



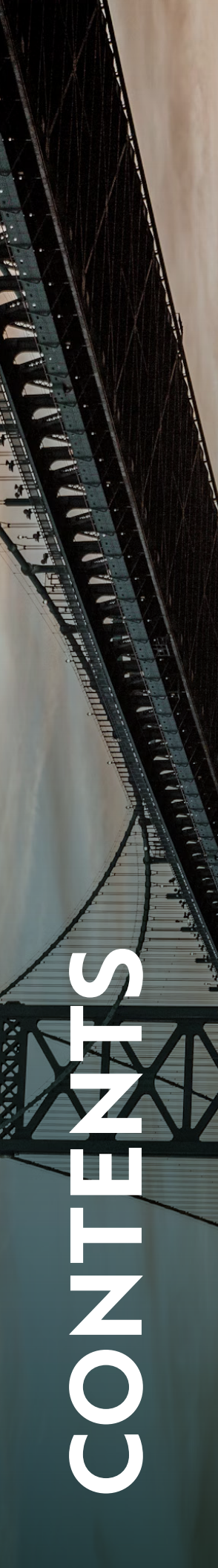
DREXEL UNIVERSITY
**Urban Health
Collaborative**
Dornsife School of Public Health



ANNUAL ²⁰²⁴ ²⁰²⁵ REPORT

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CONTENTS

Message From the Directors	1
About the UHC	2
Mission	2
Key Themes	2
Our Team	3
UHC By The Numbers	3
Our Impact	3
Funders	4
Steering Committee	5
Select Externally Funded Projects	6
Key Theme 1: Data for Policy & Community Action	6
Key Theme 2: Climate Change & Health	6
Key Theme 3: Geospatial Data & Methods	7
Key Theme 4: Health & Place	8
Key Theme 5: Health Equity	8
2024-2025 Publication & Press Highlights	10
Publication Highlights	10
Press Clips	12
Urban Health Symposium 2025	13
Policy Evaluation & Engagement for Urban Health	16
Community Engagement	17



Training	19
Urban Health Summer Institute	19
Summer Institute 2025 By the Numbers	19
PDPH-Drexel Urban Epidemiology Research Fellowship	20
Drexel-INCAP Training Program on Social Determinants of Cardiovascular Disease Over the Life Course	20
Student Awards	21
Applied Practical Experience (APE) Awards	21
Dissertation Awards	22
Working Groups	23
Pathways to Mental Health Equity (PHME): Culturally Relevant Digital and Community-Engaged Solutions for Black Youth and Young Adults Working Group	23
The Queer Inclusion, Equity, Health, & Rights (QuIEHR) Working Group	23
Looking Ahead: Strategic Goals 2025-2028	24





A Message From **Our Directors**

As you will read in these pages summarizing our work during the 2024-2025 academic year, the Urban Health Collaborative continues to thrive. Together we have created a space where all can come together to understand the drivers of health in cities and identify the actions that we can take to improve urban health and reduce health inequities. Our faculty, staff, students and many partners continue to move forward important research, translate this research into societal benefits, and train the future generations of researchers and practitioners.

There is no doubt that 2025 was a hard year for our community in many ways. Despite these challenges we remain committed to sustaining an environment that values rigorous science, open discussion and debate, and translation of what we know into meaningful actions. We are committed to using the knowledge we generate to both understand the world we live in and change it so that it is better for all of us.

As we celebrated the ten year anniversary of the UHC during our 4th Symposium, we reflected on our history and remembered the many team members as well as external collaborators and partners in Philadelphia and all over the world who have made the UHC and its success possible. In these times, we need communities like the UHC to hold us together, keep hope alive, and remind us that a better future is possible. A big thank you to all of our colleagues, friends and partners who continue to make the UHC's work possible.

Ana V. Diez Roux
Usama Bilal

Director and Co-Director, Urban Health Collaborative

ABOUT THE UHC



The Drexel University Urban Health Collaborative (UHC) was created to leverage the power of data, research, education, and partnerships to make cities healthier, more equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

MISSION

Our mission is to improve health in cities by increasing scientific knowledge and public awareness of urban health challenges and opportunities, and by identifying and promoting actions and policies that improve population health and reduce health inequities.

KEY THEMES

Data for Policy and Community Action

Data is crucial to motivate and support urban health action. We partner with others to compile and make visible data on health and health inequities in Philadelphia, as well as in cities across the US and globally.

Climate Change and Health

Climate change is a major threat to health in cities worldwide. But cities also present opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation. We work to advance urban health action on climate change across the Americas.

Geospatial Data and Methods

Novel geospatial and other analytical methods can enhance understanding and support policy and advocacy. The UHC supports the use and development of novel methods in urban health.

Health and Place

The dynamics and features of places are fundamental to urban health understanding and policy. We study the multiple ways in which places impact health and their implications for policy.

Health Equity

Improving urban health equity is at the core of UHC work. We document and identify the causes of health inequities and work with others to identify policies and interventions that promote equity.



— OUR TEAM

The Collaborative is made up of 16 core faculty, 29 affiliate faculty, 33 research staff members, and 10 temporary staff members. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, the UHC engaged and supported 40 trainees from the undergraduate to postdoctoral levels, funded internally through UHC fellowships or grants and contracts. The UHC also has a visiting scholar program that hosts emerging and established researchers from around the world. Experts from across the Dornsife School of Public Health lead the five UHC cores (Administrative Core, Training Core, Research and Data Core, Community Engagement Core, and Policy Core), with input from the UHC Steering Committee and the Antiracism Committee (ARC). Several tenure-track and research faculty are administratively supported by the UHC, and faculty members from across the university are engaged as UHC faculty affiliates.

