Welcome to our Fall 2014 Newsletter. The Center for Research on Women and Gender continues to thrive, and as always, has had a productive year. All of our programs are flourishing, but I would like to tell you about a few initiatives that we are all particularly proud of.

Our Office on Women’s Health US Department of Health and Human Services grant to improve cardiovascular health for women living in rural Illinois is entering its fourth year. We have recruited 12 churches to engage in collaborative and sustainable community-based health programs, such as gardening to promote eating fresh fruits and vegetables—often not otherwise available in the area.

Our NIH-funded Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) program is entering year eight of funding and has 10 current scholars and associates from the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, the School of Public Health, and the Cancer Center. Our BIRCWH scholars and graduates have brought in over $6 million in grant funding and published over 100 peer-reviewed manuscripts since the program began in 2007.

Our Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program has recruited Edyta Dudek to do full time community outreach with young women in primary and secondary schools. This brings a wonderful opportunity for WISE and CRWG to engage more fully in community-based outreach and education. We welcome Edyta to our CRWG family.
We are especially proud of hosting our first Women’s Health Research Day in April 2014. The CRWG and the BIRCWH hosted this event along with several of our partners. The event had over 140 attendees from across campus. In addition, students, fellows, and faculty presented 31 posters and discussed their research. We had several excellent speakers including our keynote speaker, Dr. Larry Cahill, a professor of neurobiology and behavior at University of California, Irvine, who gave a wonderful presentation about sex differences in memory and brain function. Our invited speaker, Dr. Scott Langenecker, associate professor of psychiatry a UIC, spoke about his program of research on sex/gender differences in mood disorders. We are currently planning our second annual Women’s Health Research Day to take place in the spring semester.

And a very special congratulations to two of our CRWG colleagues. Dr. Pauline Maki has been named president of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) and Dr. Chisina Kapungu received the 2014-2015 Jacquelin Goldman Congressional Fellowship, sponsored by the American Psychological Association. Chisina is enjoying Washington, DC, and is working in the office of Senator Edward Markey from Massachusetts.

I am always impressed with the great activity and enthusiasm of the CRWG faculty and staff and I hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful accomplishments of our Center in this edition of the BRC.

All my best,

Stacie Geller, Director, CRWG
Take a look at media reports of why women opt out of science and engineering careers and you will find a list of reasons such as personal choice, lack of LEGOs as a kid, and a desire for better work-family balance. However, one thing rarely on that list is sexual harassment. Over the summer, former BIRCWH fellow Julienne Rutherford and her colleagues, Drs. Kathryn B. H. Clancy, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Robin Nelson, Skidmore College; and Katie Hinde, Harvard University, published a paper in *PLoS ONE* based on a survey of 666 scientists whose work requires them to be in the field, and found an astounding two-thirds had experienced some form of sexual harassment, including 20% who were assaulted (read the article at: [http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0102172](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0102172)). This shocking finding resulted in an avalanche of press hits ranging from *The New York Times* to *Truthout*, including:

*The findings were not only quantitatively different between men and women respondents, but qualitatively different as well. The majority of men reported experiencing harassment from their peers, while the majority of women reported becoming the target of harassment and assault from their superiors in the field.*


*A major step in decreasing these occurrences is shifting cultural awareness. Campus assault doesn’t only happen in house parties or dorm rooms—it can also take place anywhere. The foremost goal is to communicate to predators not to sexually harass, assault and rape, but beyond that, a great course of action is to collectively push for straightforward sexual harassment policies in the workplace.*


*Psychologist Rebecca Campbell, who studies the effect of sexual harassment on communities, says that while all workplace harassment is harmful, it can be particularly damaging when coming from a superior. She also says these findings should be incorporated into the broader discussion about campus sexual harassment and violence.*


*Whether harassment or discrimination takes place at a field site in Costa Rica or in a conference room, the problem will not be solved with new rules archived on unread websites. The responsibility for pushing back should not rest solely with the victims. Solutions require a change of culture that can happen only from within.*

So far on Twitter, the combined reach of the paper has approached 2 million users, and the paper has been viewed on the *PLoS ONE* website nearly 48,000 times. California Rep. Jackie Spearer cited the study extensively in her letter to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) ([http://www.speier.house.gov/images/pdf/2014-07-24_AAAS_sexual_harassment.pdf](http://www.speier.house.gov/images/pdf/2014-07-24_AAAS_sexual_harassment.pdf)) about its use of sexualized and dehumanized images of transsexual sex workers on the cover of *Science*. The Twitter hashtag, #Safe13, is being used to connect women and men concerned about sexual harassment and assault in the sciences. It has become one of the more prominent emblems of gender equity on Twitter. Clearly this issue is of great importance to people outside of academia. Alas, while some academic media outlets have run op-eds that cite the report, none have reported on the survey itself.

