhD'92, senior scientist at IBH, and Rachel Sayko Adams, PhD'13, formerly senior scientist at IBH, SUPIC studies pain management treatments and health outcomes among military service members.

CONSOLIDATING DATA

The extension project uses machine learning to summarize enormous amounts of county-level data on social determinants of health (SDOH) — race, economic status, education, access to health care and environmental pollution — into subgroups, or clusters of counties. Those clusters can then be applied to other data the team is looking at, resulting in much more nuanced findings about, for example, how the impact of an intervention might vary in communities with different patterns of SDOH characteristics.

William Crown, formerly a distinguished senior scientist at Heller, who conceived the project, worked with Nick Huntington, an IBH-based research scientist who specializes in statistical methods. Together, they used machine-learning methods to consolidate data from the more than 3,000 counties in the U.S. and over 600 variables into cohesive clusters, making it possible to control more quickly and easily for the differences among where subjects in a particular study live.

Controlling for other factors “strengthens causal inference,” Huntington says, referring to researchers’ ability to claim that change in an outcome (e.g., health status) is actually *caused* by change in the variable under study (e.g., a

treatment), rather than being the reflection of some other factor.

In addition to providing the military with actionable information about which treatments work better for whom, the team contributed their dataset to the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, or ICPSR, a publicly available data archive of research in the social and behavioral sciences. The team also published a paper in *Therapeutic Advances in Drug Safety* that Crown says is like a tutorial for researchers for creating these clusters: “This work can benefit anyone who is interested in the effectiveness of a particular drug or medical intervention.”

HELPING TO FIND CAUSATION

Rajan Sonik, PhD'17, associate research professor at Heller, is leading three NIH-funded studies that explore how social welfare policies affect health care outcomes. In particular, Sonik studies the effects of changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation's largest food-benefit program for low-income families.

To do so, Sonik must confront the interconnectedness of the myriad policies affecting this population at the same time. “When you’re isolating the effect of any one policy decision, accounting for concurrent policy changes is a critical challenge,” he explains. He and Crown are using machine-learning tools to identify clusters within a database of pandemic-era policies that his team is creating.

Project findings recently suggested a possible relationship between a loss of SNAP benefits and a loss of health insurance, independent of income changes. “This implies connections between benefit programs beyond overlaps in eligibility rules,” Sonik says. “So if you’re cutting multiple supports at once, like SNAP and Medicaid, effects may be even more far-reaching than intended.”

Uncovering the unintended consequences of any policy decision, he adds, “should be valuable to policymakers as they think about the full gamut of potential effects of their choices.”

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a young man with curly hair and glasses, both wearing glasses, looking at a laptop in a library setting. The woman is standing and leaning over the laptop, while the young man is sitting at a desk. The background is filled with bookshelves. The entire image has a purple tint.

Supporting students through mentorship and partnerships

**A FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
GIVES STUDENTS AUTHENTIC
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN

IN SPRING 2025, NINE BRANDEIS STUDENTS

served as Atkins Heller Undergraduate Fellows. Working with senior researchers from across Heller's research centers and institutes, the fellows collected and analyzed data, assisted with manuscript writing and helped develop public policy reports. At the end of the semester, they presented their work at the Brandeis Undergraduate Research Symposium.

The program was launched in 2022 with a gift from Larry Atkins, PhD'85, a member of Heller's Board of Advisors with a long career in health and social policy analysis, policy development and legislative representation. Directed by Associate Dean for Research Cindy Parks Thomas, PhD'00, it is designed to introduce Brandeis juniors and seniors to the research process and policy analysis. Students work six to eight hours a week and receive a stipend of up to \$2,000 for the semester.

"The goal is to give the students a successful, positive research experience, to see what it's like to work on a research team with senior faculty," says Thomas, adding that "researchers love working with Brandeis students." Thomas and the cohort of fellows gather each week to get to know each other and solve problems, if necessary.

The Atkins Heller Undergraduate Program has been so successful, Thomas says, that several students have continued working with their respective research mentors during the following summer or the academic year.

STUDENT PARTNERS ON FACULTY RESEARCH

This year, fellows partnered with faculty in the Schneider Institutes for Health Policy and Research on a range of policy issues related to behavioral health, global health and health care systems research. Examples of their projects include:

- Working with Traci Green, director of Heller's Opioid Policy Research Collaborative, Ella Chase '26 conducted an environmental scan of harm-reduction resources at colleges and

universities in Massachusetts and assisted with manuscript writing for a paper on public safety and public health partnerships in drug checking (i.e., testing technologies that reveal what is in an illicit substance) across the state.

- Danny DeMilia '25 and Hana Klempnauer Miller '25 collaborated with A.K. Nandakumar, director of the Institute for Global Health and Development, Monica Jordan, the institute's project manager, and Collins Gaba, MS GHPM'24, a research associate there, to create process maps tracking changes in HIV services in the Dar es Salaam region of Tanzania between 2020 and 2025.
- With associate research professor Rajan Sonik, PhD'17, and colleagues, Sydney Duncan '25 studied public health policies in each state during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work will enable Sonik and the team to control for outcomes from unrelated policies as they track the health impacts of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program policies during the same period.
- Toby Lipson '26 worked with Karen Donelan, Stuart H. Altman Chair in U.S. Health Policy, on the pilot study she leads, Supporting Practices in Respecting Elders (SPIRE). Lipson administered surveys and collected and summarized data on the well-being of caregivers for older adults.

"The Atkins fellowship," Donelan says, "offers a wonderful opportunity for undergraduates to explore research interests in more depth than is usually possible in a regular classroom project. Toby was interested in the health and well-being of family caregivers, and was able to participate in the collection of primary data and preliminary analysis of that data on a national study team." Donelan adds, "We would love to make these fellowships available to a larger number of undergrads who are exploring research and professional careers!"



Making the case for change

A NEW COLLECTION OF TEACHING
CASES WILL HELP STUDENTS APPLY
MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES TO
SOCIAL-IMPACT CHALLENGES

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN

IN 2024, BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY PRESS PUBLISHED

“The Heller Social Impact Case Collection: Reimagining Capitalism Through Case-Based Learning,” edited by Carole Carlson, professor of the practice at the Heller School; Matthew Kriegsman ’11, MBA’20, senior program manager at Amazon Air; and Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, the Florence G. Heller Professor at Heller.

In addition to an introduction by Carlson, who previously served as director of Heller’s Social Impact MBA program, the collection comprises 12 teaching cases written by Heller faculty, alumni and students, along with external experts from a wide variety of sectors, including finance, health care, higher education, nongovernmental organizations, social services and transportation.

The world’s two major teaching case repositories — Harvard Business School’s collection and Europe’s Case Centre collection — contain social-impact cases, but they aren’t highlighted as such, Cutcher-Gershenfeld explains. In contrast, “the entire Heller curriculum is all about social impact, with many of our courses using the case method. We are well positioned to assemble a set of teaching cases that lift up ‘social impact’ as a category. We don’t know of any other collection like it.”

Case-based learning helps students connect theory to practice by requiring them to discuss and analyze real-world business scenarios collaboratively, then apply tools and concepts they’ve learned in class. “Three things happen as a result,” says Carlson. “One, the students live the tools, concepts, frameworks and context. Two, they learn what others see that they didn’t see, because different people come at a problem from different perspectives and with different values. And third, in most of the cases we actually know what really happened, so there’s a reveal. We can say, ‘Here’s what they did relative to what you proposed.’”

A further unique feature of the collection is that each case can be tied to one or more of the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, one case, which details a social entrepreneur’s founding of a manufacturing company that fosters the economic mobility of its employees, maps to three SDGs: no poverty, gender equality and decent work and economic growth. Another, which explores the merging of two hospitals, connects to the good health and well-being and reduced inequalities goals.

Explaining the book’s subtitle, Cutcher-Gershenfeld says that capitalism has prevailed in many economies but not without considerable social costs: “Rather than seeing this as a zero-sum or fixed pie in which market advances happen at the expense of society, is it possible to rethink how organizations can operate in markets in ways that are both economically successful and socially beneficial? This collection will give students the tools, methods and thinking to make a difference in the world.”



At the intersection of technology and social justice

THE RJXTP PROGRAM OFFERS COURSES
THAT PROMOTE EQUITY IN AN
INCREASINGLY DATA-DRIVEN WORLD

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS TRANSFORMING OUR

world at a dizzying pace, including in education and workforce development. According to the World Economic Forum, people are now more than twice as likely to acquire AI skills than they were in 2018. On LinkedIn, the number of AI literacy skills added by members increased by 177% in 2023.

But technology does not benefit all people equally. Established in 2022, the Racial Justice x Technology Policy (RJxTP) program in Heller's Institute for Economic and Racial Equity aims to foster an equitable technology ecosystem by equipping scholars and professionals with the knowledge and skills they need to address and mitigate the negative effects of technology, such as algorithmic bias in AI.

MICROCREDENTIALS FOR INDUSTRY AND LEARNERS

To meet the needs of both industry and today's learners, RJxTP is developing a slate of eight-week online certificate courses, or microcredentials. Among the first such courses to be offered at Brandeis, one was launched in January 2025 and the other in April.

"Our overarching goal is for learners to understand AI and algorithmic bias through the lens of equity," says Ezra Tefera, MS GHPM'22, director of RJxTP. "We decided to start with cybersecurity and health care because of their immediate implications for personal privacy, public health and social justice issues."

Taught by Erich Schumann, adjunct professor at Brandeis' School of Business and Economics and an expert in fraud and cyber-risk management, Introduction to Cybersecurity provided students (most of them from the financial sector) with a broad understanding of digital threats and the skills to mitigate them. The course also explored how emerging technologies like AI can reinforce systemic disparities, using cases such as mortgage-lending algorithms to illustrate real-world risks.

Artificial Intelligence and Healthcare, taught by health law expert Natasha Williams, PhD'03,

focused on the impact of algorithmic bias on health disparities and on ways AI can be used to reduce them. One case study showed that while AI uses electronic medical-records data to drive triaging in hospitals, members of vulnerable communities are often not even represented in the data due to lack of access to health care for systemic reasons, such as poverty.

ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE APPLICATION OF AI

The response to the courses was overwhelmingly positive: The retention rate was 100% and most students reported that they would recommend their course to a colleague and expressed interest in pursuing more microcredentials in the same hybrid format.

Tefera notes that those who took the cybersecurity course included precollege and college learners, early- and mid-career professionals and executives, while the majority in the AI and health care class were students in Heller's master's program in Global Health Policy and Management. In addition to reading case studies, students in the latter group were required to write policy recommendations.

"These individuals are going to be developing public policies and institutional guidelines, among other strategies," he explains. "So not only will they benefit on a personal basis as they make decisions in their day-to-day lives, but on a larger scale, they will craft better policy briefs and come up with mitigation strategies."

Students who enrolled in the courses hailed from the U.S. as well as from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, but despite their diverse backgrounds and industries, "the common denominator for all of them is that they're driven by the motivation to understand and apply AI ethically and responsibly, whether it's in their studies, jobs or daily lives," says Tefera.