UHC BY THE NUMBERS

- 27 grants and contracts submitted
- 5 new grants awarded
- \$7.19 million in direct research expenditures
- 40 active grants
- 16 core faculty
- 29 affiliate faculty
- 33 research staff
- 6 core administrative staff
- 10 temporary staff
- 10 postdoctoral fellows
- 18 doctoral students
- 12 master's students
- 3 co-op students
- 2 visiting scholars
- 248 Summer Institute participants

OUR IMPACT

- 67 publications
- 406 News mentions
- 80 citations in policy papers
- 544 mentions on social media of UHC research
- 39 citations on Wikipedia

FUNDERS

The UHC is generously supported by a gift from Dana and David Dornsife and by Drexel University. Funding to sustain our growth, scholarship, and engagement is also provided by a diverse set of external funders. In fiscal year 2025, the UHC submitted 27 grant proposals to 13 different sponsors. Active grants and contracts during this period have provided approximately \$7.19 million in direct research expenditures. These grants support the work of faculty, research staff, postdoctoral researchers, and students at all levels. Funders of projects for fiscal year 2025 included:

American Cancer Society

Arnold Ventures

Big Cities Health Coalition

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Cotswold Foundation

Independence Blue Cross Foundation

Lacuna Foundation

National Institutes of Health-Fogarty International Center

National Institutes of Health-National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

National Institutes of Health-National Institute on Aging

National Institutes of Health-National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

National Institutes of Health-National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

National Institutes of Health-National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

National Institutes of Health-National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

National Institutes of Health-National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

National Institutes of Health-Office of the Director

Pennsylvania Department of Health

Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Wellcome Trust



STEERING COMMITTEE

The UHC Steering Committee, composed of faculty, staff, and student representatives, is a key component of UHC governance and provides guidance to the UHC Directors on a range of issues, including UHC practices, policies, and the overall direction of the UHC. Steering Committee members for the 2024-2025 academic year are below:

Giancarlo Anfuso, MS

Doctoral Fellow Representative

Usama Bilal, MD, PhD, MPH

Co-Director

Autumn Ciarrocchi

Deputy Director of Administration

Stephen Dickinson, PhD

Staff Representative

Ana Diez Roux, MD, PhD, MPH

Director

Jana Hirsch, PhD, MES

Faculty Representative

Erikka Gilliam, MS, MPH

Community Engagement Core Co-Lead
and ARC Representative

Jennifer Kolker, MPH

Policy Core Co-Lead

Brent Langellier, PhD, MA

Training Core Co-Lead

Mariana Lazo, MD, PhD, ScM

Community Engagement Core Co-Lead

Ran Li, MS

Staff Representative

Kari Moore, MS

Research and Data Core Co-Lead

Leah Schinasi, PhD, MSPH

Training Core Co-Lead

Alina Schnake-Mahl, ScD, MPH

Policy Core Co-Lead

Lindsay Shea, DrPH, MS

Affiliate Faculty Representative

Loni Tabb, PhD, MS

Research and Data Core Co-Lead

STEERING COMMITTEE SUPPORT STAFF

Derek Harris, MA

Executive Administrator

Claire Jensen, MSW

UHC Project Manager





SELECT EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

DATA FOR POLICY AND COMMUNITY ACTION

KEY THEME 1

Big Cities Health Coalition & Drexel Urban Health Collaborative Partnership

Funder: Big Cities Health Coalition

Launched in 2019, the UHC partnership with the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) advances urban health in the United States by supporting a range of BCHC activities. The partnership engages UHC faculty, staff, and students and contributes to the generation of data resources and data infrastructure useful to the BCHC cities. It also supports a range of priority initiatives identified by BCHC leadership and BCHC partners. For the UHC, the partnership is an opportunity to advance its commitment to research, training, and policy translation in urban health, leveraging Drexel's historic expertise in public health practice in urban settings. Through this partnership, the BCHC and UHC enhance their ability to meet their shared vision of improving the health of people living in our nation's largest cities. Projects from this period include the [Big Cities Health Indicators Data Platform](#), an analysis of [compensation practices in public health infrastructure](#), a [landscape analysis of opioid settlement plans](#), management of BCHC's tobacco working group, and the annual BCHC member and workgroup survey.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

KEY THEME 2

Drexel Research Center on Extreme Weather and Urban Health (Drexel CCUH)

Funder: NIH- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

In 2023, the UHC received a multi-million-dollar grant from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities to establish the [Drexel Research Center on Extreme Weather and Urban Health \(CCUH\)](#) (total award \$3,178,772). Led by Ana Diez Roux, MD, PhD, MPH, and Usama Bilal, MD, PhD, the CCUH provides the organizational structure and data infrastructure required to drive action-oriented research on the impacts of climate change on health and health inequities in diverse cities across the Americas. The Center supports research focused on intra-urban heterogeneity in the impact of heat on health, as well as capacity-strengthening and policy engagement for cities to reduce the health consequences of extreme weather.

Climate Change and Urban Health in Latin America (SALURBAL-Climate)

Funder: Wellcome Trust

Building upon over six successful years of the Wellcome Trust-funded [Urban Health in Latin America \(SALURBAL\) Project](#), SALURBAL-Climate was funded in 2023 to address the critical need for evidence linking climate change to health impacts across Latin America (total award \$7,505,780). Led by [Ana Diez Roux, MD, PhD, MPH](#), and Olga Lucía Sarmiento (Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá Colombia) the project is documenting the effects of climate change on health in over 350 cities across 11 countries, evaluating the health impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, building capacity among researchers in the region, and supporting policy translation of findings.

Urban Inequality and Spatial Distribution of Heat Mortality in Brazilian Cities

Funder: Wellcome Trust

Through a project launched in 2023 and funded by the Wellcome Trust (total award \$960,995) the UHC partners with the World Resources Institute (WRI) to make visible the effects of heat on health in Belo Horizonte and Campinas, Brazil, in ways that support urgent policy decisions. Led by Usama Bilal, MD, PhD, MPH, the project is documenting how the effects of heat on health differ across neighborhoods within cities and sharing these findings in ways that engage and support policy makers at the city-level. The team is implementing a scalable local engagement methodology to align research with needs, build local capacity for action, and help design public policies and interventions to mitigate impacts on health from extreme heat and other climate hazards.