Dr. Rutherford thinks few academic outlets are reporting on the survey because academics themselves are still processing the results. We reflected on the issue of romance in the lab, and professors dating students. During our training as students, we both knew of fellow students who dated professors. How much consent can any student give to a professor in their field, especially given how small subfields can get, and how a bad breakup can have an impact on professional standing? Dr. Rutherford said she was spending a lot of time reflecting on her own experience as a student, and felt that others are doing the same, as Aschwanden suggested in her *New York Times* essay. Not to excuse any of the harassment or assaults reported, but when one is in a system where these behaviors are tolerated, or willfully ignored, it may be difficult to read survey results that suggest one’s tolerance of past behavior may have harmed another person’s life, much less their career.

Where the paper has made an academic splash is at conferences and at the department-head level. Rutherford and colleagues wanted it to get out to fellow scientists to start changing the culture of doing science. But the response was beyond anything they imagined. They didn’t expect it to be so rapidly incorporated into lab meetings and syllabi. They didn’t expect it to so quickly make it into the hands of department heads, deans, chancellors, and program officers. Dr. Rutherford and her three co-authors have spent a lot of time on the phone and Skype in a daze, and sometimes in tears, since the paper came out, because the data have resonated so strongly with so many people—because people have written them, called them, and walked up to them in meetings to thank them for this work.

Rutherford was recently at a conference that brought together young scientists from many disparate disciplines. The subject of the paper organically came up in a number of conversations and it was an incredible experience to note the part she played, and then personally engage with men and women she hadn’t known before, about how they wanted to help make the change. One woman told her that being able to hold the paper up at meetings in support of the arguments she’s been making at her institution has allowed her to move beyond being “that feminist,” because it’s not easy to ignore solid evidence of the problem. Empowering others to transcend institutional barriers has been so far the most rewarding, exciting, and humbling experience in her career.

Another place of change is with those charged with administering field sites. In light of the paper, Rutherford knows some colleagues who have drafted their own field-site-specific policies of conduct and reporting mechanisms, and think that idea is catching on. The study findings suggest that principal investigators, site managers, course directors, and advisors
have a lot of agency to make actionable changes, and we are seeing that happen. Rutherford thinks that change at the level of the professional society will come, but it will be somewhat slower. After the preliminary data were presented at the American Association of Physical Anthropologists meeting in April 2013, the American Anthropological Association issued its “zero tolerance” stance on sexual harassment and assault (http://blog.aaanet.org/2013/04/16/zero-tolerance-for-sexual-harassment/). We know of other professional associations that have circulated the paper and have been holding internal discussions, and there are some ethics committees within associations that have been rethinking their policies. Some professional conferences already have sexual harassment policies for the duration of their meetings. Rutherford and her colleagues think this is really important and want to see more of that, as it reinforces that these places are still workplaces, and as such, all members of the workforce are entitled to safety and dignity.

So what is next for this group of women who are opening up conversations about harassment in the sciences? They are working on a second paper analyzing dozens of detailed follow-up phone interviews of a subset of their survey respondents. They are conducting thematic analysis to determine characteristics of respondents who indicated they were targets and characteristics of the sites where they were targeted. This deep contextualizing of the phenomenon will point the way to more ways the culture of harassment and disenfranchisement of our most vulnerable scientists can be changed for trainees at the earliest stages of their careers. Both targets and bystanders suffer from these environments and Rutherford and her colleagues hope to present a cogent analysis of the emotional and professional consequences. Rutherford and colleagues are also hearing from other researchers from numerous fields who are launching their own studies (http://anthropology.arizona.edu/news/survey-field-safety-middle-east-north-africa-and-mediterranean-basin). All four coauthors have advised colleagues who are moving forward with this kind of work.

Sexual harassment and assault are issues that are far too often whispered about or discussed in ways to avoid the instigator (e.g., “Don’t be alone with him!”). Dr. Rutherford and her colleagues collected those whispers and painted a picture that appears bleak. But from that bleak reality is a growing conversation that is long overdue and creating positive outcomes. The more light we shine throughout the sciences, the better we can make the work and social environment, and the better and more innovative we can make scientific endeavors.
Senior Director of Research at CRWG, Pauline Maki, PhD, spoke with Dr. Langenecker, Associate Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Psychology about his program of research on sex/gender differences in mood disorders.

Depression received a lot of attention in the media recently following the suicide of Robin Williams. You were recently featured in ABC News Channel 7 in a segment that helped to identify signs of depression and suicidal thoughts. What do we know about sex/gender differences in suicide and depression?