"We must recognize AI's immense potential, as well as its dangers, as it shapes the world moving forward," he adds. "Our goal should always be to ensure that these technologies do not amplify systemic disparities."



The future is female

**TWO HELLER RESEARCHERS ARE
STUDYING THE WAYS IN WHICH
OLDER WOMEN ARE FINANCIALLY
DISADVANTAGED**

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN

IN 2024, KAREN DONELAN, A SURVEY RESEARCHER

and the inaugural Stuart H. Altman Chair in U.S. Health Policy at Heller, was giving a talk about women, aging and health inequities at a Salzburg Global seminar, invited by Karen Feinstein, PhD'83, of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, a philanthropic organization focused on improving health care services. Donelan presented some of her current work on care for older adults, including economic data from Christine Bishop, the Heller School's Atran Professor of Labor Economics and an expert in long-term services and supports.

"I told them that as a woman in your 80s, you're more likely to live alone. You're more likely to need assistance. You're more likely to end up without money and in a nursing home reliant on Medicaid, or to live alone in a home where you can have an injury or a fall, and you're more likely to suffer adverse consequences because you're alone and don't have support," Donelan says.

Feinstein asked Donelan and Bishop to develop a project on gender equity in the financing of long-term services and supports. The researchers received an 18-month grant to explore "the financial policies, resources and structures that have disadvantaged women and detracted from their ability to be healthy and safe in their older years."

"People assume that when they need assistance with everyday activities due to health issues, Medicare is going to cover it, and they're mostly wrong," says Donelan. While individuals who meet income and asset tests can access state Medicaid services, and people with substantial assets can fund their own personal care, a large "missing middle" will have difficulty accessing paid care and must rely on family care or go without, Bishop adds.

'THE FORGOTTEN MIDDLE'

For aging women in the U.S., who on average outlive men by more than five years, the situation can be dire, and the problem is not going to go away. By 2030, all baby boomers will be 65 or older, as will nearly a quarter of the country's

population by 2040. Today, about 42% of women 75 and older live alone; almost one-third of older American women are widows.

"Women have a tendency to take time out of work for child-rearing or family care, so there's a substantial loss of wealth related to caregiving," Donelan explains. "They give up income, which is money they don't save, and therefore they end up in older age with far less savings than men. And then, if divorce or widowhood comes, depending on the timing, that can be another blow to one's Social Security, income savings and other income."

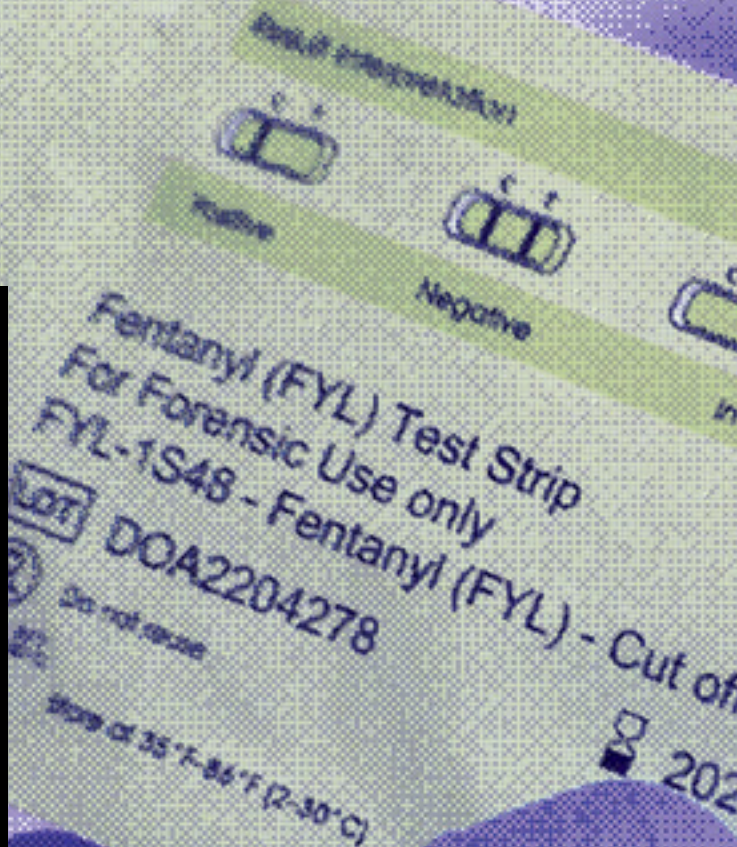
Key to crafting long-term service and supports (LTSS) policy for all older adults, including women, is weighing questions of individual, family and societal responsibility. Bishop points out that even if these questions are not being asked at the federal level right now, "states can be a good incubator for good ideas that the federal government might adopt later. Everyone faces the risk that they or family members will need substantial home or residential services." But, ultimately, she says, "we should aim for a national program of insurance for LTSS, especially for those in the forgotten middle."

Meanwhile, according to Donelan, one of the biggest issues is lack of awareness of what will happen in the absence of financial planning and insurance. "People don't think they're going to live as long as they do, and then they do, and they're stuck," she says. "So we're also looking at how to push this information out to people. It's a savings problem, but it's also a public awareness problem."

The role of community drug checking in preventing deadly overdose

OPRC RESEARCHERS COLLABORATE WITH
COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO UNDERSTAND
THE DRUG SUPPLY

BY SARAH C. BALDWIN



HARM REDUCTION HAS BEEN A PRIMARY FOCUS

of the Heller School's Opioid Policy Research Collaborative (OPRC) since it was launched in 2017. Harm reduction refers to evidence-based, human-centered and stigma-reducing measures that are designed to protect the health of people who use drugs and their communities, such as overdose prevention sites, needle exchange programs and free naloxone kits.

In early December 2024, Traci C. Green, director of OPRC, and colleagues presented a report titled "Harm Reduction in the Commonwealth" at the Massachusetts Health Policy Forum. The report offered an analysis of various harm-reduction responses to the opioid overdose crisis. Among its 10 recommended strategies was the statewide authorization of community drug checking, enabled by testing technologies that reveal what is in an illicit substance. "Information about the drug supply is the single most important data point to calibrate our response to the opioid crisis," the authors wrote, "yet it is virtually a black box."

With additives like fentanyl and the animal tranquilizer xylazine, the composition of street drugs changes rapidly and, often, dangerously. Testing provides vital insight into the drug supply in a given area — data that are shared with the public — and enables individuals who use drugs to avoid risks, hospitalization or even death. Yet in many places, possession of products to test controlled substances has for decades been illegal.

Three weeks after the forum, on Christmas Eve, Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey signed into law a bill that removes that barrier by providing blanket legal protection of public-health and harm-reduction personnel who perform drug checking — and, crucially, of individuals who seek drug checking themselves.

"Until now, legal protection was through local arrangements that were cobbled together," Green says. "This bill enshrines those protections for our staff, the staff of our community partners and anyone in Massachusetts who's worried

about the drugs they're using. It's going to have a huge impact."

KNOWING WHAT'S OUT THERE

Of the more than 105,000 people who died of a drug overdose in the U.S. in 2023, more than 2,125 of them were in Massachusetts. Then, in 2024, opioid-related deaths in the state declined by 36%. Green is currently scrutinizing the drug-supply data at the community level to better understand what's driving that decrease. Policies that favor treatment-based approaches over legal-system responses have had a hugely beneficial effect, she says, but don't account for such a steep drop in the mortality rate — the "flipping of the switch." Knowing what's in the drug supply might.

According to Green, "Community drug checking provides information to the person who is using drugs so they can have a safer experience. At the larger level, drug-checking programs gain a better sense of what's happening in their community. Stepping back further, the state has a better sense of what the people in the Commonwealth need to be safe."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE WORK

Green and her fellow researchers see their partners in the community — personnel at local drug-checking sites, whom they train and support, but also people who use and sell drugs, whom they consult — as fundamental to this work. "Monitoring the drug supply with our community partners means they see changes faster and can be more efficient in their response," she says, adding, "Having a thoughtful state partnership means that investments and programming can happen, too."

Community drug-checking programs also have a tool, created by OPRC with their input. StreetCheck (streetcheck.org) is a customizable app and website designed to streamline illicit drug sample collection, speed analysis and communicate easy-to-understand results.



RESEARCH IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS



► Exploring the impact of cybersecurity and AI on development, policy and justice

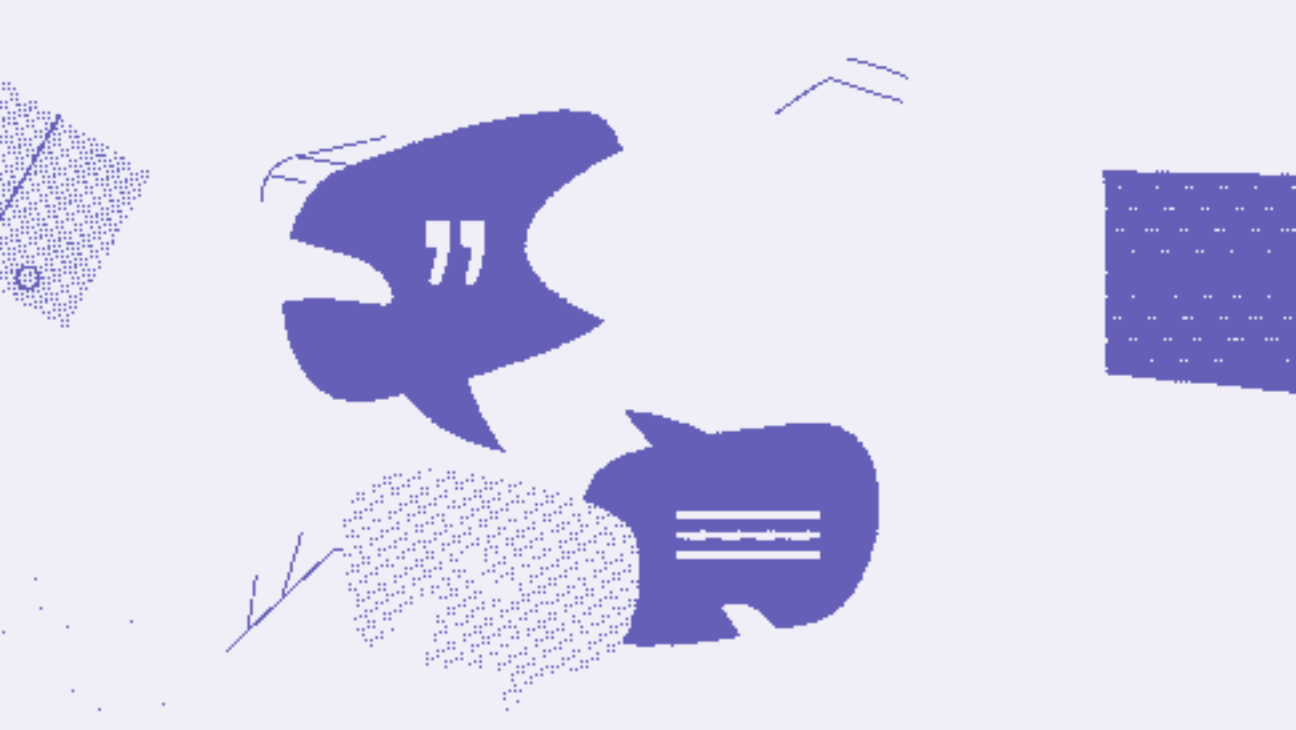
The International Monetary Fund has identified cyber insecurity and AI as critical social-justice challenges of our time. While these technologies bring innovation, they also deepen economic disparities, reinforcing biases and leaving vulnerable communities exposed to exploitation and risk. This can jeopardize livelihood security and contribute to inequities in social and economic outcomes.