GEOSPATIAL DATA AND METHODS

KEY THEME 3

Life-course acculturation trajectories and dementia in a multi-ethnic cohort of older adults: The MESA Acculturation and Dementia Study

Funder: NIH-National Institute on Aging

UHC core faculty Jana Hirsch, PhD, was awarded funding in 2021 (total award \$4,358,351) to leverage comprehensive, longitudinal data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), and its associated ancillary studies, MESA Neighborhood and MESA MIND, to investigate how unique life-course acculturation patterns, based on individual- and neighborhood-level longitudinal data, are related to cognition, AD/ADRD biomarkers, and dementia in older adults.

HEALTH AND PLACE

KEY THEME 4

Social Determinants of Fatty Liver Disease and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Liver Disease

Funder: NIH-National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Funded in 2024 (total award \$2,242,215), the Social Determinants of Fatty Liver Disease project led by [Dr. Mariana Lazo, MD, PhD, ScM](#), is studying the pathways linking neighborhood environments and other social factors to fatty liver disease risk (total award \$2,242,215). The project is also investigating whether neighborhood factors contribute to excess risk among low-socioeconomic status and minoritized populations. The study leverages and expands on data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), a multisite longitudinal study of cardiovascular disease among adults living in six communities across the United States.

HEALTH EQUITY

KEY THEME 5

The Collaborative Center for Legal Epidemiology: Evaluating law as an intervention to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities related to HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STDs, and Tuberculosis

Funder: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In 2024 [Alina Schnake-Mahl, ScD, MPH](#), Assistant Professor and UHC Policy Engagement Core co-lead, and [Ana Diez Roux, MD, PHD, MPH](#), along with researchers from The Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University Beasley School of Law (CPHLR) and Stony Brook University, were awarded a five-year, \$3.89 million grant from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention. The project, led by Scott Burris at the Temple University School of Law, is investigating whether, how, and under what conditions laws can impact a range of infectious disease outcomes. The project is a unique partnership between legal scholars and epidemiologists to advance the ways in which we study the health consequences of laws in order to advance the use of legal tools in promoting urban health. Drexel is leading its evaluation component.

Comparing the impact on health equity among immigrant populations of sanctuary and anti-sanctuary state preemption policies

Funder: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

In 2024, UHC faculty [Brent Langellier, PhD, MA](#), and [Alina Schnake-Mahl](#) were awarded funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to [study](#) how state preemption laws affecting immigrant sanctuary policies impact the lives and health of Hispanic and Latino people in the U.S. (total award \$125,355). Preemption laws are enacted by upper levels of government, such as the state or county, to prevent lower levels of government, such as cities and towns, from enacting certain policies. Many states preempt a number of policies related to firearms, zoning, and workers' rights. With this study, Langellier and Schnake-Mahl examine the effects of preempting sanctuary/anti-sanctuary policies on voting, public program participation, and low birth weight, among Hispanic/Latino people.

Community Participatory Research to Build Violence Prevention Evaluation Capacity

Award: \$202,233

Funder: Pennsylvania Department of Health

In 2023, UHC core faculty member Amy Carroll-Scott, PhD, was awarded funding to provide guidance on the development of community partnerships as part of a study focused on creating a community-derived framework for sustainable measurement of the effectiveness of community-focused violence prevention programs. The team partners with diverse stakeholders to elicit and prioritize programmatic outcomes that demonstrate the short and medium-term effectiveness of violence prevention programs and will develop a toolkit of resources to support program evaluation.

2024 - 2025 PUBLICATION AND PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

— PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Alina Schnake-Mahl, Ana Diez-Roux, Usama Bilal, and Gabriel Schwartz [co-authored a publication in the American Journal of Epidemiology](#) to spotlight **how challenges in measuring policy exposures can compromise causal inference, and suggested ways in which these challenges can be addressed.**
- Félice Lê-Scherban [led a study published in Social Science and Medicine](#), which included UHC Doctoral Research fellow Zach Fusfeld, **on maternal Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and lifetime experiences of racial discrimination (EOD).** It found that maternal ACEs and EOD may undermine maternal and child health via household hardships, along with other potential mechanisms.
- Alina Schnake-Mahl and Jacquelyn Jahn [co-authored an invited commentary](#) in the American Journal of Epidemiology. **They discussed the needed research and methodological challenges regarding policies that support working parents and gender health equity.**
- Josiah Kephart, Usama Bilal, Maryia Bakhtsiyarava, Ana Diez Roux, and others co-authored a paper in Nature Cities, **[“Social disparities in neighborhood flood exposure in 44,698 urban neighborhoods in Latin America.”](#)** The paper documented large inequities in flood exposures linked to neighborhood education.
- Leah Schinasi, Brisa Sánchez, Steven Melly, Kari Moore, and Anneclaire De Roos co-authored [a longitudinal study of pediatric patients](#) in Philadelphia published in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health. **It found that high levels of green space reduced the effects of high levels of air pollution (SO₂ or NO₂ levels) on asthma incidence in children.**
- Jessica Uruchima, Goro Yamada, Alina Schnake-Mahl, Brisa Sánchez, and Ana Diez Roux co-authored [a study on extensions in paid parental leave](#) in 148 cities in Chile, Mexico, and Colombia (2000-2015). Published in Social Science & Medicine, **the study found that combined paternal and maternal leave policies seemed to have the most beneficial effect on infant and neonatal mortality.**
- Janelle Edwards, Anneclaire De Roos, and Leah H. Schinasi co-authored a scoping review with other Drexel researchers [on indoor temperatures and health](#). It concluded that most studies found warmer indoor temperatures were linked to adverse health, well-being, or thermal comfort outcomes.