Suicide attempts are relatively common in Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). In a room of 36 people, it is estimated that six will have MDD (four women and two men), and one of those six will have made a suicide attempt that requires medical attention. Men are more likely to make lethal attempts at suicide. Women are twice as likely to have MDD than men after puberty and more likely to use slower acting methods such as taking pills and are therefore more likely to receive medical intervention following the attempt. Men have more access to lethal weapons. Women are socialized to talk about their feelings, which might include suicidal thoughts. Social and cultural norms make stigma greater in men, decreasing access to resources and treatment.

Why are females more likely to be diagnosed with MDD than males?

While hormonal factors play a role in this sex difference, some of the difference may be a byproduct of how we make diagnoses. Men are twice as likely as women to have a substance abuse disorder, which may be diagnosed instead of depression. Going back to this concept of societal norms, women are more frequently encouraged to talk about feelings and discouraged to use drugs. These norms are changing with destigmatization of drug use.

How did you become interested in studying sex differences in MDD?

I came to this work from a base rate perspective. Competition for research grants makes it necessary to study a high base rate disorder. The high percentage of people who don’t seek treatment for depression and the relatively low response rate to current treatments indicates that the system is inefficient. In a disorder this prevalent, we could make significant differences in individuals’ lives by making even incremental steps.

Does the field of psychiatry fund studies on sex differences in MDD?

Surprisingly, almost no one talks about the fact that the prevalence is twice as high in women. Studying sex differences in MDD is studying a subspecialty within a subspecialty. It requires what I call stealth research. Funding bodies are less likely to fund a study with a sample size large enough to power for sex differences. So, I power grants for a comparison of MDD versus MDD and anxiety disorder. This approach allows for a sufficient sample size. It’s a practical solution to a serious problem. So the next challenge is how do I incorporate...
measures of hormonal factors since that requires extra money? I need to do that to understand the etiopathogenesis of MDD in women.

This speaks to the larger problem in the biomedical enterprise. To study a subspecialty within a subspecialty you need to be a more senior researcher. You need four times as much money to power for interactions. So, one interaction might be that a symptom or disease pathway is present in women and absent in men. We call this a sex differential effect. That requires the most power so the largest sample size and is unlikely to be feasible. A second kind of interaction is that a symptom is present in women and the opposite in men. That’s easier to power but still requires a large sample size, and does not make much sense from a biological perspective. The budget is the final gate that has to be overcome to fund sex differences research. It’s highly relevant scientifically, but not financially feasible.

What are some of your new discoveries?

Because I am a neuropsychologist and a neuroimager, I use the same instruments in multiple studies whether I am studying outcomes pre and post treatment, conducting a cross-sectional study or doing a longitudinal study. Because I use consistent outcome measures across my studies, I can combine data across studies to yield pretty large sample sizes. One of the tests that I routinely administer is a measure of emotion perception, which measures how participants perceive emotions in faces. Here I see interactions. In individuals with MDD who are younger than 40, women have difficulties in emotional perception but men don’t. With impulsivity tests, it’s just the opposite. This may play a role in men using guns in suicide. In older individuals, the sex differences are gone. Both men and women have difficulties with emotion processing and impulsivity.

Why is that?

It might be that the brain circuits that are affected in MDD become scarred as the disease progresses. What are more specific biological pathways to depression in younger adults become more generalized as the disease progresses.

What other discoveries have you made?

There are somewhat terrifying findings regarding the impact of child abuse on aspects of depression. Women are more likely than men to be victims of child abuse, whether neglect, sexual abuse, or physical abuse. Think of it as caregivers failing to meet basic and social needs of females more than males. This might also contribute to the difference in MDD between females and males. Women with a history of abuse first have difficulties processing reward, and second first have more difficulties perceiving emotions than men. Given the opportunity to get money by simply pressing a white box, women with a history of child abuse don’t maximize the money they earn, even if all it takes is to press a button with the same speed throughout the task. They may learn early that opportunities for good things to happen to other people do not apply to themselves. These thoughts become automatic and increase risk for depression. So if I’m a female who experienced childhood trauma I am more likely to perceive a neutral face as angry and also to perceive fearful and sad faces as angry. This is adaptive; I am hypersensitive to the most dangerous emotion to protect myself. For example, if I know when dad will get angry, I will take action to avoid him. The problem is that this pattern of emotion misperception and avoidance can become overly generalized to other relationships.
On April 28, 2014, we hosted our inaugural Women’s Health Research Day, an event designed to promote networking and raise awareness about advances in women’s health and sex differences research at UIC. The event attracted over 140 faculty members, students, and researchers from across campus.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Larry Cahill, a professor of neurobiology and behavior at University of California, Irvine, gave an engaging presentation about sex differences in memory and brain function, which provided important insights for attendees across the health science disciplines. Invited speaker Scott Langenecker, PhD, associate professor of psychiatry at UIC, gave a thought-provoking presentation on sex differences in depression.