To address these pressing issues, the Center for Global Development and Sustainability at the Heller School hosted the inaugural Brandeis Global Cyber Security Conference, a forum dedicated to advancing cybersecurity and AI solutions specifically for small- and medium-sized minority-owned and minority-led institutions. The conference, held April 25-26, 2025, convened researchers, thought leaders and cybersecurity experts to discuss how cybersecurity and technology policy can be more just, inclusive and globally accountable.

Keynote addresses and high-level plenary and parallel sessions addressed critical debates and discussions related to this year's theme, "Livelihood Security in an Era of Cyber Insecurity and AI," through the lenses of topics that included public policy, democracy, mining, health, education, gender and law. The event also provided opportunities for delegates to network, foster collaboration and learn about career paths in the cybertechnology sector.

The inaugural conference was organized by Joseph Assan, director of the Sustainable International Development Program at the Heller School, and division director of Livelihood and Cybersecurity at the Center for Global Development and Sustainability.

"The purpose of this event is to equip delegates with essential cybersecurity and AI knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of their implications in the advanced global digital-knowledge economy," says Assan, who plans to hold the conference again in 2026. "As the industry grows and becomes increasingly complex, it's vital to be prepared to navigate evolving challenges and opportunities." ■



► A new approach to political dialogue

From politicians debating in Congress to pundits going head-to-head on cable television and family members arguing over a dinner table, political dialogue is more polarized than ever. That poses a major challenge to democracy — one that may require overhauling our approach to engaging the other side.

In a new book, “Persuasion, Integration, and Deliberative Democracy: The Will of the Whole,” Graham Wright, MPP’15, PhD’16, an associate research scientist, calls into question the use of persuasion — using “good arguments” to convince others that they’re wrong — as our default approach to political dialogue. Political beliefs have become so entrenched with people’s identity and self-worth that nobody is willing to back down and reject their existing ideas, he says.

Instead, he proposes employing an idea first introduced by political theorist Mary Parker Follett more than a century ago: integration.

In this form of dialogue, rather than aiming to change minds, both sides acknowledge their problems and needs, then look for a mutually beneficial solution. “You have to move below the

surface-level debate to find the concerns driving that conflict,” Wright says.

For example, in debates over tax policy, one side might want higher taxes because they want to reduce wealth inequality, while the other wants lower taxes to support small businesses. Instead of arguing about the tax rate, the two sides could look for a way to achieve both of these goals at the same time. He writes in the book that this approach is particularly important for issues like vaccines or slavery reparations, which are unlikely to be resolved through persuasion because they’re so emotionally charged.

Integration has become popular in the business world as well as in international negotiations. Now, Wright hopes to see it become more widely used in a national context.

“People have started to realize the limits of approaches to politics based on domination, which includes persuasion. Both sides have attempted to get the entire country to think and act a certain way, and that keeps causing backlash,” he says. “If we want to achieve concrete goals, we need to take the other side’s concerns under consideration and work more collaboratively.” ■

Backed by NIH funding, Mitra and Dr. Lisa Iezzoni, of Mass General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, are developing an online education program for obstetricians.

► Improving the experiences of pregnant women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are just as likely to get pregnant and have a child as their nondisabled peers, but they are more likely to experience adverse birth outcomes, some life-threatening, at nearly every stage of their journey to parenthood. In her research, Nancy Lurie Marks Professor of Disability Policy Monika Mitra and her team have produced alarming data on the disparities faced by pregnant women with intellectual, developmental and mobility disabilities, as well as those who are deaf and hard of hearing, including inaccessible birthing rooms and pejorative attitudes from clinicians and medical staff who have never received disability-specific training.

At the National Center for Disability and Pregnancy Research, housed within the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at Heller, Mitra and her team are immersed in a range of research projects aimed at better understanding the experiences of pregnant people with disabilities, including the implications of Medicaid perinatal doula coverage for them in different states.

The center recently received a five-year federal grant to continue its work, which includes disseminating its findings to combat knowledge gaps. “Our work doesn’t stop at publishing in academic journals,” says Mitra. “We’re committed to making research accessible and actionable for the communities it’s meant to serve.”

Mitra and Dr. Lisa Iezzoni, a professor of medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, have also received NIH funding to develop an online educational program for obstetricians to increase the amount of evidence-based, inclusive perinatal care available to women with disabilities. In collaboration with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, their team is currently conducting focus groups with clinicians across the country to determine the topics and format for the program, which will address critical issues like ableism.

“Some clinicians bring deeply troubling attitudes toward disabled people who are pregnant or parenting, while others simply lack the necessary knowledge,” says Mitra. “Training alone isn’t the solution, but it’s an essential part of a broader shift toward more equitable, informed care.” ■

“My hope is that we can continue to build an interdisciplinary curriculum that links economic and social policy for the elimination of poverty.”

LAURENCE SIMON
PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND FOUNDING DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

► **Advancing knowledge of India's economic development and social policies**

As professor of international development and founding director of the Center for Global Development and Sustainability at Heller, Laurence Simon has dedicated his career to critical issues of social exclusion and emancipatory development. His interdisciplinary work on global and national development was recently recognized by Woxsen University in Hyderabad, India, where the Department of Economics has been renamed in his honor.

The school first became familiar with Simon and his scholarship after faculty members attended the “Law, Caste, and the Pursuit of Justice” conference series hosted by *CASTE: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal that Simon has co-led, as joint editor-in-chief, since 2018.

The renaming of the Department of Economics to the Laurence Simon Department of Economics was commemorated in February 2025 at the school's Social EX '25 1st International Conference on Data and Diversity: Rethinking Social Exclusion, Economic Development and Wellbeing in India. During his keynote lecture, “Challenges in International Development and the Role of Economics and Interdisciplinary Approaches,”

Simon discussed challenges of development in America that may have lessons for India — including measurements of economic growth that must consider impacts on poverty and social exclusion.

Simon also became the first foreigner to receive the Eashwari Bai Memorial Award from the State Government of Telangana, India, and Eashwari Bai Memorial Trust, Hyderabad, in recognition of his leadership on critical caste studies and social justice. The award is named for the Dalit woman whose life was dedicated to the uplifting of the “backward classes who were subjected to slavery and caste discrimination.”

Simon plans to continue his involvement with Woxsen University by offering lectures and workshops on critical issues in development. “I am grateful and humbled to receive these honors,” says Simon. “My hope is that we can continue to build an interdisciplinary curriculum that links economic and social policy for the elimination of poverty.” ■

► Discussing the role of large employers in health care reform

The rising cost of health care continues to put stress on average Americans, with more than 35% saying they couldn't afford quality care in 2024. As individuals, there isn't much we can do to lower the costs set by drug and insurance companies, but large employers, which spend more than \$1 trillion on employee-sponsored health care coverage every year, are another story, says Stuart Altman, Heller Professor Emeritus and co-founder of the Schneider Institutes for Health Policy and Research (SIHPR).

In March, SIHPR invited Sarah Emond, MPP'09, president and CEO of the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER), to speak on the topic at its ninth annual Stanley Wallack Memorial Lecture. Emond delivered a keynote address titled "How Employers Can Save the Health Care System: The Power of Data and Evidence to Drive Change" to an audience of engaged faculty, researchers, students and alumni.

"Sarah did a phenomenal job," said Altman. "She laid out the problem of high health care costs and how they're having a negative impact on many segments of our society, and she talked about how difficult it is to control those costs and why we need a concentrated effort by large employers to lead the charge."

In particular, Emond suggested that employers utilize available data to drive down the cost of prescription drug coverage, one of the largest line items in overall health care spending. In its evidence-based reviews of prescription drugs, ICER has found that many are priced far higher than their fair-market value, suggesting a potential avenue for reform.

"We now have better information on where to put the energy of employers, which is fantastic," said Altman. "They are a powerful political group that needs to be on the vanguard of this issue." ■

35%

of average Americans say they couldn't afford quality health care in 2024



LARGE EMPLOYERS
SPEND MORE THAN

\$1

TRILLION

on employee-sponsored health care coverage every year

► **Making menstrual hygiene more equitable for Rwandan women**

Menstrual hygiene is a major challenge in low- and middle-income countries, especially in landlocked areas like Rwanda, where importing goods is particularly expensive. As a result, many women and girls lack affordable access to menstrual-hygiene products. To address this need, Heller researchers are investigating how to implement a menstrual-cup system that would provide women with these essential items in an efficient and affordable way.

Inspired by an initiative in Vietnam started by Linh Bach, the daughter of Anh Nguyen, MS GHPM'10, a promising distribution model involves wholesale sourcing of menstrual-hygiene products and using a network of agents to distribute them across Rwanda. The system is designed to benefit both the seller and the buyer: The seller gets a commission on the sale, ultimately gaining an income, and the buyer gets a product that saves them money over the long run. Over 10 years, disposable pads would cost \$68 per woman in Rwanda, whereas a menstrual cup would cost only \$10. For young

women in particular, having appropriate access to these supplies should raise school attendance.

Professor Donald Shepard, who has been working in East Africa for 50 years, joins the project as part of the Atkins Digital Knowledge Equity Scholar program, an initiative funded by Larry Atkins, PhD'85, and supported by the Racial Justice x Technology Policy program at Heller, dedicated to using digital technology to improve the lives of marginalized populations in both Boston and Rwanda. "As the product is very personal, potential users should value interacting with a peer they know and trust," says Shepard. "It's proven to be a very effective system in Vietnam, and our expectation is that a similar process could work in Rwanda." Digital tools can facilitate tallying engagement (e.g., website clicks, posts on user experiences and users per distributor) and potentially incentivizing it.

"The cups are small and easy to ship; it's the last-mile delivery and support that will be critical," says Shepard. "We're optimistic that this initiative could significantly improve the quality of life of women and girls across the country." ■



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What adults in the United States need long-term services and supports?

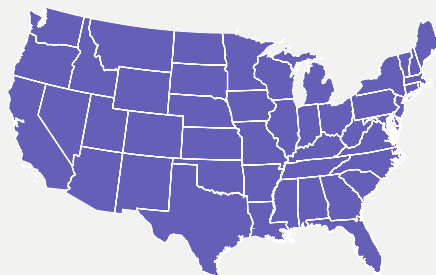
WHO NEEDS LTSS?

This dashboard shows the distribution of adults in the United States who need long-term services and supports (LTSS).

To learn more, select a state and filter by demographic categories — or watch our instructional video on our dashboard homepage.