- Mariana Lazo, Usama Bilal, Loni Tabb, Jana Hirsch, Steven Melly, and Brisa Sánchez co-authored [a study published in *Cities* examining whether 25-year trends in neighborhood alcohol environments in US metropolitan areas differed by area sociodemographic characteristics](#). It found that neighborhoods with a higher percentage of minoritized residents and higher percentages of low-income residents tended to have more unfavorable levels and trends in densities of alcohol outlets.
- Maryia Bakhtsiyarava, Josiah Kephart, Brisa Sánchez, Leah Schinasi, Usama Bilal, Andrea Jaffe, Ana Diez Roux, and our partners at SALURBAL published a study in *Environment International*. [It explored future temperature-related mortality in Latin American cities under climate change and population scenarios](#). The study found that Latin American cities may see a doubling of excess heat mortality by 2050, with both temperature increases and population aging being major contributors to the projected increasing heat-related deaths.
- Maggie Beverly led a study along with Amy Carroll-Scott, Félice Lê-Scherban, and Matthew Janetti, [published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*](#). **It found that the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated existing food purchasing challenges and added new challenges**; neighborhoods shaped by structural forces do not adequately meet families' food needs and administrative burdens continue to inhibit Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) use, although pandemic-related changes to WIC were beneficial.
- Alex Ezeh was a Co-Chair of [The Lancet's second commission on adolescent health and wellbeing](#), with Allison Groves and Luwam Gebrekristos serving as commissioners as well.
- Gabriel Schwartz led a study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* [analyzing the efficacy of laws protecting tenants' health](#). The study found that the laws enacted to protect tenants' health were largely ineffective.
- Leah Schinasi and Alina Schnake-Mahl [co-authored a study published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* examining social and labor policies as determinants of occupational heat vulnerability](#). It found that without broad access to these policies and programs, both inside and outside the workplace, socioeconomic and racialized inequities in worker heat vulnerability will widen.
- Juan Carlos Figueroa Morales and Brisa Sánchez published the first study to look at [intermittent water access \(IWS\) \(less than continuous 24 hour-a-day access\) and beverage consumption](#). Its findings suggest an association between IWS and consumption of industrialized beverages, and thus its potential contribution to chronic disease risk.
- Alina Schnake-Mahl led a study co-authored with Ana Diez Roux and Usama Bilal, [published in *Annals of Epidemiology*](#), examining **hospital and neighborhood variation in in-hospital mortality and mortality disparities**. It found that nearly one in five patients hospitalized for COVID-19 died, and there was substantial variation in risk of in-hospital mortality by neighborhoods and hospitals.
- Schnake-Mahl also led another study with Bilal and Diez Roux, published in *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*, [investigating neighborhood disparities in influenza and influenza-like illness hospitalization during seasonal and pandemic influenza](#). It found that neighborhood factors showed significant associations with hospitalization, with the magnitude of the disparities varying by neighborhood factor. Disparities were generally slightly wider during pandemic influenza periods, though differences between periods were small.

— PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

November 2024

- [An article on congestion pricing](#) in The Washington Post cited a UHC Hot Topics blog post from earlier in the year on [New York City's postponed congestion pricing plan](#).
- In an interview with The Philadelphia Inquirer, Josiah Kephart [discusses the impact of wildfire smoke on health](#).

January 2025

- [The Philadelphia Inquirer profiled the work of Heli Xu, Ran Li, and Usama Bilal](#), in preserving the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) database after being taken offline.
- [Research led by Jourdyn A. Lawrence](#) on the growing inequality in life expectancy among Americans [was featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer](#).

April 2025

- Ana Diez Roux was [interviewed by NPR](#) regarding a letter signed by members of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine regarding threats to scientific research activities resulting from actions of the Administration.
- [Josiah Kephart was featured in the American Public Health Association's](#) May newsletter, offering expert advice regarding natural gas emissions.

May 2025

- Jennifer Kolker [was interviewed by The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) on Delaware County's new public health agency and its fight to conduct regular restaurant health inspections.
- Research co-authored by Gabriel Schwartz and Jacquelyn Jahn on fatal police violence across US metropolitan areas 2013-17 [was featured in an article in Axios](#).
- The aforementioned Lancet Commission report, of which Alex Ezeh was a Co-Chair, and Ali Groves and Luwam Gebrekristos were commissioners - was also featured in a number of articles worldwide accompanying the research, including [National Geographic](#).
- Jana Hirsch and Yvonne Michael [co-authored a study published in MDPI](#), which found that when climate disasters hit, they often leave long-term shortages in health care access. This study went into syndication and was published in a number of outlets, including [The Washington Post](#) and [The Boston Globe](#).

June 2025

- [Leah Schinasi was quoted in an article in WHYY](#) on the dangers that high temperatures can have on public health.
- A dashboard developed by UHC Researchers showing rates of cancer in Philadelphia neighborhoods [was used in an article in WHYY profiling the recently created organization, Philadelphia Communities Conquering Cancer](#). In explaining its mission, the organization [also uses this data as evidence for needed action](#) in communities.

URBAN HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

On September 4-5, 2025, the UHC hosted its first Urban Health Symposium since 2019. The symposium, which brought together over 200 researchers, practitioners, and policymakers focused on improving health in cities, was the fourth installment of the UHC's signature event – [the first taking place 10 years ago, in 2015.](#)

Titled “Healthy Cities for the Next Decade: A Call to Action,” the event included sessions on climate change and urban health, novel data and methods in urban health, policies and interventions to improve health equity in neighborhoods, and more. The main symposium was preceded by a [Pre-Symposium event](#) hosted on September 3rd by our partners at [SALURBAL-Climate](#), focused on the effects of climate change on the health of urban populations.



The Symposium opened with a panel discussion between four leaders of US city health departments – Philadelphia, Kansas City, Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte, NC, and Cleveland. All 4 members of the panel are also members of the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC), a forum for leaders of health departments in 35 of the largest cities in the US.

The Symposium also featured presentations by urban health researchers focused on methods and evidence relevant to policymaking. Top researchers from around the country and the world gave talks on novel data and methods in urban health, climate change affecting urban populations, and the impacts of policies and interventions at the neighborhood level. A poster session and reception provided opportunities for sharing and networking.

