Message from the Director

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California (CCREC), a multi-campus research program initiative of the University of California!

CCREC is pursuing an ambitious and innovative agenda to address the inter-related crises in the state in the economy and employment, in education, in health and nutrition, in the environment, and in housing. By bringing together researchers, community leaders, and policy makers in collaborative problem-focused projects, CCREC aims to build strategic responses to the challenges, to untangle the policy knots that bind creative solutions, and to foster civic engagement and evidence-based public deliberation.

CCREC’s busy first year has included substantial work simply to get our operations underway: we have hired staff, written By-Laws, developed our website, organized the Governance Council and Coordinating Committee, written and submitted several foundation proposals, developed a Planning and Development Grant program and funded the inaugural group of projects, and analyzed codes of ethics to identify gaps in relation to the conduct of equity-oriented collaborative research. None of this would have been possible without the stellar contributions of our dedicated and creative staff, headed by CCREC Coordinator, Samara Foster, Ph.D.

CCREC is a collaborative effort from start to finish. In this newsletter and on our website (http://ccrec.ucsc.edu), you can meet our wonderful staff and some of the amazing CCREC Fellows who have been at the forefront of engaged scholarship not only in California but nationally and internationally as well.

You can also learn about the exciting and critically important agendas of CCREC-funded projects. Whether it’s working in the San Joaquin Valley with immigrant youth from Mexican indigenous communities to foster civic engagement and broader educational opportunities, or with California’s Central Valley organizations seeking to understand the cumulative impacts of agricultural practices and water and land use on drinking water quality, CCREC-supported projects examine the intersections of issues so that responses can be more strategically transformative. Similarly, another CCREC-supported project enables researchers to collaborate with the workers most exposed to green cleaning products to investigate their health effects so that new policy initiatives can protect the workers’ well-being as well as the environment. Another CCREC-supported project seeks to multiply and extend the success of a variety of equity-oriented participatory action research projects by providing training and support to organizations interested in developing their capacities for this kind of work.

CCREC endeavors to facilitate public learning processes that enable communities and policy makers to examine the complex challenges we face today in California. We believe that the University of California has a vital role to play in generating the kind of engaged research that can inform these deliberative and decision-making processes, and we believe that a knowledgeable public can embody the wisdom necessary to respond creatively and build an equitable California that will meet the needs of all of our state’s residents.

Once again, let me welcome you to CCREC. We invite your participation, and we encourage you to give us your feedback and be involved in our development and activities. Your engagement with our work will certainly make it better, and by working together, CCREC’s impact will grow and make a difference for the entire state.

-Ron Glass, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Philosophy of Education
UC Santa Cruz
CCREC Awards Four Collaborative Research Planning & Development Grants

In February of this year, CCREC released its first Request for Proposals for planning and development grants to support research projects that use collaborative methodologies to address the interrelated crises affecting the state of California. The active engagement of communities and policy makers in the research process relies on careful early planning to bring stakeholders together, identify the research questions, and design the research as a whole. CCREC recognizes that this process is time consuming and requires resources, but is rarely supported in standard grant processes as it is typically expected that these will be already completed at the time of application. CCREC aims to promote collaborative research by providing grants that support these crucial early collaborations and processes of research design.

Four innovative and important projects were selected in May from among an impressive pool of applications.

Dr. Robin DeLugan, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at UC Merced, is the Principal Investigator for a project called “Resourcing and Critical Reflection on PAR Capacity Building in the San Joaquin Valley.” The project aims to advance community-based collaborative research in California’s Central San Joaquin Valley (SJV) by establishing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Resource Center in Fresno. The project builds on a four and half year long effort by Community University Research and Action for Justice (CURAJ) to establish and foster trusting relationships among UC researchers from Berkeley, Davis, and Merced and SJV grassroots organizations. The new resource center will use a popular education approach to train community members on how to identify and frame research questions around environmental and health issues that affect their lives. The new center will also serve as a meeting place for those involved in ongoing community-based research in the region, thus encouraging research collaboration.