We were also honored to showcase the variety of research on women’s health and sex differences at UIC through our abstract and poster competitions. Abstract winners, Heather Sipsma, PhD, assistant professor of nursing and Nanci Alanis, undergraduate student in psychology, gave excellent presentations on their research. In addition, 31 faculty, staff, and students presented their research at our peer-reviewed poster session. Awards for best posters were given to Beelet Dawood, an undergraduate student in psychology; Hitisha Patel, a graduate student from the College of Pharmacy; and Susan Magasi, PhD Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, in the College of Applied Health Sciences.

Our co-sponsors included Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH), Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences, College of Medicine, College of Nursing, Department of Psychiatry, Department of Psychology, Graduate Program in Neuroscience, Developmental Center for AIDS Research, Hektoen, and the Chancellors Committee on the Status of Women.

We are currently planning our second annual Women’s Health Research Day. Visit crwg.uic.edu for more information.

*Darwin clearly understood that "sex matters." In fact, he knew that without his concept of "sexual election" his theory of evolution would fail. Strangely, biologists have for the most part long since forgotten this essential component of his remarkable theory. Darwin never did. After receiving intense criticism for it, he said, "My conviction in the power of sexual selection remains unshaken.*

-Larry Cahill -
The Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) program has completed its seventh successful year of fostering research and career development among junior-level women’s health researchers at UIC. Our Scholars and Women’s Health Research Associates have enjoyed a productive and successful year of publications and funding awards. Scholar Sadia Haider, M.D., M.P.H. was awarded funding for her project “Increasing the Uptake of Postpartum Long-Acting Reversible Contraception: A Novel Approach at the Well Baby Visit.” Medscape featured the work of scholar Kirstie Danielson, Ph.D., who demonstrated that islet transplants from female donors work better in recipients of both sexes. Scholar Nuriya Robinson, M.D. and BIRCWH Principle Investigator Stacie Geller, Ph.D. are part of a multidisciplinary team that received funding from the Chancellor’s Discovery Fund and Illinois Ventures to develop a prototype medical device for auto transfusion in life-threatening postpartum hemorrhage in settings where blood products are not otherwise available.

UIC BIRCWH Co-Investigator Tonda Hughes, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., has been appointed Associate Dean of Global Health in the College of Nursing (CON). Dr. Hughes, Professor in the CON’s Department of Health Systems Science, has been serving as the Interim Executive Director of the Global Health Leadership Office (GHLO). In this position, she has worked to advance CON’s international academic mission and has increased the visibility of the CON internationally. On September 26, 2014, Dr. Hughes received the inaugural CON Distinguished Researcher Award in recognition of her renowned research career on sexual minority women’s health.

The BIRCWH program also celebrates the successes of our former scholars. Former scholar Joanna Burdette has been appointed Associate Dean for Research in the College of Pharmacy. Former scholar Julienne Rutherford, Ph.D. and co-authors published a paper on sexual harassment and assault in fieldwork settings in PLOS ONE that has received an overwhelming public response. Within the first 24 hours of publication the paper was tweeted 657 times to a combined 900,000 Twitter users, and the paper is in the 99th percentile for online traffic. Mainstream media outlets including the New York Times, Daily Beast, Scientific America, USA Today, Science, Washington Post, NPR, Mother Jones, and VOX featured the paper after its publication. Former scholar Thasarat Vajaranant, M.D. was featured on Yahoo! News for her research that found that women who had their ovaries and fallopian tubes removed before age 43 had increased risk for glaucoma.
The BIRCWH program is pleased to welcome our newest scholar Faith Fletcher, Ph.D., who began her BIRCWH appointment on October 1, 2014. Dr. Fletcher, Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences at the School of Public Health, is a sociobehavioral researcher with training in health education and promotion, bioethics, and behavioral science. Her research focuses on addressing intrapersonal, environmental, and contextual factors that impact reproductive and cancer-related disparities among disadvantaged women living with HIV/AIDS. In addition to welcoming our new scholar, we are delighted to welcome four new Women’s Health Research Associates: Terry Moore, Ph.D. (Medicinal Chemistry, College of Pharmacy), Minjie Wu, Ph.D. (Psychiatry, College of Medicine), Kristine Molina, Ph.D. (Psychology, Liberal Arts & Sciences), and Laura Hirshfield, Ph.D. (Medical Education, College of Medicine).