The Symposium also featured two keynote speakers. [Dr. Mary T. Bassett](#), Director of the François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights and FXB Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Former Commissioner of both the New York State and New York City Departments of Health spoke on the intersection of politics and urban health, and how politics can have a profound effect on health outcomes in cities. The second keynote speaker, [Dr. Michelle Morse](#), Acting Commissioner of Health, City of New York Internist & Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital, spoke on the structural drivers of health equity in cities and the role of government and other actors in addressing these drivers.



2025 UHC

URBAN HEALTH SYMPOSIUM





The 2025 Urban Health Symposium wasn't just a gathering of minds working to improve health in cities – it was a celebration, a celebration of the work that's brought the growth we've seen in the field over the past few years, and of the resilience of those pursuing equitable health outcomes in cities all over the world. Finally, it was also a celebration of 10 years of the UHC, commemorated in a celebratory toast as part of the Symposium.

POLICY EVALUATION AND ENGAGEMENT FOR URBAN HEALTH

The UHC Policy Core serves as a resource to bolster partnerships with local stakeholders and policymakers, to disseminate and translate UHC research and evidence on urban health and policies, and to increase the policy impact of UHC research. Below are a sample of UHC policy evaluation and engagement highlights from the 2024-2025 academic year.

KEY POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2024-2025

- **Philadelphia City Council District Health Dashboard:** In 2025, the UHC's Policy Core launched an [interactive dashboard](#) that allows Philadelphia residents, policymakers, and advocates to directly engage with data that shines a light on health equity, education, and other issues in their communities. The Philadelphia City Council District Health Dashboard offers a view of key health indicators, social determinants, and policy-relevant metrics across the city's ten council districts.
- **Policy Engagement with Big Cities in the US:** The UHC began working with the BCHC in 2020. For the UHC, the partnership is an opportunity to advance its commitment to urban health research, training, and policy translation, leveraging the school's expertise in public health practice in urban settings. The partnership is dynamic and flexible, with a scope determined each year while allowing for many additional projects when opportunities are presented.
- **Drexel Research Center on Extreme Weather and Urban Health (CCUH) Policy Engagement:** In October 2024, the CCUH organized a workshop for our urban health and climate change research teams across Latin America and the United States with a focus on improving our skills in sharing complex research findings with non-academic audiences.
- **SALURBAL-Climate Policy Engagement:** As part of the SALURBAL-Climate project, the team focused on expanding partnerships and increasing research translation across Latin America through dissemination products like scrollytelling, SALURBAL-Climate Fellows videos, and the "Diálogos SALURBAL" event series. The project also worked on increasing international visibility at events such as COP16, the UN World Data Forum, and ISUH.
- **Hot Topics Policy Blogs:** During this period, the UHC's Policy Core released two Hot Topics in Urban Policy & Health blogs. The [first](#), from November 2024, provided a roundup of coverage related to the 2024 election and health. The [second](#), from April 2025, discussed the possible impact of guaranteed income during and after pregnancy on health.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The UHC Community Engagement Core (CEC) aims to facilitate and strengthen engagement between the UHC and its surrounding communities, with the goal to foster health equity and address local needs. Below is a sample of UHC community engagement highlights from the 2024-2025 academic year.

KEY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2024-2025

UHC faculty and staff contributed to several community-focused initiatives at the Dornsife School of Public Health:

- **Latino Health Collective:** The [Latino Health Collective \(LHC\)](#) is a collaborative network of city officials, policymakers, public health professionals, medical providers, community leaders, and representatives from Latino-serving organizations working across the Philadelphia region. The LHC's mission is to achieve health equity for the Philadelphia Latino community through dialogue, advocacy, mobilization, and inter-organizational collaboration.

The LHC was founded in 2020 and continues to be directed by two Drexel faculty including Dr. Mariana Lazo (UHC Core faculty) and Dr. Ana Martinez-Donate (UHC Affiliate Faculty). The LHC has received a number of local awards including the Health and Wellness Achievement award (2025) by the Office of Immigrant Affairs, City of Philadelphia, and the Public Health Recognition Award by The College of Physicians of Philadelphia (2024). Key activities of the LHC include: weekly bi-lingual newsletters, monthly bi-lingual town halls, annual in-person retreat. In [2025's retreat](#), Usama Bilal gave a presentation, "Unlocking the Power of Data: Tools & Strategies for Impact," to the 90+ attendees. The UHC community engagement core was involved in the preparation of a data infographic of the Latinos in Philadelphia, which was disseminated as part of the retreat.

- **Philly Joy Bank:** The [Philly Joy Bank \(PJB\)](#) provides \$1,000 per month to up to 250 pregnant Philadelphians through pregnancy and 12 months Postpartum who live in Cobbs Creek, Strawberry Mansion, and Nicetown-Tioga. From July 2024-Jan 2025, the evaluation team enrolled eligible PJB applicants comprised of birthing people who had been selected to receive a monthly stipend and those who had not been selected but would be eligible for care services such as financial coaching, benefits counseling, doulas, lactation supports, and home visiting. They also launched a follow-up survey six months postpartum in April 2025 and conducted a series of arts-based qualitative discussions with PJB participants during and after pregnancy. UHC faculty and staff involved with the project include Ali Groves (UHC Affiliate Faculty) and Erikka Gilliam (UHC staff member).

- **Introduction to Grant Writing for Community-Based Organizations:** CEC designed and delivered a full-day Summer “Grant Writing 101” training for community-based organizations, reaching 40 participants (including 8 participants who received a scholarship and were members of CBOs with existing partnerships with the UHC).
- **Infographic on Health and Wellbeing of Latinos in Philadelphia:** In partnership with researchers from the Dornsife School of Public Health, UHC faculty and staff created an infographic leveraging the work of the UHC’s Research and Data Core. The infographic highlighted key indicators for the Philadelphia Latino population and their health, and was designed specifically for community partners and broader dissemination.
- **Community-Facing Newsletter (“Engaged”):** During this period, the CEC launched [*Engaged*](#), a community-facing newsletter aimed at facilitating and nurturing partnerships between academic researchers and community leaders and organizations. We released the first edition in Fall 2024 and the second in Spring 2025.