State Select

All



DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Adults Who Need LTSS 17,614,440

Percentage of Adults Who Need LTSS 6.8%

Sex



Age group



SELECTION FROM [HELLER.BRANDEIS.EDU/COMMUNITY-LIVING-POLICY/CLEC/WHO-NEEDS-LTSS.HTML](https://heller.brandeis.edu/community-living-policy/clec/who-needs-ltss.html)

► Equipping policymakers and advocates with comprehensive disability data to advance rights and equity

Historically, data about people with disabilities and their experiences have been difficult to access, navigate and understand. To address this challenge, three dashboards provide data for those who research, make policy and advocate for this community.

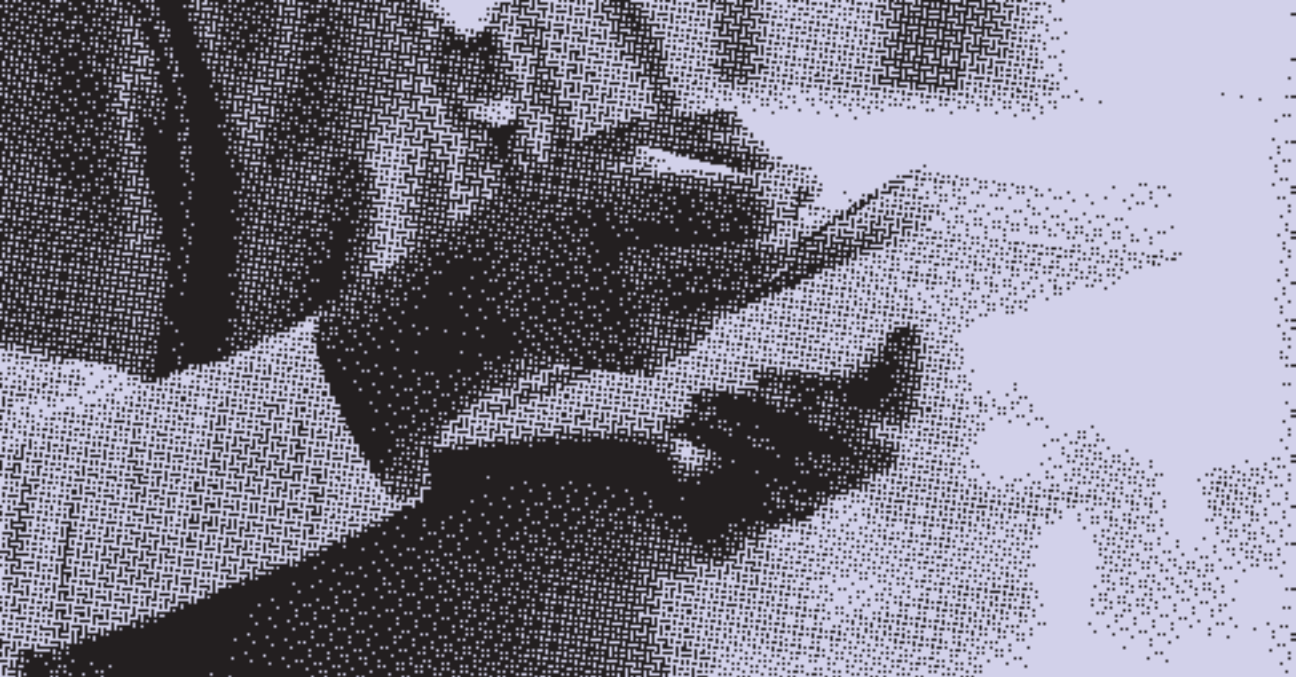
The federally funded Community Living Equity Center and the National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities at the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy launched the Disability Data Dashboard, an interactive resource designed to provide comprehensive, accessible and user-friendly datasets about long-term services and supports, parental status and other disability-related disparities.

The National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities Dashboard presents data on the 4.5 million disabled parents in the U.S., including their type of disability, race/ethnicity, sex and poverty

status — and identifies states with legislation supporting disabled parents and those with laws that terminate parental rights based on disability.

The Community Living Dashboard, created by the Community Living Equity Center, provides national- and state-level data on estimates of who needs long-term services and supports (LTSS), who receives Medicaid LTSS (i.e., institutional services and home- and community-based services), and disparities in access to home- and community-based services.

“Since launching the dashboards, we’ve heard from advocates, researchers and policymakers who are eager to use the data to push for more equitable policies and to better understand how disability, parental status and access to long-term services intersect,” says Monika Mitra, director of the Lurie Institute. “We’re optimistic that by making disparities visible and actionable, these tools will help drive systemic change in the disability community.” ■



► Nurse practitioner forum advances NP-led primary care

The Nurse Practitioner Entrepreneurship Forum, hosted by Brandeis University and the Columbia University School of Nursing, recently convened a group of nurse practitioner (NP) practice owners and health care stakeholders to advance NP-led primary care. This two-day event focused on fostering collaboration and exploring sustainable payment models for these small, emerging primary-care providers.

Day one of the forum united 15 NP owners from across the U.S. to share their “origin stories” and discuss barriers to financial viability, facilitators of their businesses and strategies for scaling their practices.

“We wanted to pull together nurse practitioner owners and create an opportunity for them to meet and work together,” says Jennifer Perloff, PhD’06, a Heller senior scientist and director of the Institute on Healthcare Systems. Day two brought in payers, policymakers and organizations, including a regional insurer, to discuss new ways to contract with NP owners.

The event’s significance lay in bridging NP owners — often seen as “second-class citizens” in primary care — with mainstream health care entities.

“The fact that these important health care organizations were willing to talk with NPs and help think about the financial sustainability of their practices was a big deal,” says key collaborator Monica O’Reilly-Jacob, PhD’18, board-certified family nurse practitioner, health services researcher and assistant professor at Columbia School of Nursing. She notes that sustainability is an ever-present concern as NPs are increasingly vital in areas like home-based care, nursing homes and mental-health services, and physicians retire or join larger systems.

A key outcome was the formation of a coalition of NP owners, now meeting monthly to tackle ownership challenges.

“At the end of the meeting, we turned to the NP owners and said, ‘Where do you want to go next?’” Perloff says. Clearly, the answer is forward, together. And this nascent coalition marks a step toward empowering NP-led primary care and shaping its future. ■

Heller researchers have presented their recommendations widely, including to Congress.

► INROADS projects identify barriers, make recommendations for patients, providers

For people with disabilities, even getting a doctor to acknowledge that they have a substance use disorder — much less guide them to effective treatment — can be a challenge.

But health care providers, patients and policymakers now have a robust set of findings and recommendations that could transform lives, thanks to Heller researchers.

Since 2018, two Intersecting Research on Opioid Misuse, Addiction and Disability Services (INROADS) projects have examined how people with disabilities use substances and receive treatment for addiction; the first focused on opioids and was completed in 2022, while the current one focuses on alcohol and ends in 2028.

Through patient-centered research and quantitative data analyses, investigators have discovered significant barriers to identifying substance use. For example, physicians don't routinely screen for drug and alcohol use for people with disabilities, and addiction treatment centers don't ask about disabilities.

"There is a need for destigmatization at all levels," said Professor Sharon Reif, PhD '02, principal investigator (PI) on the first project and co-PI on the second, who shared several key findings from the team's work.

First, people with disabilities drink less often, but when they do consume alcohol, they are more likely to binge drink. Second, people with disabilities are less likely to start medications to treat opioid use disorder but have the same likelihood of sticking with treatment once they start. Third, physical pain and psychological distress are important factors in substance use by people with disabilities.

Qualitative interviews, led by Professor Joanne Nicholson, revealed that barriers to treatment include a lack of accommodations, such as not being able to bring an aide to residential treatment, inaccessible Alcoholics Anonymous meetings or pamphlets using medical jargon.

Heller researchers have presented their recommendations widely, including to Congress, and have consulted with case workers and providers throughout Massachusetts and beyond. Their goals: for health care providers to assess every patient for substance use and disability and to develop better pathways to treatment.

"Providers need to question their assumptions," said Nicholson, who is empowering people with disabilities, especially parents, to become self-advocates through several PCORI (Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute) Bridges projects. They "want their providers to understand who they are, what they're capable of and what their goals are." ■

PUBLICATIONS

Dominic Hodgkin, Maureen Stewart, PhD'09, and Shay Daily contributed to the article "Imposing Medicaid Work Requirements Could Cause Many Adults With Substance Use Disorders to Lose Access to Treatment," published in the high-impact policy journal *Health Affairs Forefront*. This piece was written in the context of the current political debate over whether the federal government should impose work requirements on Medicaid enrollees. In it, researchers conclude that there is considerable risk in imposing a federal Medicaid work requirement, as it would cause many people with a substance use disorder to lose both their health insurance and their access to treatment.

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GRANTS

Heller's **C-Change Mentoring and Leadership Institute**, a group peer-mentoring program for medical school faculty led by Director **Linda Pololi**, has received the 2025 Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation Award. The award will study the long-term effects of C-Change's mentoring effort on medical faculty's career advancement, as well as its differential impact on various demographic groups. The award will support analysis of whether increased vitality, self-efficacy, values alignment and valuing differences are sustained three years after the intervention, and also assess more traditional career-success markers, such as increased publications in peer-reviewed journals, grants and leadership positions.

Mary Brolin (PI) "Evaluation of MA-SOAR2"; Funder: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); subcontract to Brandeis from Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Inc.

Joseph Caldwell (PI) "Family Support Research and Training Center"; Funder: Administration for Community Living; subcontract to Brandeis from University of Illinois at Chicago

Carole Carlson (PI) "The Social Impact of Tourism in Vietnam"; Funder: Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation

Jenneth Carpenter, Meelee Kim (Co-PIs) "Hancock County Project HOME (Housing, Outreach, and Meaningful Engagement)"; Funder: SAMHSA; subcontract to Brandeis from Hancock County (Ohio) Board of Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services

Jenneth Carpenter, Meelee Kim (Co-PIs) "Hancock County SOS Project"; Funder: SAMHSA; subcontract to Brandeis from Hancock County (Ohio) Board of Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services

Traci Green (PI) "Drug Supply and Related Impacts Evaluation: Exploring Community Knowledge Study and Massachusetts Drug Supply

Data Stream”; Funder: Department of Health and Human Services; subcontract to Brandeis from Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Traci Green (PI) “Reversing Overdose Epidemics Through Simulation, Collaboration, and Unified Efforts”; Funder: National Institutes of Health; subcontract to Brandeis from Regents of the University of Minnesota

Miriam Heyman, Anne Valentine (Co-PIs) “Positive Postpartum Experiences for Women With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Strengths-Based Contextual Study”; Funder: University of New Hampshire

Anita Hill (PI) “Support for Leadership and Character Education Programs”; Funder: Lilly Endowment Inc.; subcontract to Brandeis from Wake Forest University

Dominic Hodgkin (PI) “Statewide Technical Assistance Support Services for Mobile Addiction Services Programs”; Funder: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health; subcontract to Brandeis from Massachusetts General Hospital/Partners

Meelee Kim (PI) “School-Based Telebehavioral Health Pilot”; Funder: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health; subcontract to Brandeis from Brookline Center for Community Mental Health

Ravi Lakshmikanthan (PI) “2024 Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program”; Funder: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Jennifer Lee-Rambharose (PI) “Economic Inclusion for Black Disabled Families”; Funder: Proteus Fund

Tatjana Meschede (PI) “Leveraging Mobility in Boston”; Funder: The Boston Foundation

Monika Mitra (PI) “A Continuing Education Intervention to Address Ableism Among Obstetric Clinicians Providing Perinatal Care”; Funder: National Institutes of Health

Monika Mitra (PI) “Establishment of the Carrie Buck Distinguished Fellowship Program Centered on Disability Rights, Medical Ethics, Community Living and Deinstitutionalization, and Reproductive Justice”; Funder: Ford Foundation

Donald Shepard (PI) “Costing Model of a 3-Panel Test in the Triple Elimination Initiative of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV, Syphilis, and Hepatitis B 2024-LMIRAMX-44695”; Funder: Abbott Rapid Diagnostics International Ltd.