We are pleased to announce the 2014 Alice J. Dan Dissertation Research Award winners. The winners are Molly McGown from the department of anthropology for her research entitled, “Making moral mothers through group care: biopower and the social production of reproductive health knowledge;” Norma Jane Mejias from the department of disability and human development for her research entitled, “The role of support group involvement in the self-concept of women with disabilities;” and Cara Smulevitz from the departments of art history and gender and women’s studies for her research entitled, “Girl, if you make the movie, I promise somebody will see it.”

The annual Dan Dissertation award encourages original and significant research about gender and/or women by UIC doctoral students. Recipients are awarded monetary support to assist with their research. The award is open to UIC doctoral students in any field who have completed the requirements for candidacy and have an approved dissertation proposal by the application deadline.

To make a tax deductible donation in support of the Dan Dissertation Award, visit http://crwg.uic.edu/support-crwg/.
WISE Community Outreach

“It is very interesting because it is about solving problems in the world” wrote one middle school student, describing one thing she learned about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) during a UIC campus visit. On that rainy day in August a group from Mujeres Latinas en Accion’s summer program visited WISE. Spending a summer morning on campus is probably not the most exciting prospect for the average teenager, but the students quickly became involved in the activities organized by WISE leaders.

In one project, the middle and high school students learned about environmental engineering and the global shortage of clean water. The students activated their prior knowledge on the subject by watching a short documentary and playing a game about the availability of clean water. Who knew that nearly half of the hospital beds in the developing world are occupied by patients with waterborne diseases? Students expressed a great interest in the subject, and shared stories about their own experience with collecting water in Central America.

The students then designed water filters with materials provided, including charcoal, sand, plastic bottles and coffee filters. Through this activity, the students were introduced to the engineering design process: identifying the problem, brainstorming, designing, testing and redesigning cycle. Students worked with great enthusiasm on their filters and made several changes before sharing their final solutions. The winner was announced by WISE Community Outreach Director, Edyta Dudek, who then drank the polluted water using the filter designed by the kids.

The visit also included a campus tour, led by UIC Office of Admissions Student Ambassadors. The students were particularly interested in the Ambassadors’ own experiences on campus. One Ambassador happened to be an environmental engineer major. This allowed the visiting students to make a connection to the morning’s presentation and activity, and they asked many questions regarding this particular STEM field.

The visit would not be complete without meeting a UIC faculty member. Dr. Roy Plotnick of Earth and Environmental Sciences shared his enthusiasm of paleontology with the students. The students had an opportunity to touch fossils and inquire about the methods used by paleontologists. The Mujeres Latinas en Accion youth group is looking forward to visiting campus again in the near future. In addition, WISE undergraduate students will serve on a panel in late September to talk to the same group about their STEM majors, experience at UIC and college life in general, so the kids can learn more about this “big campus with a lot of awesome majors.”

If you know a school or community group that would like to explore STEM fields, please contact WISE Community Outreach at WISE_Outreach@uic.edu or visit our new website at http://crwg.uic.edu/wise-home/wise-pre-college/.
WISE Brings Girls Who Code to UIC

Girls Who Code (GWC) is an award-winning national program that works to inspire, educate, and equip girls with the computing skills to pursue 21st century opportunities. WISE has launched a chapter of GWC at UIC that meets on Saturday mornings and brings together Chicago area high school girls who want to learn to code. To learn more about WISE Girls Who Code, please visit https://crwg.uic.edu/wise-home/wise-pre-college/girls-who-code/

WISE Campus Activities

Graduate Assistant Sana Ahmed won her division (Art/Design/Humanities + Business/Computer Science/Mathematics + Social Sciences) at the UIC Student Research Forum for presenting the success of the WISE peer mentor program. We then took her poster to the 2014 WEPAN Change Leader Forum where we shared our successful peer mentor model with other women in engineering programs across the country.

WISE is engaged in a busy fall semester. We have welcomed our WISE Wing students to campus. We have also launched 50 new mentoring pairs! That is an increase of 66% from last year. Our first WISE panel of the year discussed the many scientific careers surrounding eliminating or “curing” heart disease. WISE welcomed Drs. Brenda Russell, Daniela Valdez-Jasso, and Joan Briller to an exciting conversation. Far too many students believe that the best or only path to curing diseases is through medical school. These three scientists gave the students information on how to find the best niche to contribute to a cure. We are actively planning our next event, a return visit to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, to meet more of their women in technology. Thanks to our partnership, one WISE woman spent her summer at the Fed helping to keep our monetary system secure.

As always, keep in touch with WISE via Facebook (facebook.com/UICWISE program) to keep up to date on our events. For photos, connect with us on Flickr (https://www.flickr.com/photos/uicwise/) or follow up on Instagram (http://www.enjoygram.com/uicwise).