Dr. Jonathan Fox, Professor in the Latin American and Latino Studies Department at UC Santa Cruz, is the Principal Investigator for a project called “Civic Engagement Among Indigenous Mexican Migrant Youth in the Central San Joaquin Valley: Strategies, Repertoires, and Lessons” This participatory action research project will document and analyze the civic engagement decisions and practices of Mexican indigenous migrant young adults in the central region of the San Joaquin Valley (Madera and Fresno Counties). Immigrant youth from indigenous families face both challenges and opportunities for civic engagement that are shaped by cultural and linguistic differences that are not addressed in the existing literature on youth civic engagement. A working group of ten community college students and alums from Oaxacan families will be trained by UC researchers to lead focus group interviews with other 1.5 and 2nd generation young adults who are civically engaged, including community needs assessments and focus on access to education. The working group and UC researchers will then analyze the findings and present them to a regional meeting of their counterparts and allies. This pilot project will conclude with the dissemination of a bilingual report on lessons learned. The report will include both the focus group results and the deliberations at the regional meeting.

Dr. Meredith Minkler, Professor of Health and Social Behavior in the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley, is the Principal Investigator for a project called “Workers’ Voice in the Greening of California: The Intersection of Work, Health, and the Environment.” California currently leads the U.S. in the movement towards a green economy, which has the potential to shape the health and livelihood of millions of Californians in the coming years by addressing some of the most critical environmental crises today involving toxics, climate change, energy use, and pollution, while also creating a dynamic new source of jobs. One aspect of the new economy is “green cleaning,” which offers an opportunity to reduce the quantity of hazardous chemicals entering landfills and the environment while also reducing worker and consumer exposures to chemicals at work and in the home. Although the move to green cleaners is important and needed, little is known about these products from the perspective of workers who use them in greatest quantity (i.e., janitors, domestic workers, home care workers, hotel housekeepers, and hospital cleaning staff). The study will evaluate the health impact of green cleaning products from a worker perspective and develop effective interventions and policy recommendations to protect workers from potentially harmful chemical exposure and/or ergonomic problems.

Dr. Rachel Morello-Frosch, Associate Professor in Environmental Science, Policy, & Management and the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley, is the Principal Investigator for a project called “Cumulative Impacts of Drinking Water Quality in the San Joaquin Valley.” California’s San Joaquin Valley is one of the world’s richest agricultural regions yet it is also home to some of the greatest environmental problems, among which is drinking water contamination. But drinking water contamination is only one of multiple environmental threats facing Valley communities. Air pollution is some of the worst in the nation, and pesticide exposure commonplace. Recognizing these multiple sources of contamination, advocacy groups desire a framework to assess these co-existing problems, often referred to as cumulative impacts (CI). But CI work has generally focused on air and pesticide pollution, and excluded drinking water, both in the SJV and other CI analyses. Our project seeks to leverage two existing university-community partnerships to assess the CI of drinking water contamination in the SJV, and create community-driven solutions. We aim to contribute to the emerging science of CI, help inform policy and regulatory efforts that seek to solve the region’s drinking water problems, and build alliances with other CI efforts in the Valley. Ultimately, our goal is to better protect community health and contribute to solutions for achieving environmental justice.

Check out the CCREC website for project updates at http://ccrec.ucsc.edu/projects/funded.

CCREC will release another Request for Proposals for planning and development grants in January, 2012. Details will be posted on the CCREC website at http://ccrec.ucsc.edu/projects/rrps.

CCREC Supports Collaborative Projects Across the State

In addition to awarding formal grants to support the planning and development of collaborative projects, CCREC occasionally provides support for important efforts across the state that promote both engaged scholarship and equity in California’s communities. The following are such projects that CCREC currently supports.