TRAINING

The UHC leads several training initiatives designed to support Drexel students and capacity building in urban health research and practice more broadly.

— URBAN HEALTH SUMMER INSTITUTE

The 2025 Drexel Urban Health Collaborative Summer Institute welcomed a total of 248 participants. This year's Institute featured 12 dynamic courses, including 6 newly developed offerings that broadened the scope of educational opportunities. Topics included artificial intelligence for urban health research and practice, an introduction to Geographic Information Systems, climate change for urban health researchers, and applied policy and program evaluation for urban health. We fostered institutional partnerships with the Philadelphia DATA CoLab, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and Kean University, enriching the curriculum and expanding collaborative potential across sectors.

Summer Institute 2025 By the Numbers

- Total Enrollment: 248 participants
- Number of Courses: 12
- Number of New Courses: 6
- **Institutional Partnerships:** 3 key collaborators
 - Philadelphia Department of Public Health
 - Philadelphia DATA CoLab
 - Kean University

2025 UHC
SUMMER INSTITUTE



PDPH-Drexel Urban Epidemiology Research Fellowship

Funder: Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)

Félice Lê-Scherban was awarded funding to promote the development of a skilled epidemiology workforce in local public health departments through a structured research fellowship for master's-level public health students. The fellowship is a collaboration between the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), the Urban Health Collaborative (UHC), and the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics (Epi-Biostat) at Drexel University's Dornsife School of Public Health (DSPH).

PDPH Epidemiology Refresher Workshop Series

Funder: Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)

Brent Langellier and Félice Lê-Scherban were awarded funding to teach a 6-session series aimed at providing state-of-the-art knowledge relevant to today's practicing epidemiologists.

Drexel-INCAP Training Program on Social Determinants of Cardiovascular Disease Over the Life Course

Funder: NIH-Fogarty International Center

Through a D43 from the Fogarty International Center at the NIH, the UHC and the [Research Center for the Prevention of Chronic Diseases \(CIIPEC\)](#) at the Institute for Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP) are partnering on a training program that aims to increase capacity to research cardiovascular disease inequities in Central America. In addition to mentored research training three graduate students from Guatemala enrolled full-time at the Dornsife SPH, and a postdoctoral fellow at INCAP, the program offers training to an additional postdoctoral fellow and two scholars at INCAP, three scholars at the University of Nicaragua in Managua, and one scholar at Wuqu' Kawoq (an NGO in Guatemala that focuses on providing services to indigenous communities). The program also offers short workshops for trainees from the region and supports other capacity-building activities, including a monthly webinar series.