Save The Date

Please save Tuesday, April 14, 2015 for our annual End of the Year Dinner and Celebration.
The Center for Research on Women and Gender partnered with Mujeres Latinas en Acción, the longest-standing Latina organization in the country, on their latest Latina Portrait annual policy report. This year’s report focused on economic security. CRWG Assistant Director Veronica Arreola wrote the introduction to the report and attended the report release press conference in September.

The study found that Latin@s* are overrepresented in Chicago’s low-wage workforce. While they make up 26% of the city’s population, 42% of low-wage workers are Latin@. Undocumented Latin@s are most at risk for living in poverty. Due to their status, undocumented Latinas often must choose undesirable low-wage work or informal work in which they cannot fight for better pay or working conditions due to threat of being fired or deported. These low-wage industries also often expose Latinas to exploitation from supervisors. Undocumented Latin American women are at an increased risk of experiencing wage theft or being paid less than minimum wage, as well as sexual violence. This situation has local implications, as women comprise nearly half of the undocumented population in Illinois.

The impact of low-wage work on Latinas is exemplified by the monthly cost of childcare in Illinois, which can total $1,469, while a full-time minimum wage earner will make just $1,430 a month. The high cost of child care may keep Latinas in low-wage work because it limits the type of work they can do, in attempt to minimize childcare costs.

The Latina Portrait did not just paint a bleak state of affairs. It ends with a number of policy recommendations including raising the minimum wage, establishing earned sick-time, and creating a domestic workers bill of rights. Recommendations for action are detailed for allies who work in local government, labor and service organizations, and academia.


**Please note:**

*Using Latin@ instead of “Latino” recognizes both Latinos and Latinas. For the Latina Portrait, Latin@ was used to differentiate between Latin@s of all genders and when just talking about Latina women.*
CRWG Faculty Affiliate Receives Congressional Fellowship, Assists with Ebola Legislation

Chisina Kapungu, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the UIC College of Medicine, received the 2014-2015 Jacquelin Goldman Congressional Fellowship, sponsored by the American Psychological Association. The purpose of the fellowship is to provide psychologists with a public policy learning experience, to contribute to the more effective use of psychological knowledge in government, and to expand awareness about the value of psychology-government interaction among psychologists and within the federal government. Chisina is working in the Office of Senator Edward Markey from Massachusetts.

Among her first projects, Chisina worked on legislation to allocate funds to establish domestic “Ebola treatment hubs,” regional designated hospitals that can provide specialized care for Ebola patients. The legislation, introduced on November 19 by Senators Markey and Rob Portman from Ohio, responds to the current limitations in US hospitals with biocontainment facilities that are appropriate for treating Ebola patients or others with infectious diseases that require isolation. Currently, there are only four hospitals with biocontainment facilities in the United States, and those locations have a total of 11 beds that can be used at any one time.

The proposed bill establishes a program where the US Department of Health and Human Services can distribute funds to assist hospitals that voluntarily seek designation as a treatment center. These funds would support the establishment of an isolation unit, appropriate and intensive training for all healthcare workers, acquisition of needed personal protective equipment, handling, transport and disposal of contaminated waste and other activities necessary to treat patients with Ebola or other serious infectious diseases safely and effectively. The legislation would also allow hospitals to apply for compensatory awards to cover the excess and otherwise unpaid expenses of treating a patient with Ebola.

CRWG Assistant Director Participates in Chicago Regional Forum on Working Families

Veronica Arreola, WISE director and CRWG assistant director, participated in the Chicago Regional Forum on Working Families, which was held in preparation for the Summit on Working Families, which was hosted by the White House, the US Department of Labor, and the Center for American Progress. Veronica was invited to share her thoughts on increasing the number of women in the STEM workforce as well as women in leadership positions overall.

For more information about the Summit for Working Families, visit: http://workingfamiessummit.org
CRWG Collaborates to Prevent Maternal Mortality in Tanzania

CRWG director Stacie Geller and collaborator Crystal Patil, associate professor of medical anthropology in the College of Nursing, are recipients of the inaugural Global Health and Wellbeing Seed Grant Program, established by the Chancellor’s Global Excellence Task Force and the College of Medicine’s Center for Global Health. The seed grant program was created to support projects that improve the lives of people around the world. The program provided start-up funding for three multidisciplinary research projects, to assist researchers in seeking external funding in the future.

Drs. Patil and Geller will work together to conduct a needs assessment in urban Dares Salaam, Tanzania, with a focus on reducing maternal mortality. Based on the needs assessment, they will adapt a continuum-of-care approach for city residents. The continuum of care approach has successfully reduced maternal deaths from postpartum hemorrhage in rural areas of the developing world. The goal of the research is to identify factors that put urban women at risk of dying from postpartum bleeding.