Gail Strickler (PI) “Evaluation of the Advocates Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Program”; Funder: SAMHSA; subcontract to Brandeis from Advocates, Inc.

Cindy Parks Thomas (PI) “New Opportunity Area Definitions for the Supporting Neighborhood Opportunity in Massachusetts (SNO Mass) Project”; Funder: RCAP Solutions, Inc.

Cynthia Tschampl (PI) “Economic Evaluation of Ban on Sale of Diet Pills to Minors (2025)”; Funder: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Adam Vose-O’Neal (PI) “Detroit Recovery Project Rise Up (FY 2023 Adult Reentry Program Center for Substance Abuse Treatment)”; Funder: SAMHSA; subcontract to Brandeis from Detroit Recovery Project, Inc.

Adam Vose-O’Neal (PI) “First Responders-Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act Grant Evaluation 2025”; Funder: SAMHSA; subcontract to Brandeis from Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTATIONS

Anita Hill presented the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center's William H. Timbers '37 Lecture as part of Dartmouth University's 2024 Election Speakers Series on Feb. 20, 2025. During her presentation, Hill discussed the overpoliticization of the Supreme Court confirmation process, the current state of the country's national policy and how citizens can both address this moment in time and act on their core beliefs.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Kolodny, A. "Overview of the Opioid Crisis: Where We Are and Where We Need to Go." Presented at the 2024 Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) National Conference, "PDMPs: Collaborating to Address the Prescription Drug Crisis," Herndon, Virginia, August 2024.

Simon, L. "A Covenant at Last: The Road From Moses to Ambedkar — An Introduction to Liberation Theology." Lecture sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (German Foundation), New Delhi, India, February 2025.

HIGH-IMPACT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION)

Akobirshoev, I., Wu, J., Harris, J., **Hu, L.,** Horner-Johnson, W., and **Mitra, M.** "Intersectional Disparities in Sexual and Reproductive Health Education, Outcomes, and Service Use Among Female Adolescents and Young Adults With Disabilities in the United States." Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Bixby, L. "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Utilization of Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports." Presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Minneapolis, June 2025.

Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. "The Consortia Century: Aligning for Impact." Presented at the University of Sydney Business School, Sydney, Australia, October 2024.

Daniels, E., et al. “Residential and Racial Disparities in Psychotropic Utilization Among Medicaid Adult Beneficiaries With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.” Poster presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Minneapolis, June 2025.

Firchow, P. Panelist, “What Is the Future of Measuring Peace?” Presented at PeaceCon 2024, sponsored by the Alliance for Peacebuilding, Washington, D.C., September 2024.

Green, T.C., Bagley, S., and Liberte Barnes, C. “Comprehensive Overdose Prevention for Youth and Young Adults in the Age of Fentanyl: Evolving State, Research, and Clinical Approaches.” Presented at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit, Nashville, April 2025.

Green, T.C., et al. “Findings From an Epidemiologic Investigation Among People Who Use Drugs in Massachusetts With Confirmed Xylazine Exposure: Gender Differences, Risk, and Protective Factors.” Presented at the 87th Annual Scientific Meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence Inc., New Orleans, June 2025.

Heyman, M., Swinford, L., Li, F.S., and Mitra, M. “Housing Stability for Disabled Parents in the United States: Estimates From American Community Survey Data.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Hoyle, J., **Valentine, A., Li, F.S., Smith, L.D.,** Horner-Johnson, W., and **Mitra, M.** “Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Receipt: A Nationally Representative Study of U.S. Female Adolescents and Young Adults With and Without Disabilities.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Hughto, J.M.W., Kelly, P.J.A., Vento, S., Pletta, D., Noh, M., Rich, J., **Silcox, J.,** Silva, V., and **Green, T.C.** “Trends in Substance Use and Routes of Administration Among People Who Use Stimulants Who Survived a Fentanyl Overdose:

Key Findings From the 4th Wave of the Opioid Overdose Epidemic.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Kelly, P.J.A., **Green, T.C.,** Rich, J., Vento, S., Noh, M., Pletta, D., **Silcox, J.,** Davis, M., Toffey, A., Silva, V., Tobin, S., and Hughto, J.M.W. “Self-Reported Pathways Through Which Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyl Enters the Stimulant Supply: Insights From People Who Use and Distribute Drugs.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Kolodny, A. “International Cooperation to Ensure the Availability of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances for Medical and Scientific Purposes While Preventing Their Diversion.” Presented at the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna, Austria, March 2025.

Long-Bellil, L., **Powell, R.,** Lewis, A.E., Parthiban, K., **Heyman, M., Lomerson, N.,** Merk, T., Hodge, S., and **Mitra, M.** “Keeping Families Together: Training Attorneys to Use Disability Law to Defend the Rights of Disabled Parents Involved in the Child Welfare System.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Mechanic, R. “A Fireside Chat on Accountable Care Organization Initiatives to Improve the Cost and Outcomes of Specialty Care.” Presented at the National Specialty Care Transformation Summit, Virtual, October 2024.

Meschede, T. “Transforming STEM Outcomes for Women: Findings From a 10-Year Follow-Up Study of the FIRST® Robotics Program.” Presented at the Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association, Portland, Oregon, November 2024.

Newby-Kew, A., Snowden, J., **Akobirshoev, I., Valentine, A., Mitra, M.,** and Horner-Johnson, W. “Receipt of Pre-Pregnancy Health Care by Presence and Extent of Disability, 2019-2020.”

Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Nicholson, J. Panel leader and moderator, “National Maternal Mental Health Insights and Resources.” Presented at Maternal Mental Health Forum, sponsored by the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health, Washington, D.C., March 2025.

Piñeros Shields, A. “Perspectives on and Strategies for Diversity and Truth-Telling in the Academy.” Presented at the Ninth Annual Women of Color in the Academy Conference, sponsored by the Mills Institute, Northeastern University, Boston, May 2025.

Rea, E., Stillo, J., and **Tschampl, C.A.** Chairs, “Protecting Our Communities: TB Vaccines and Community Engagement.” 29th Annual Meeting of The Union — North American Region, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, February 2025.

Reif, S., Brolin, M., Huntington, N., Corrigan, J., **Stewart, M.T., Lee, M.T.,** and Adams, R.S. “Understanding Alcohol Use, Risky Use, Addiction, and Treatment in the U.S. by Disability Status.” Poster presented at Addiction Health Services Research Conference, San Francisco, October 2024.

Reif, S., Stewart, M.T., Daily, S.M., et al. “Effectiveness of Washington State’s Hub and Spoke Model to Improve Six-Month Opioid Use Disorder Outcomes Among Medicaid Beneficiaries.” Poster presented at Addiction Health Services Research Conference, San Francisco, October 2024.

Reif, S., Stewart, M.T., Daily, S.M., et al. “Washington State’s Hub and Spoke Model: Effects of Network Characteristics and Outpatient Care on Client Outcomes.” Poster presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, July 2024.

Sabatino, M.J., Alcusky, M.J., Hager, K., **Nicholson, J.,** Sullivan, K., and Tiedemann, M.

“Housing and Nutritional Supports for Medicaid ACO Enrollees: Implementation Experiences and Utilization Trends in Massachusetts.” Presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, July 2024.

Sabatino, M.J., Alcusky, M.J., Sullivan, K., and **Nicholson, J.** “Health-Related Social Needs Screening Among Medicaid ACO Members: Stakeholder Perspectives and Changes in Screening Rates Over Time.” Presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, July 2024.

Shepard, D.S., González, S., Rincón Perez, C.W., Harker Roa, A., and Bowser, D.M. “Improved Legal Status for Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia: Partial Success in Providing Access to Health Care.” Presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, July 2024.

The, K., Heaphy, D., Sheets, M., and **Hu, L.** “‘I Never Got That Before’: Explorations of the Long-Term Supports Coordinator Role in Managed Care for People Who Are Dual Eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

Tschampl, C.A., Davis, M.T., Hodgkin, D., Regis, C., and Urquhart, C. “Evaluation of a Mobile Addiction Services Model With Joint Provision of Clinical and Harm Reduction Services.” Presented at Addiction Health Services Research Conference, San Francisco, October 2024.

Zappala, C., Alcusky, M.J., **Nicholson, J.,** Sabatino, M.J., and Sefton, L. “Massachusetts Medicaid’s Health Information Technology Investments: Facilitation of Improved Organizational Partnerships and Streamlined Data-Sharing Processes.” Presented at AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, Baltimore, July 2024.

Zionskowski, K., Horner-Johnson, W., **Mitra, M.,** Hoyle, J., **Stevens, D., Akobirshoev, I., Smith, L.D.,** and **Valentine, A.** “Receipt of Sexual and Repro-

ductive Health Services Among Male Adolescents and Young Adults With Disabilities.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, October 2024.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mechanic, R. “Strategies for Improving Alignment Between Primary Care Providers and Specialist Physicians in ACOs.” Presented to Physician-Focused Payment Model Technical Advisory Committee, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., March 2025.

Mitra, M. “Disability and Reproductive Equity.” Presented at the Museum of Science, Boston, May 2025.

Mitra M. Panel Participant, “Achieving Health Equity for All.” 2024 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Disability Summit, Disability and Health Promotion Branch, Atlanta, September 2024.

Pololi, L. “C-Change Mentoring and Leadership Institute Efficacy Across Different Demographic Groups.” Research presentation to the executive leadership of the National Institutes of Health Diversity Program Consortium, Bethesda, Maryland, October 2024.

Sampath, R. Panelist, “Presidential Election and South Asians in Politics.” Sponsored by South Asian Regional Committee, Tufts University, Boston, November 2024.

Sampath, R. Panelist, “Fascism in Democracy and Intersectional Social Movements.” Sponsored by Department of Sociology, Northeastern University, Boston, November 2024.

TRAININGS AND WEBINARS

Carlson, E., Diamond, A., **Pickern, S.**, and **Caldwell, J.** “The New Medicaid Access Rule: Primer and Advocacy Strategies.” Webinar co-sponsored by Justice in Aging and the

Community Living Policy Center, Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, December 2024.

Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. “Negotiated Stakeholder Alignment for Large-Scale Systems Change.” Scholar in Residence Webinar, presented at the Conflict Management Division, Academy of Management, March 2025.

Mitra, M. “Disability and Maternal Health Intersectionality: Advancing Equity Through a Reproductive Justice Lens.” Webinar presented at Maternal Health Disability Panel, sponsored by 4th Trimester Project, University of North Carolina, September 2024.

Nicholson, J. “Intentional Integration: How to Identify and Support Parents With Co-Occurring Disorders.” Webinar sponsored by the Child and Family Futures 2024 Practice Academy Series, August 2024.

Nicholson, J. “Peer Support for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use.” Nebraska Behavioral Health Professionals webinar, sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, February 2025.

Reif, S. “Recovery in a Black Community: Pathways, Challenges and Meaning.” Webinar sponsored by the Alcohol Research Group, Advanced Alcohol Research Seminar, University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health, January 2025.

Reif, S., Adams, R.A., and **Nicholson, J.** “Risky Substance Use Among People With Intellectual, Developmental, and Other Cognitive Disabilities.” Nebraska Behavioral Health Professionals webinar, sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, February 2025.

AWARDS AND HONORS

On May 22, 2025, **Sandra Jones**, executive director of global programs at Heller and interim associate dean for social policy and management in the School of Social Sciences and Social Policy at Brandeis, was presented with the We Rise Together Award for Social Justice at Duolingo's Fifth Annual We Rise Together Awards Ceremony in Pittsburgh. Each year, this event honors a growing global community of changemakers for their outstanding contributions in improving education access and enriching the lives of students, especially those who are displaced and underserved. The 2025 awardees, nominated by their peers, are distinguished individuals who embody the Duolingo English Test's mission to make higher education more accessible and inclusive, and to reimagine what's possible in the global education system.

APPOINTMENTS TO PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARDS OR REVIEW COMMITTEES

Karen Donelan was appointed to the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission's inaugural Behavioral Health Workforce Center Advisory Group in January 2025.

Traci Green serves as a deputy editor for the journal *Drug and Alcohol Review*.

Robert Mechanic is a member of the editorial board for *Population Health, Equity and Outcomes*, a publication of the *American Journal of Managed Care*.

Monika Mitra was named a commissioner for the newly launched Lancet Commission on Disability and Health.

Joanne Nicholson is guest editor of *Frontiers in Psychiatry, Public Mental Health, Special Issue on Parents with Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders and Their Children*, vol. III. This issue includes over 30 papers, authored by 178 international scholars. An eBook will be published by Frontiers.

SPECIAL AWARDS FOR PUBLICATIONS

Scholars from the **Lurie Institute for Disability Policy** were named finalists for the Best Research Paper Award at the National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Conference in Alexandria, Virginia, April 22-23, 2025, for the policy brief, “Association of Person-Centered Planning With Improved Community Living Outcomes” (**Caldwell, J., Chong, N., and Pickern, S.**, 2024, Waltham, MA: Center for Community Living Policy, Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University).

Sharon Reif, PhD’02, and co-authors **Maureen T. Stewart, PhD’09, Shay M. Daily, Mary Brolin, PhD’05, Margaret T. Lee, Lee Panas, Grant Ritter**, and **Jennifer Wicks** received Best Research Abstract Runner-Up Award at the 2024 Association for Multidisciplinary Education and Research in Substance Use and Addiction annual conference in Chicago, Nov. 14-16, 2024, for the paper, “Effectiveness of Washington State’s Hub and Spoke Model to Improve Six-Month Opioid Use Disorder Outcomes Among Medicaid Beneficiaries.” This work was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse in cooperation with the Washington State Health Care Authority.

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld served as a 2024-2025 scholar in residence in the Academy of Management’s Conflict Management Division.

Traci Green, Mary Jo Larson, PhD’92, and the Responding to Xylazine (R2X) team at the **Opioid Policy Research Collaborative** received a Leadership Award from the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative (PAARI) at the PAARI National Law Enforcement Summit in Tampa on Feb. 25, 2025.

FELLOWSHIPS

Joanne Nicholson is serving as an invited faculty fellow and research mentor for the Mothers

of New York City Research Training Center at Mercy University in Dobbs Ferry, New York. The project is a five-year, Health Resources and Services Administration-funded initiative, secured by colleagues at Mercy University under the Maternal Health Research Collaborative for Minority-Serving Institutions.

Lurie Institute Visiting Scholar **James Dalton Stevens Jr.** received a Switzer Research Fellowship award for his research project, “U.S. Disability Mortality Trends Across Disability Status, Type, Sex and Race-Ethnicity, 2017-2021.”

David Weil served as the Stone Visiting Scholar at the Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School from July 2024 through June 2025, focusing on research related to economic inequality and labor market dynamics.

CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEES

Joanne Nicholson was a program committee member for the Disability Research Interest Group at the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, held in Minneapolis, June 7-10, 2025.

Cynthia Tschampl, PhD’15, was on the conference planning committee and served as an abstract reviewer for the 29th Annual Meeting of The Union — North America Region, held in Vancouver, Canada, Feb. 26-March 1, 2025.

Cynthia Tschampl served as moderator and planning committee member for the Fifth Annual Thomas Q. Garvey Public Health Lecture, held virtually on April 3, 2025. More than 300 people attended the event, which was jointly supported by the Rutgers Global Tuberculosis Institute, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Medical Advisory Committee for the Elimination of TB.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Cynthia Tschampl, PhD'15, was on the planning committee for the largest TBFighters Hill Day in Washington, D.C., on April 9, 2025. Nearly 300 TB survivors, advocates — including author John Green — and public health experts met with congressional staff in over 200 meetings to educate on TB prevention, education and research. Tschampl led the combined Massachusetts and Missouri delegation and conducted six meetings with congressional staff. As part of the preparation for the event, she led a public-health communications training webinar on March 26, 2025.

OP-EDS

Pamina Firchow co-authored an opinion piece, “Market Logic Can’t Compute the True Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid,” in *The Hill* on March 25, 2025.

Robert Kuttner published the following opinion pieces in *The Boston Globe*:

- “Mass General’s Growth Comes at Expense of Affordable Health Care,” Jan. 11, 2025.
- “A Recession? You Can Thank Trump for That,” March 11, 2025.

Graham Wright, MPP'15, PhD'16, published the following opinion pieces:

- “We Need a New Way to Talk About Politics When Persuasion Fails,” *The Boston Globe*, Dec. 26, 2024.
- “A Democratic Version of the Tea Party Is a Bad Idea. Here’s Why,” WBUR, March 26, 2025.

HIGH-PROFILE MEDIA COVERAGE

Karen Donelan was quoted extensively in a Dec. 31, 2024, article in *The Boston Globe*, “Nurses Licensed in 42 Other States and Jurisdictions Will Soon Be Eligible to Practice in Mass.”

Traci Green was quoted in the following:

- *The Worcester (Mass.) Guardian*, Nov. 11, 2024, “MA Continues to Address Opioid Use Disorder Through Narcan Access.”
- *The Washington Post*, Jan. 23, 2025, “Trump Falsely Triples Number of Reported Overdose Deaths as He Targets Cartels.”

- NPR, May 13, 2025, “Experts Warn Congress Cuts to Addiction Funding Will Mean More Overdose Deaths.”

Anita Hill was interviewed by Jake Tapper on CNN for a March 25, 2025, piece, “‘Surreal’: Anita Hill Recounts Her Testimony About Allegations of Sexual Assault by Former Boss Clarence Thomas.”

Andrew Kolodny was quoted in the following:

- *The Washington Post*, Sept. 17, 2024, “In the U.S., Opioid-Maker Purdue Is Bankrupt. Its Global Counterparts Make Millions.”
- *The New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 16, 2025, “An Effective Treatment for Opioid Addiction Exists. Why Isn’t It Used More?”
- “Wall Street Week,” April 23, 2025, “The FDA’s Opioid Reckoning.”
- Bloomberg, May 5, 2025, “Nearly Quarter of Those on Long-Acting Opioids Develop Addiction.”

Research by the **Lurie Institute for Disability Policy** was used in an infographic, “Supporting the Health Care Needs of People With Disabilities,” published by the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation on July 25, 2024.

Research by **Lisa Lynch** and a colleague was highlighted in an Oct. 31, 2024, article in *The Boston Globe Magazine*, “Where Women Stand 50 years After Title IX.”

Tatjana Meschede’s research was cited in a Sept. 10, 2024, article in *The Boston Globe*, “MIT’s Biggest Contributions of the Past 25 Years? They Aren’t What You Think.”

Donald Shepard was interviewed for a May 26, 2025, piece on “Marketplace Morning Edition,” “How Preventing RSV, a Respiratory Virus Especially Harmful to Babies, Pays Off.”

David Weil was quoted in the following:

- *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 3, 2024, “Who’s Really at the Wheel for Uber and Lyft? In Many Ways, AI.”
- *The New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 17, 2024, “The Hidden Truth Linking the Broken Border to Your Online Shopping Cart.”

- *The Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2025, “DeSantis Has a Solution to Florida’s Labor Shortage: Teenagers.”

PODCASTS

Robyn Powell, PhD’20, appeared on the May 7, 2025, episode of “ADA Live!,” a podcast produced by the Southeast ADA Center, a member of the ADA National Network and a project of the Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University. The episode was titled, “Parental Rights of Parents With Disabilities.”

David Weil appeared on the Jan. 24, 2025, episode of the “OECD Beyond GDP” podcast, “The Mystery of Stagnating Wages: David Weil Elucidates.”

HOSTING A LARGE EVENT/CONFERENCE WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The **Brandeis-Harvard SPIRE (Substance Use Disorder Systems Performance Improvement Research and Engagement) Center** sponsored two methods workshop webinars:

- On Nov. 8, 2024, Samrachana Adhikari, associate professor of biostatistics in the Department of Population Health at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, spoke on “Methodological Challenges in the Evaluation of Local Policy Effects on Overdose Outcomes.”
- On May 5, 2025, Larry Han, assistant professor of public health and health sciences at Northeastern University’s Bouvé College of Health Sciences, discussed “Multi-Source Causal Inference Leveraging Transfer Learning.”

On May 28, 2025, the **Brandeis-Harvard SPIRE Center** sponsored its annual Spring Symposium, “The Business of Behavioral Health: Private Equity’s Growing Role,” moderated by Susan Busch of the Yale School of Public Health, with panelists Zirui Song (Harvard Medical School), Jane Zhu (Oregon Health and Science University) and Colleen Grogan (University of Chicago Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice).

The **Center for Global Development and Sustainability** hosted its annual daylong symposium for its Mississippi Delta Scholars Program in November 2024. Guest speaker **Rajesh Sampath** presented “Racial Equity in the U.S.”