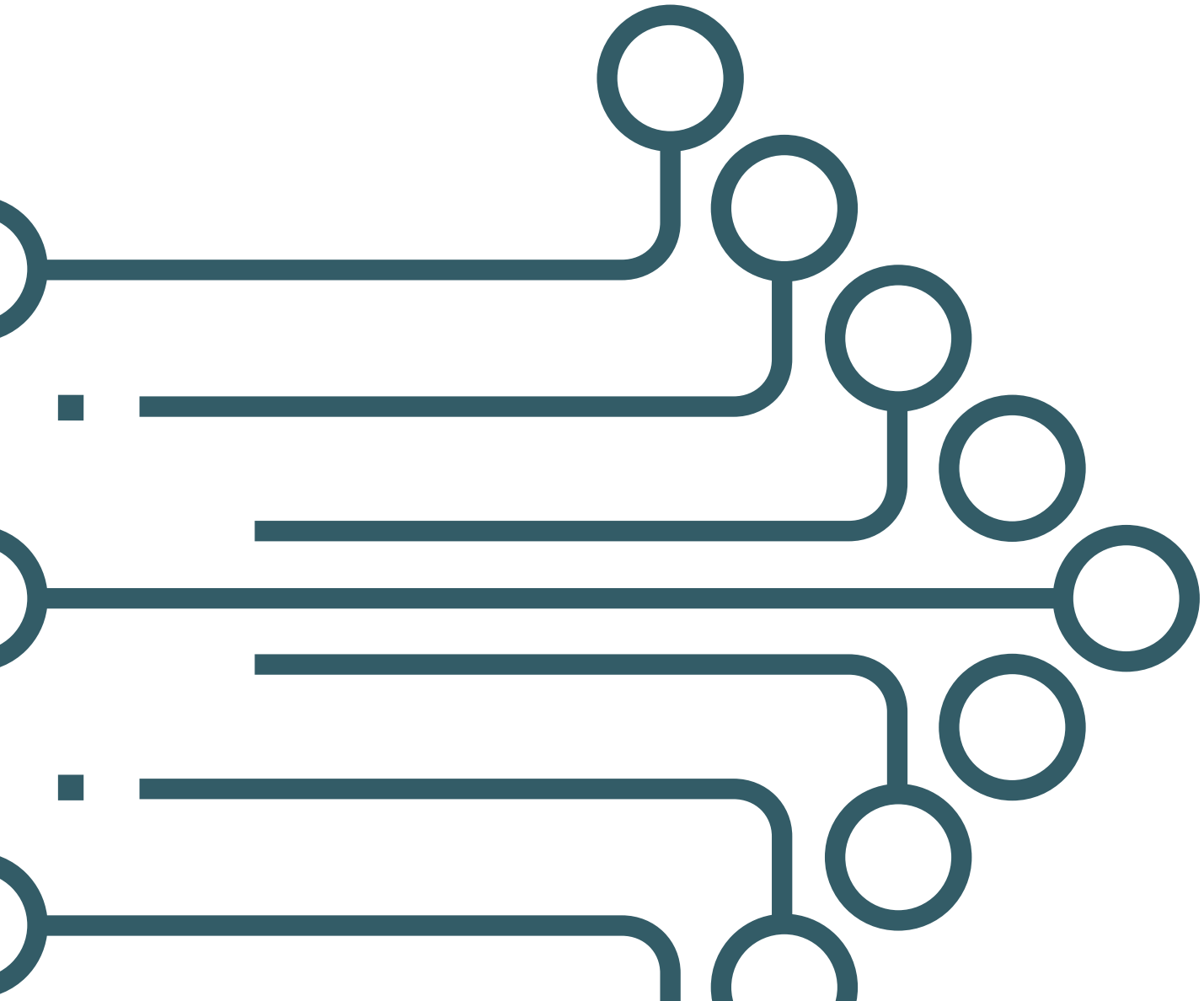
STUDENT AWARDS

Applied Practical Experience (APE) Award

The Applied Practical Experience (APE) – also commonly called a practicum – is a community-based experience in the practice of public health. All [Master of Public Health \(MPH\)](#) students at Dornsife complete an APE as part of their degree requirements. Each year, the UHC's Community Engagement and Policy Cores fund student APE projects. In 2025, the awardees were Leah Gill and Chizoba Okorie.

Leah Gill, an MPH student, was awarded funding from the Community Engagement Core. For her APE in summer 2025, Leah worked with Dr. Irene Headen to support the development and implementation of an evaluation plan for the maternal health community-based organization [chosen•kin](#).

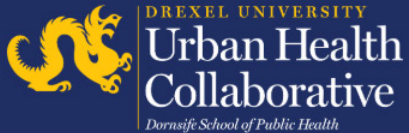
Chizoba Okorie, an MPH student, was awarded funding from the Policy Core. Chizoba served as a research intern at Drexel's Medical Cannabis Research Center (MCRC), conducting a qualitative systematic literature review focused on the intersection between Pennsylvania's medical cannabis dispensary network and structural determinants of health in marginalized communities.



CONGRATS TO OUR 2025 DISSERTATION AWARDEES



Lisa Frueh, MPH



Giyoung Lee, MPH

DISSERTATION AWARDS

Dissertation research funding awards at the UHC provide financial support to select Drexel University doctoral students conducting dissertation research. The 2025 dissertation awardees were:

Lisa Frueh, for "Schools as health-related assets: The role of school physical, educational, and social environments in shaping children's resilience to temperature and fine particulate matter exposure in New York."

Giyoung Lee, for "Improving non-mandatory vaccination uptake among Asian American adolescents: The role of collectivism in parent decision-making."

WORKING GROUPS

As part of its efforts to promote and support urban health research across Drexel, the UHC funds working groups that catalyze urban health research, practice or training. In 2025, the UHC awarded funding to two working groups:

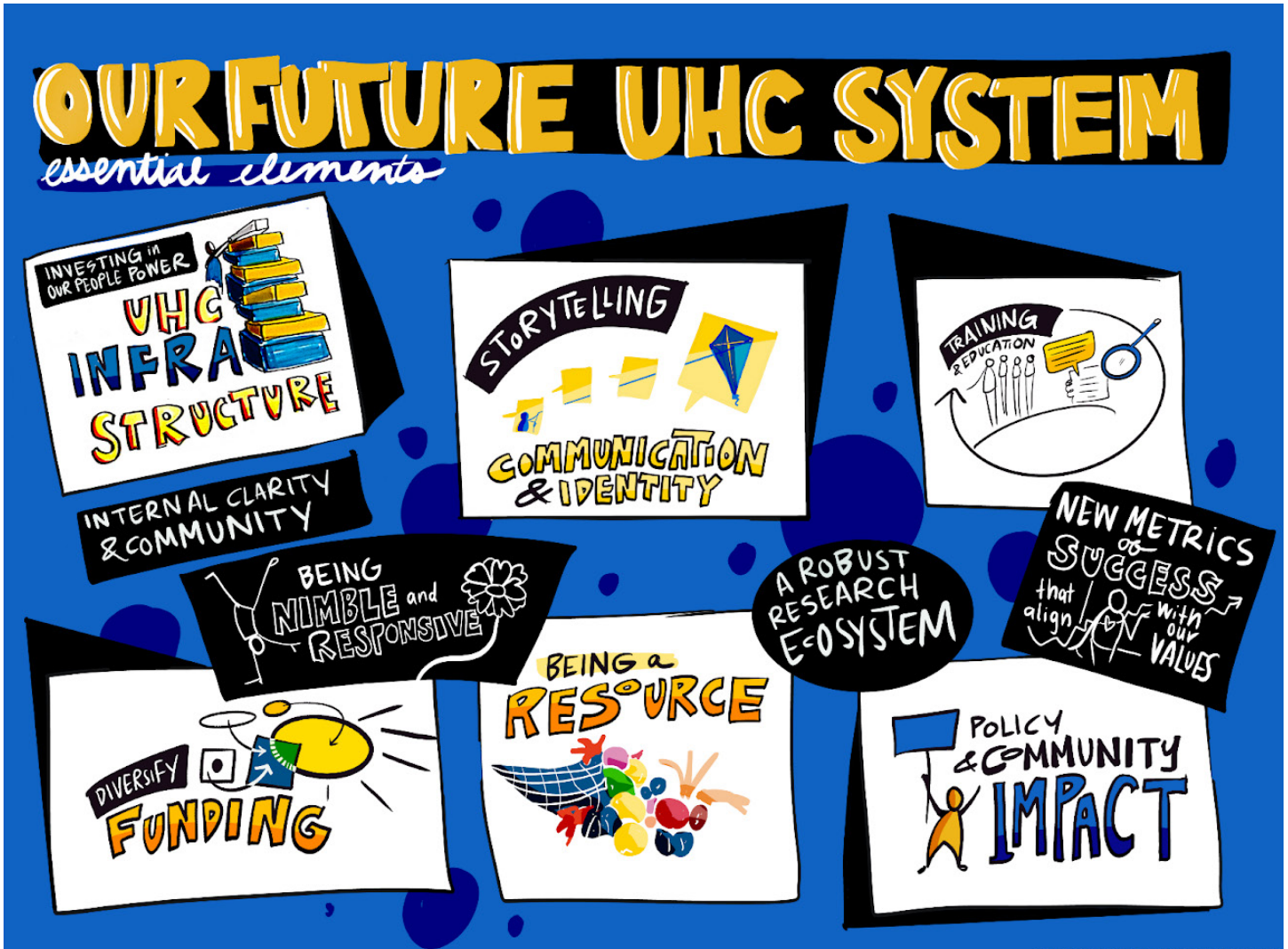
Pathways to Mental Health Equity (PHME): Culturally Relevant Digital and Community-Engaged Solutions for Black Youth and Young Adults Working Group

The PHME Working Group, led by [Kofoworola D.A. Williams, PhD, MPH](#), brings together faculty researchers, students, community members, and stakeholders to co-create equitable mental health solutions for Black youth and young adults through forming advisory groups, a digital photovoice project, and grant development.