For more information, visit: [http://news.uic.edu/seed-grants-foster-research-projects-in-global-health#sthash.LDbcKNJm.dpuf](http://news.uic.edu/seed-grants-foster-research-projects-in-global-health#sthash.LDbcKNJm.dpuf)

CRWG Collaborates with State Health Department on Every Mother Initiative

Illinois was selected as one of six states to participate in the Every Mother Initiative program from the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs funded by Merck for Mothers. The Every Mother Initiative is intended to help state maternal mortality review committees turn data into action to prevent maternal mortality. CRWG Director Stacie Geller is co-investigator for Illinois’ team effort, and research specialist Abby Koch is participating as an epidemiologist and member of the state review committee. The Illinois team will focus on maternal deaths that take place out of hospitals, which represent about one-third of the maternal deaths in the state.

CRWG Welcomes Visiting Scholar

Over the next two years, CRWG is hosting visiting scholar Rebecca Thurston, associate professor of psychiatry from the University of Pittsburgh. While at UIC, Dr. Thurston will be collaborating with Pauline Maki, professor of psychiatry and psychology at UIC and Senior Director of Research at CRWG. Dr. Thurston, an expert on cardiovascular function and menopause, and Dr. Maki, an expert on brain function and menopause, are examining whether hot flashes at menopause are associated with decreases in brain and cardiovascular function and whether such associations are evident when hot flashes are measured objectively in real time by ambulatory skin conductance monitors.
CRWG Senior Research Director Named NAMS President

Pauline Maki, professor of psychology and CRWG senior director of research was selected as the incoming president of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS), effective October 2014. NAMS is North America's leading professional organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging.

CRWG Director Receives Chancellor's Discovery Fund Award

CRWG director Stacie Geller and colleagues are recipients of the Chancellor's Discovery Fund for Multidisciplinary Research. Their project is titled, "Testing of a Prototype Obstetrical Device for Auto Transfusion in Life Threatening Postpartum Hemorrhage," and is intended for use in settings where blood products are unavailable. The multidisciplinary research team includes College of Medicine collaborators Valerie Dobiesz, MD, MPH, from Emergency Medicine and the Center for Global Health; Pam Kutz, BS, CCP, from Cardiothoracic Surgery; and Nuriya Robinson, MD, from Obstetrics and Gynecology; as well as Hananeh Esmailbeigi, PhD, from the Bioengineering Department in the College of Engineering.

Welcome New Staff

Congratulations to Sana Ahmed and Diana Rusz, CRWG graduate research assistants who graduated in May 2014. Sana completed her master of education degree in measurement, evaluation, statistics, and assessment and is currently working as a retention specialist at Malcolm X College in Chicago. Diana completed her master of public health degree in health policy and administration. She is currently working as a research assistant for Health Management Associates in Chicago.

We wish to welcome Ellen Paulsey to the CRWG staff. Ellen is a graduate student in the maternal and child health program in the UIC School of Public Health. Ellen was hired as a graduate research assistant to work with our heart health programming in southernmost Illinois.

Congratulations!

In November 2013, Heather Risser, faculty affiliate gave birth to a son, Benjamin. In June 2014, Abby Koch, research specialist celebrated her marriage to Steve Hammer. In July 2014, Chisina Kapungu, affiliate gave birth to a son, Tristan! Congratulations to Heather, Abby, and Chisina!

Visit Our New Website!

In August 2014, we launched our new website. Please visit us at http://crwg.uic.edu/.

Join Us on Facebook!

Please Visit: http://www.facebook.com/uic.crwg
Since 2011, St. John Praise and Worship Center, located in Pulaski, Illinois, has been in a partnership with the Center for Research on Women and Gender (CRWG) through the Southern Seven Coalition for Women’s Health, which has a mission to improve the lives of women and their families. St. John Praise and Worship Center, located in the southernmost part of the state, has a mission of reaching out to address not only spiritual needs, but also physical, emotional, economical, and social needs of the individuals. The vision of the organization includes local and international outreach, services for the elderly, the Preparatory Academy elementary school, as well as addiction services.

St. John Praise and Worship Center is a partner on the CRWG’s Coalition for a Healthier Community (CHC) grant, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health. The church has been an integral part of the CHC initiative, focused on improving the cardiovascular risk profile of women and families in the seven southernmost counties of Illinois. St. John’s participation in this initiative has undoubtedly strengthened the church’s role as a leader of health promotion in their community. In addition, as one of our first churches to participate in the CHC initiative, St. John has taken a leadership role by sharing its expertise with our other partners, which include ten other churches in the region.