The **Council on Healthcare Economics and Policy**, under the leadership of chair **Stuart Altman**, presented its 31st Princeton Conference, “Exploring the Health Care System,” in Boston, Nov. 13-15, 2024. The conference touched on significant issues facing the U.S. health care system and the potential impacts the incoming administration would have. While topics like Medicare, Medicaid, reproductive health and the workforce remain prevalent, new and complex challenges continue to arise. The conference covered newer emerging topics, such as private equity and artificial intelligence, providing attendees with helpful primers to understand these important issues and insight into their impacts on health care quality, cost and delivery.

The **Lurie Institute for Disability Policy** presented the following webinars:

- “Cultivating Disabled Leadership for an Inclusive Sustainable Future,” Dec. 2, 2024, in honor of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The discussion was moderated by Lurie visiting scholar **LuanJiao Aggie Hu**, and panelists included Lurie research associate **Jennifer Lee-Rambharose**.
- “Strategies for Supporting Parents With Disabilities When There is Child Protection Involvement,” Jan. 30, 2025.

The **Massachusetts Health Policy Forum**, under the leadership of Executive Director **Michael Doonan, PhD’02**, presented the following events:

- “Harm Reduction in the Commonwealth: Analysis of Opportunities to Save Lives,” Boston, Dec. 3, 2024. Panelists included **Traci Green**, director of the **Opioid Policy Research Collaborative**.
- 2025 Student Forum, Boston, Jan. 8-9, 2025.
- “Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration: Advancing the Collaborative Care Model in the Commonwealth,” Boston, May 22, 2025.

The **Opioid Policy Research Collaborative** held an Overdose Prevention Research Summit on Sept. 30, 2024, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). The purpose of the summit was to establish clear, evidence-based priorities for DPH in the areas of overdose prevention and drug user health.

CONGRESSIONAL OR LEGAL TESTIMONY

Andrew Kolodny presented testimony at the United States Food and Drug Administration Joint Meeting of the Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee and the Anesthetic and Analgesic Drug Products Advisory Committee Meeting on May 5, 2025.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The **Brandeis-Harvard SPIRE Center** sponsored a mentoring program at the Addiction Health Services Research Conference in San Francisco, Oct. 16-18, 2024, which achieved a record level of engagement from mentors and mentees. In total, 103 participants applied as mentees, 109 participants applied as mentors (some of whom also applied as mentees), and 79 mentor-mentee pairs were matched.

In partnership with Sow Good Now, the **Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy** held its Fifth Annual GiveBack with the Brandeis Women’s Soccer Team and the Waltham Boys & Girls Club. Through this engagement, the young people come together for a day of soccer practice and grantmaking. This year’s grant recipient was Boston Health Care for the Homeless.

“Ultimately, the debate should not be about whether foreign assistance should continue — it should be about how to ensure it is as effective as possible. The question is not just how to track every dollar, but how to measure success in a way that reflects the complexity of development and peacebuilding efforts.”

PAMINA FIRCHOW IN THE HILL

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Heller PhD candidate **Tozoe Marton, MS GHPM/MA SID'20**, was awarded an American Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women in the amount of \$25,000 for the 2025-26 award year. Her dissertation examines how professional midwives in Kenya navigate training and working conditions shaped by national health policies, global maternal-health priorities and local health-system constraints. Using ethnographic methods across urban and rural training sites, Marton explores how midwives are socialized into the profession and how their roles are negotiated within the broader landscape of maternal health care.

PUBLICATIONS

Agarwal-Harding, P., Ruscitti, B., **Shepard, D.S.,** Roa, A.H., and Bowser, D.M. (2024). "Disparities in Healthcare-Seeking Behaviors and Associated Costs Between Venezuelan Migrants and Colombians Residing in Colombia." *International Journal for Equity in Health*. 23(1).

Beck, K.B., MacKenzie, K.T., Kirby, A.V., McDonald, K.E., **Moura, I.,** Breitenfeldt, K.E., Rutenberg, E., Kumar, T., Mancino, J., Sabatello, M., Roth, S., Nicolaidis, C., and the Working to Increase Inclusivity in Research Ethics Consortium. (2025). "Guidelines for the Creation of Accessible Consent Materials and Procedures: Lessons From Research With Autistic People and People With Intellectual Disability." *Autism in Adulthood*. Published online Feb. 19, 2025.

Charron, S. (2025). "Long-Term Patterns of Maternal Stress for Mothers With Intellectual Disabilities and Borderline Intellectual Functioning: What the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study Tells Us." Waltham, MA: National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities, Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

Dhanani, H., **Tabata-Kelly, M.**, Jarman, M., and Cooper, Z. (2024). "A Scoping Review of Hospital-Based Geriatric-Centered Interventions on Trauma Surgery Services." *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. 73(4), pp. 1250-1266.

Jordan, M., Ekirapa Kiracho, E., **Marton, T.**, Karegyeya, G., Maina, T., Ssebagereka, A., Ssempala, R., Ross, R., Forsythe, S., **Nandakumar, A.K.**, and McBain, R. (2025). "Mapping Care Pathways: Clinical Providers' Perspectives on Process Maps of HIV Service Delivery in Uganda." *Global Public Health*. 20(1), 2479660.

Luan, Y., Hodgkin, D., Behrman, J., Stein, A., Richter, L., Cuartas, J., and Lu, C. (2024). "Global Development Assistance for Early Childhood Care and Education in 134 Low- and Middle-Income Countries, 2007-2021." *BMJ Global Health*. 9(11), e015991.

Moore Murphy, L., Stenoien, D.V., Love, E., Mwale, H., **Vu, V.T.T.**, Thurow, A., Walker, D., Jordan, M., **Nandakumar, A.K.**, and Konopka, S. (2025). "Supporting Local Ownership of Transition Processes: A Key Pathway to Sustaining the HIV Response." *BMJ Global Health*. 10(6), e018190.

Tabata-Kelly, M., Hu, X., Dill, M.J., Alberti, P.M., Bullock, K., Crown, W., Fair, M., May, P., Ortega, P., and **Perloff, J.** (2024). "Physician Engagement in Addressing Health-Related Social Needs and Burnout." *JAMA Network Open*. 7(12), e2452152.

Thai, T.T., Nguyen, D.B., Nguyen, T.T., Hoang, H.V.T., Li, M., Li, L., **Vu, V.T.T.**, Tran, L.P.T., Do, D.V., Shoptaw, S., and Le, G.M. (2025). "Validation of the Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST) for Identifying Methamphetamine Use Among People on Methadone Maintenance Treatment in Vietnam." *Addiction*. Published online Feb. 6, 2025.

Waring, M. (2025) "Terminating the Parental Rights of Mothers With Disabilities." Waltham, MA: National Research Center for Parents with

Disabilities, Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

Zandam, H., **Moura, I., Akobirshoev, I., and Mitra, M.** (2025). "Non-COVID Respiratory Infections Related Emergency Room Visits Among Autistic Adults in the United States." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 68(1), pp. 46-55.

PRESENTATIONS

Lebeck, K.D. "Building Recovery Capital: The Science of Flourishing Beyond Addiction Treatment." Presentation prepared for the National Institutes of Health and National Institute on Drug Abuse Substance Use Disorders Ventures Certificate program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, January 2025.

Lebeck, K.D. "From Complexity to Consensus: Theoretical Synthesis for Overcoming Barriers in Defining Recovery." Poster presented at the annual National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science, Virtual, April 23-24, 2025.

Moura, I., Wright, S., and Nicholson, J. "Using Community Perspectives to Promote Career Success for Autistic Employees." Poster presented at the International Society for Autism Research Annual Meeting, Seattle, April 30-May 3, 2025.

Schuck, R.K., Baker-Ericzen, M., **Moura, I.**, Caldwell, R.M., Love, J., Maslak, J., Kripke-Ludwig, R., Frowner, E., and Nicolaidis, C. "Self-Reported Adequacy of Supports and Information for Autistic Adults: Instrument Validation and Preliminary Investigation of Predictor Variables." Poster presented at the International Society for Autism Research Annual Meeting, Seattle, April 30-May 3, 2025.

Silverman, A., Nicholson, J., Lesser, V., and Faughnan, K. "People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Describe Their Experiences With Sexual and Reproductive

“To truly invest in creating and using AI to benefit humanity, we need to fully include disabled people as experts in this work – because somehow, we are still less willing to accept disabled people’s intelligence and humanity than that of a machine.”

PHD CANDIDATE IAN MOURA IN TECH POLICY PRESS

Health.” Roundtable discussion presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, Oct. 27-30, 2024.

Stober, K., Moura, I., Nguyen, T., and Caldwell, J. “Amplified Adversity: The Intersectional Impact of Disability, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity Minority Status on Social Determinants and Mental Health Outcomes.” Presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, Oct. 27-30, 2024.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Brandeis undergraduates **Sydney Charron** and **Marcy Waring** were selected as 2024-25 Student Disability Policy Fellows by the **Lurie Institute for Disability Policy**.

PhD candidates **Elad Daniels** and **Ian Moura** received Switzer Research Fellowships for Doctoral Dissertation Research. Daniels received funding for his dissertation, “Psychotropic Utilization in Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.” Moura’s funding is for his dissertation titled, “Examining the Impact of Algorithmic Decision-Making Tools on the Disability Community.”

Scholars from the **Lurie Institute** were named finalists for the Best Research Paper Award at the National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Conference in Alexandria, Virginia, April 2025, for the article “Outcomes of Person-Centered Planning in Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services” (**Chong, N., Caldwell, J., Kaye, H.S., and Mitra, M.**, 2024, *The Gerontologist*, 64(6), gnae017).

Ian Moura received the American Public Health Association (APHA) Disability Section Student Award at APHA’s Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, October 27-30, 2024.

Ian Moura also received a Health Policy Scholars Dissertation Award, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Ian Moura served as a technical expert on a panel assembled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, “Integrated Dataset on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.” The panel discussed and provided feedback on an operational definition for the intellectual and developmental disabilities population that can be applied in administrative claims data for research.

Ian Moura and co-authors Caldwell, R.M., Baker-Ericzen, M., Scharer, M., Maslak, J., Joyce, A., Nicolaidis, C., and the Academic Autism Spectrum Partnership in Research and Education Outcomes Project Team received the “Top Rated Abstract” ribbon for their poster presentation, “The State of Affairs of Existing Service Outcome Measure According to Autistic Adults, Service Providers, and Academic Researchers: What to Improve and How to Do It,” at the International Society for Autism Research Annual Meeting held in Seattle, April 30-May 3, 2025.

Masami Tabata-Kelly, PhD candidate, served as co-chair of the Health Workforce programming theme for the AcademyHealth 2025 Annual Research Meeting held in Minneapolis, June 7-10, 2025.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Jessica Chaikof, PhD candidate, was interviewed by NPR about cuts to Harvard’s federal funding and its impact on her for the June 18, 2025, piece, “A Woman Fears Her Eyesight Won’t Be Saved in Time Due to Research Grant Cuts.”

PhD candidate **Ian Moura’s** op-ed, “To Regulate Artificial Intelligence Effectively, We Need to Confront Ableism,” was published in the *Tech Policy Press* on Oct. 16, 2024.