The Queer Inclusion, Equity, Health, & Rights (QuIEHR) Working Group

In 2024, the UHC renewed funding for the [QuIEHR Working Group](#), led by [Stephanie Hernandez, PhD, MS](#). It comprises Drexel community members and community partners engaging in research, education, practice, and advocacy related to public health, human rights, and social inclusion for sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations.

LOOKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC GOALS 2025-2028



Graphic Recording by R. Adler & C. Bonner of Illustrating Progress

During the 2024-2025 academic year, through a collaborative process involving all UHC faculty, staff, and trainees, the UHC developed a new strategic plan for 2025-2028. In fall 2025, we began the implementation of the new strategic plan, which has six strategic goals.

GOALS

Resource Hub for Urban Health Expertise

The UHC strives to be a dynamic research hub and a source of timely and relevant multidisciplinary urban health expertise sustained by robust data and responsive evidence. We seek to lead the generation, integration, and exchange of knowledge on how urban systems impact population health and on the strategies and policies that are needed to promote health in cities.

Internal Organization

Our internal organization, our people, our practices, and our administrative and data infrastructure will foster a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. They nurture interpersonal relationships and center antiracism and equity, empowering everyone at UHC to thrive.

Partnerships for Policy and Community Impact

We will prioritize creating and strengthening bi-directional partnerships to increase the impact of our work. Our approach is shaped by the communities, policy actors, and other partners we work with.

Telling Our Story

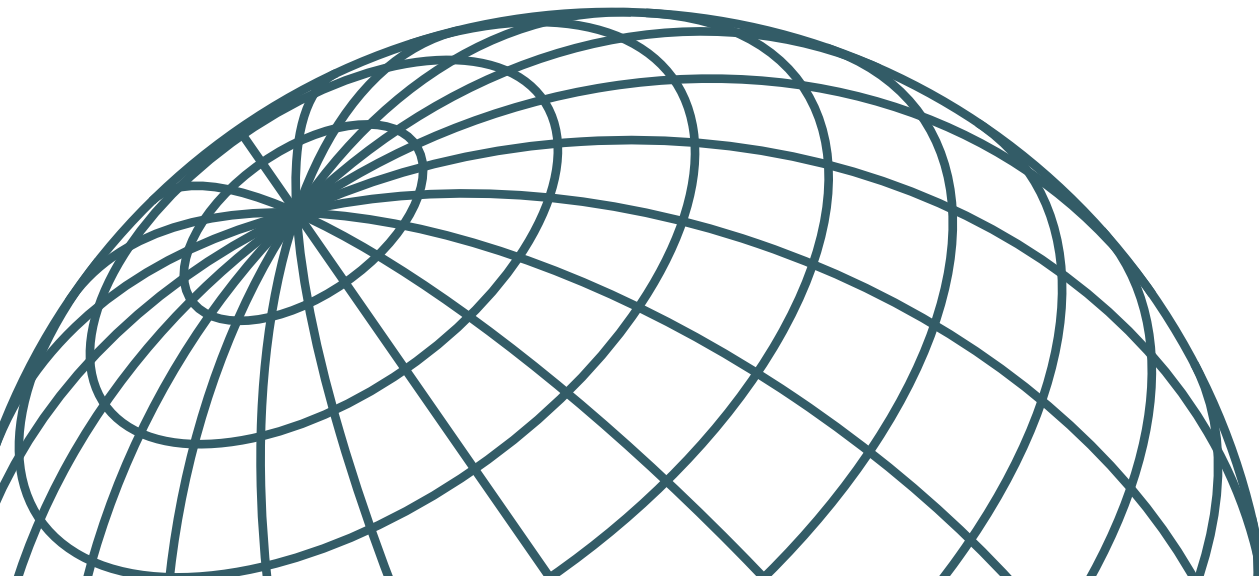
We will clearly and consistently communicate our story and unique value, including our expertise, reach, and impact, with the goal of advancing urban health research and practice.

Training

We will use innovative methods to train current and future practitioners, researchers, educators, experts, leaders, and advocates to improve health in cities. We will continuously seek to improve the reach and quality of the training we provide.

Diverse, Sustainable Funding

We will continuously seek flexible, diverse, and sustainable resources to support core staff and infrastructure while also encouraging exploration, innovation, growth, and responsiveness to emerging urban health challenges.





DREXEL INSTITUTE



HERBERT R. RILEY



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Urban Health Collaborative

Dornsife School of Public Health

DORNSIFE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AT DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Dornsife's mission is to provide education, conduct research, and partner with communities and organizations to improve the health of populations. Dornsife views health as a human right and has a special commitment to improving health in cities, eliminating health disparities, and promoting health in all policies.

The UHC and the Dornsife School of Public Health are committed to creating an environment that supports intellectual exchange and debate and promotes diversity and inclusion in all our activities.

PARTNER WITH US

Knowledge generation and action cannot happen without partnerships. At the UHC we engage with communities, governments, nonprofits, and other stakeholders locally and globally to conduct research and translate evidence into effective action.

The Urban Health Collaborative is a member of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, coordinated by the Urban Institute in Washington, DC and a member of the International Society on Urban Health.

CONTACT US

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Drexel University Urban Health Collaborative



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