As part of the CHC grant, the church identified a “coordinator,” Stephanie Fisher, to lead and implement community-driven monthly health promotion sessions, called Heart Smart Maintenance (HSM). The HSM program focuses on improving heart health related behaviors, such as healthy eating and increased physical activity. Ms. Fisher’s tireless efforts have encouraged participants to make positive lifestyle changes through educational and story-telling activities related to personal health journeys. St. John’s HSM participants have noted increased physical activity levels, weight loss successes, and an intimate connection with other members of their HSM group. Ms. Fisher brings over ten years of experience implementing community health education programs to raise awareness about heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and HIV/AIDS prevention. In total, she has over 30 years of experience working in the health arena.

In addition, St. John Praise and Worship Center has lead sustainability efforts in the region to implement long-lasting, community-focused health promotion programs. Currently, the coordinator and HSM participants are working with the CRWG research team to develop an evaluation fueled by the participants’ research questions. Together, the group has worked to create an evaluation tool and plan to track the group’s health progress.

This partnership has also led to the dissemination of important research findings to domestic and international audiences at the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health Conference and the American Public Health Association annual meeting. We anticipate future dissemination activities with St. John Praise and Worship Center to promote the health efforts in the region.
Jackie (de la Cruz) Kestler

Since leaving CRWG five years ago, I've been working at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. I started out as a Clinical Research Coordinator in the Department of OB/GYN working with Teresa Woodruff, PhD on the Oncofertility Consortium. After a year and a half, I transitioned to the Department of Medical Social Sciences with Laurie Wakschlag, PhD, where I currently work as a Research Project Manager on the MAPS Study, an NIMH-funded research project that is validating a measure developed to delineate between normative vs. clinically concerning disruptive behavior in young children.

My time as a graduate assistant at the CRWG was spent working closely with Kris Zimmermann on the Southern Seven Initiative for Cardiovascular Health, an initiative focused on reducing cardiovascular disease risk in rural women. I assisted with various tasks, including data entry and deepening my expertise in IRB submissions, the latter of which has definitely come in handy in my former and current positions! I grew an appreciation for working on women-centered research and for collaborating with teams composed of and led by strong, accomplished women!

Outside of work, I enjoy spending my time with my husband and 8-month old son, Sebastian; motherhood has challenged me in more ways than I could have imagined, but it has been such a joyful and rewarding time as well!

Marcella (Schmidt) Vaicik

While at UIC from 2007-09, getting my master’s degree in bioengineering, I was a graduate assistant for the National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE grant-funded Women in Science and Engineering System Transformation (WISEST) program at CRWG. Immediately after graduation from UIC, I entered a PhD program in Biomedical Engineering at Illinois Institute of Technology. My PhD research utilizes tissue engineering to develop biomaterial-based models of adipose (fat) growth and function for the study of treatments for obesity and diabetes. In the summer of 2011, I was an NSF East Asia and Pacific Summer Institutes Fellow and I conducted tissue engineering research in microvascular reconstructive plastic
surgery laboratory in Taiwan. Recently, I authored a book chapter on “Vascularization in Engineered Adipose Tissue” and I have 12 additional publications and poster presentations for previous and current work.

My time working with CRWG was an incredibly valuable experience. I was able to learn about the tenure track process and challenges that are faced by women and minorities in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in academia. The WISEST program worked to identify solutions to these challenges based on scientific research and implement these solutions at UIC. WISEST had a strong focus on unconscious bias in the hiring and promotion process of tenure track STEM professionals. From my experience at CRWG, I have been able to bring more awareness about unconscious bias to graduate students in engineering through my work with the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). From 2012-14, I served as the Graduate Programming Coordinator for SWE, where I developed multiple sessions geared towards current engineering graduate students and academics. I used my knowledge and resources from my time at CRWG to better prepare future faculty in engineering for academia. Currently, I am a board member on the SWE Conference Advisory Board, which has allowed me to use what I learned working for CRWG to help SWE better support current and future STEM faculty. My time working with the WISEST program has also helped me with my own career path, as I anticipate finishing my PhD this fall. My career plan is to obtain a post-doc after graduation and pursue a tenure track engineering faculty position.

In April 2014, I had my first child. I am enjoying my new role as working mother to my son, Hugh. When I was at CRWG, I had the opportunity to interact with several highly successful working moms as well as listen to some great speakers discuss work-life balance specifically focused on the STEM academic career and parenthood. Ideas and resources suggested in those interactions and seminars sure are coming in handy now.
A list of peer-reviewed articles by CRWG staff and faculty are listed below.


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