Advancing
the rights,
experiences
and aspirations
of parents with
disabilities:
Miriam Heyman

Miriam Heyman is a research scientist at the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, where she serves as project manager for the National Research Center



for Parents with Disabilities. She is the 2025 recipient of Heller's Early Career Research Investigator Award.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH.

My work focuses on parents with disabilities and their families. The number of disabled parents in the United States is large and growing; however, there has been a significant lack of research on who these parents are and their life circumstances. Due to ableism, stigma and discrimination, there's a common assumption that people with disabilities can't or shouldn't be parents. As a result, these parents experience multiple disparities. For example, they are referred to the child welfare system at disproportionately high rates, and then they encounter discrimination within the system itself.

My research focuses on life experiences of disabled parents, ultimately to inform the creation of relevant supports. We've found that disabled parents are more likely than nondisabled parents to lack stable and affordable housing, circumstances that can perpetuate negative outcomes within the child welfare system, including loss of child custody. Additionally, parents with disabilities are more likely than nondisabled parents to experience poverty. Poverty and the lack of stable housing can impact parent and child well-being, so we're working to identify opportunities to better support disabled parents and hopefully end this cycle of discrimination and marginalization.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN DISABILITY RESEARCH AND THE MORE SPECIFIC AVENUES YOU'VE PURSUED?

Working as a special-education teacher in New York City public schools after I graduated from

“We know that parents with disabilities encounter discrimination and marginalization, and it’s important to document that, but it’s also important to tell the positive stories.”

MIRIAM HEYMAN

college, I noticed all the systemic factors that impacted not only my students’ lives, but the lives of their families, like the policies that perpetuate poverty and unstable housing. As a PhD student at the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College, I focused my dissertation on how patterns of parent-child interaction can facilitate positive development for kids with developmental disabilities. Research has shown the power of parenting: Parenting that is warm, responsive, consistent and stimulating is associated with positive development of social and communication skills. When we can support parents holistically — their mental health and their overall well-being — we are better able to provide the type of optimal parenting that all kids need to thrive.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU CURRENTLY FOCUSING ON?

I’m working on a project funded by the National Research Consortium on Mental Health in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities examining the positive postpartum experiences of mothers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We’re talking to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have given birth within the past five years, and asking them to tell us about their positive parenting experiences, questions like: How do you celebrate birthdays with your child? What’s something funny that happened with your child? What do you like to do together on weekends? We know that parents with disabilities encounter discrimination and marginalization, and it’s

important to document that, but it’s also important to tell the positive stories. The second half of that study is looking at contextual and internal assets that promote positive experiences: How do parents’ positive attributes, like perseverance or their sense of humor, contribute to their parenting? What environmental supports — like extended family, religious communities and neighbors — are helpful to them and their parenting? We want to understand the meaningful support that can facilitate positive outcomes for parents and families.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU’D LIKE POLICYMAKERS TO UNDERSTAND?

It’s vital to educate policymakers about the capabilities of parents with disabilities and also the systems in place that are working against parents with disabilities, like the bias and the stigma within the child welfare system. Supports for parents with disabilities, things like affordable, accessible housing, can not only help parents but also have a very powerful effect on the whole family.

One of our central goals at Lurie is making sure that our findings reach the people who can use them to impact change. We have a new data dashboard, an interactive resource to help visitors learn more about people with disabilities. The purpose is to provide concrete data points that advocates and policymakers can use to design policies that are supportive of parents with disabilities.



Nearly a half
century of
pioneering
research and
expert leadership
at Heller,
Brandeis and
beyond:
Professor
Emeritus
Stuart Altman

Stuart Altman is a leading health economist who has been at Brandeis and the Heller School for almost 48 years. During that time, he served as



the dean of Heller for three different terms, the interim president of Brandeis for one year, and the Sol C. Chaikin Professor of National Health Policy at Heller until his retirement in 2025.

HOW HAVE HELLER AND BRANDEIS SUPPORTED YOU IN YOUR WORK?

From early on in my tenure at Brandeis, the trustees of the university encouraged me to be actively involved in the health care system. As a result, my two careers in academia and in health care have been interconnected. At the Heller School, I also worked to create a health care research group, which is now the Schneider Institutes, and helped raise substantial funds to support our research and education. Brandeis and Heller have been like family to me.

HOW HAS HEALTH POLICY CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED AND WHAT STILL NEEDS TO CHANGE?

When I started my career, there were very few health economists, but now there are hundreds, if not thousands. It has become an increasingly important subject, as health care spending consumes a larger and larger percentage of our national income.

Unfortunately, the key problems that were paramount in the early 1970s, when I got started, are still major problems today: The cost of health care has been and continues to be much too high and almost unaffordable for big segments of our population. We have a very complicated system that often leads to people getting either inadequate care or none at all. While we've made substantial progress in some areas, particularly in covering the uninsured, the progress is far from complete. There's real concern today that many of

“I’ve been fortunate to have played a role in some very important decisions and issues that have formed the basis for much of how our system now operates.”

STUART ALTMAN

the improvements could be undone by the current political forces.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST PART OF TURNING HEALTH POLICY IDEAS INTO REAL CHANGE?

Health care is so important for individuals, but it’s so expensive that it impacts every segment of our system, from the people who pay the bills — the employers, the individuals and the government — to those who deliver care — doctors, nurses, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies. It has become the largest industry in the country, and as a result, any changes that are being proposed impact big constituencies. When you make improvements in an area that helps one group, other groups, at times, view it negatively. There is constant political and economic pressure to mold reform according to how each group sees how it impacts them. The health care system isn’t something that is simple to change; it’s extremely complex, and the way we organize the system to provide and pay for care affects millions of people.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC MOMENTS OR DECISIONS THAT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF IN YOUR CAREER?

I’ve been fortunate to have played a role in some very important decisions and issues that have formed the basis for much of how our system now operates. While working in the administration of President Nixon, I helped create the national health insurance plan that he proposed in 1974, many components of which eventually became the Affordable Care Act passed by President Obama in 2010.

I’ve been involved in different ways to try to lower the growth in health care costs, from the Cost of Living Council in 1971 to efforts to make the delivery system, and how the Medicare program pays hospitals and physicians, more efficient. I was also fortunate to be selected to head the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, which was established to slow the growth of health care spending in the state and keep it in line with the growth in the state’s income.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF HEALTH POLICY LEADERS?

Our system has gotten even more complicated and there are many more actors in the game. When I started my career, I did not have any formal training in health care economics. I had to learn it all on the job, but there was time to learn. That’s not the case today, so I encourage anybody who wants to enter this field to get a decent education that provides them with knowledge to navigate the system and to understand the implications of the reforms they advocate.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR LEGACY IN HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH POLICY WILL BE?

I want people to remember me as someone who tried to make our health care system more efficient and provide coverage equitably for all individuals. Just because people can’t afford health care doesn’t mean they should go without it.

HELLER RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

RESEARCH ACTIVITY
JULY 1, 2024 -
JUNE 30, 2025

TOTAL SPONSORED
RESEARCH ACTIVITY

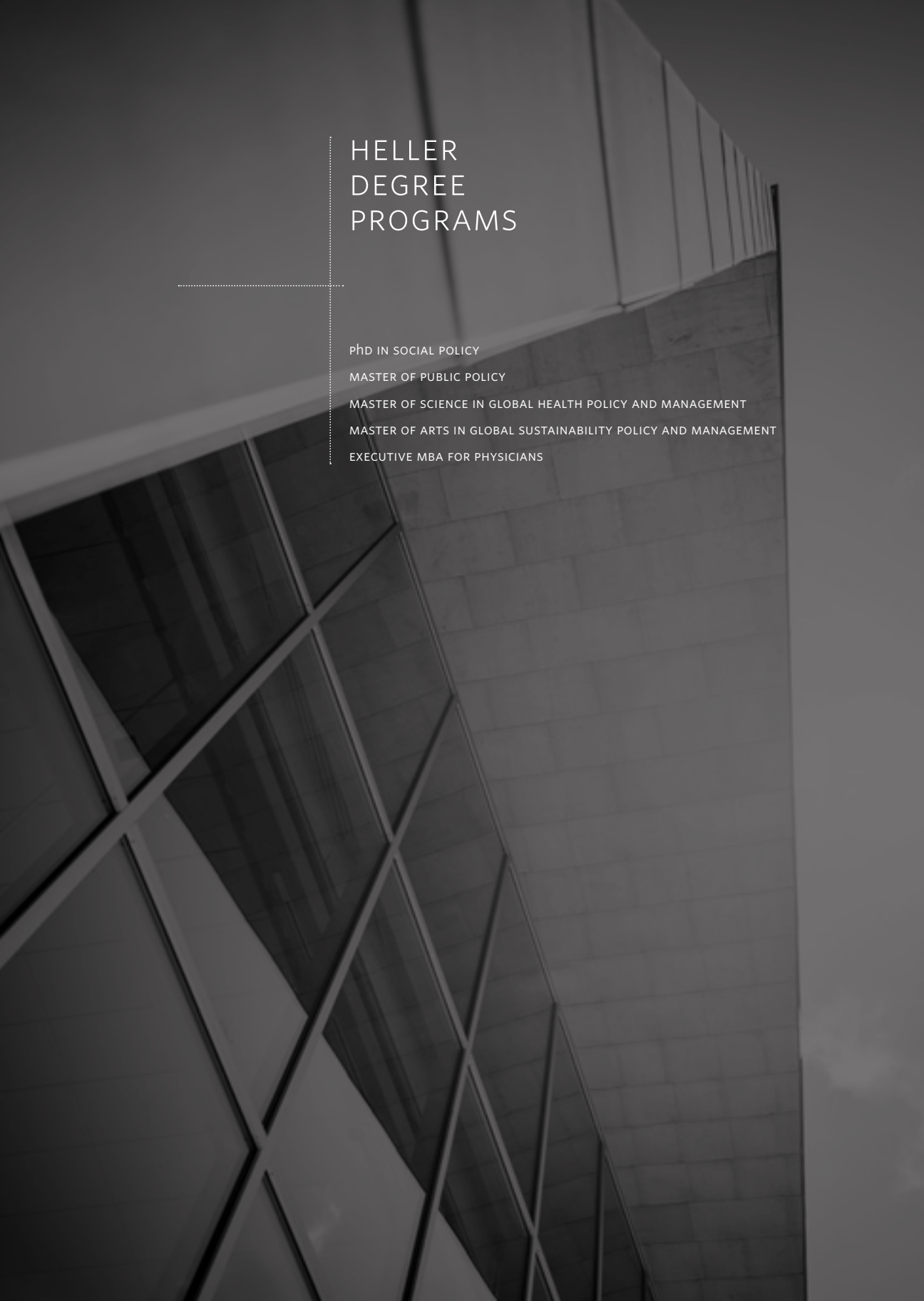
\$19.7
MILLION

217
ACTIVE PROJECTS

247

RESEARCH STAFF, FULL
AND PART TIME

- 60+ STUDENTS
INVOLVED IN PAID
RESEARCH POSITIONS



HELLER DEGREE PROGRAMS

PHD IN SOCIAL POLICY

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN GLOBAL HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE MBA FOR PHYSICIANS

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