Dr. Mary Victoria Basolo, Associate Professor in the Department of Planning, Policy, & Design at UC Irvine, is the Principal Investigator for a project called “Health Impacts through Planning (HIP) Cities Initiative.” HIP is a new campus and community partnership initiative between the Orange County Health Care Agency, the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC), and the Departments of Planning, Policy, and Design at UC Irvine. The goal of the HIP Cities Initiative is to help cities in Orange County build capacity resulting in proactive integration of health into planning, policies, and practices to create long term sustainable improvements in the health of communities, individuals, and families. CCREC is providing support and partnership for the particular aspects of the HIP project that focus on the collaborative research and deliberative processes.
CCREC Supports Collaborative Projects Across the State

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CCREC Fellow, Dr. Beth Rose Middleton, Assistant Professor of Native American Studies at UC Davis, is leading a project called the “Uneasy Remains Film Project,” which represents a collaborative effort of local tribes, community members, students, and professors to examine the history of studying and collecting indigenous remains at UC Davis and how this history has been informed by the Federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The project will result in a feature length film, curriculum materials, geo-referenced maps of indigenous remains and lands, and an archive database of research materials for use by tribes, schools, and other organizations. CCREC is providing support for the elements of this important project that foster dialogue about the “uneasy remains” in the university’s possession and about the university’s relation with the indigenous communities in the state.

CCREC Fellows Make a Difference

CCREC Fellow, Victor Becerra, Director of the Community Outreach Partnership Center at UC Irvine, coordinated a conference on collaborative research, “Public Scholarship: Engaging Contradictions in the Contemporary University,” in Irvine on April 25, 2011. The conference focused on how to achieve a greater balance between public scholarship and institutional prestige, especially given the need for greater community investment in higher education. The participants explored the following questions: What are the ways in which research universities can earn public trust through public scholarship? And how can we address the contradictions between public scholarship and prevailing institutional expectations of faculty development? The keynote address, “In the Midnight Hour: Why Public Scholarship Matters Now,” was given by George Lipsitz, Professor in the Department of Black Studies and Sociology at UC Santa Barbara. The panelists included CCREC’s Director, Ron Glass, who closed the conference with a panel called “Public Scholarship, Institutional Transformation, and Community Engagement.” See http://scholarship.ucicopc.org/ for more information.

CCREC Fellow, Dr. Flora Lu, Assistant Professor in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies at UC Santa Cruz, brought collaborative methods to undergraduate students through an environmental justice course in the spring quarter. In her course, students enriched their learning of the theoretical basis of the environmental justice movement through collaborative research efforts with local environmental justice organizations and activists (Vegg daylight Community Garden in San Jose, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, and the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems). As a culminating event, the students of the class joined the Student Environmental Center for a speaker panel and discussion about toxic waste dumping and related issues in Northern California, which included university scholars and community organizers. Included on the panel was Tracy Perkins, a UC Santa Cruz graduate student in Sociology and original signatory to the initial CCREC proposal.

Dr. Lu has also been honored with a 2010-2011 Golden Apple Award from the UC Santa Cruz Division of Social Sciences for outstanding teaching.

CCREC Fellow, Dr. Rodney Ogawa, Professor of Education at UC Santa Cruz, has published a new book, co-authored with Betty Achinstein (researcher at the Center for Educational Research in the Interest of Underserved Students (CERIUS)), titled Challenged(d) Agents: New Teachers of Color in Urban Schools (Teachers College Press, 2011). The book examines both the promise and complexity of diversifying today’s teaching profession. Drawing from a 5-year study of 21 new teachers of color working in urban, hard-to-staff schools, the book uncovers a systemic paradox that the teachers confront. They are committed to improving educational opportunities for students of color by acting as role models, culturally/linguistically responsive teachers, and change agents. The teaching profession encouraged such commitments and some teachers acted with support from individual, organizational, and community-based sponsors. However, many of these new teachers work in schools that are culturally subtractive and have restrictive accountability policies that challenge their ability to perform cultural/professional roles to which they are committed. Many teachers internalize the contradiction, resulting in their becoming changed agents within the educational system they sought to change.

What is Collaborative Research?

CCREC uses “collaborative research” as an umbrella term for methodologies that actively engage communities and policy makers in the research process from start to finish.

This means that university researchers, community-based organizations, and policy makers will work together in framing the problems to be tackled and the questions that need to be answered; they will work together to undertake the research and interpret the results for their significance for community and policy change; and they will work together to disseminate the research findings and advocate for change. Collaborative research is engaged scholarship in action.

Become a CCREC Funding Partner

CCREC’s inauguration is generously supported by a Multi-Campus Research Programs and Initiatives (MRPI) grant from the University of California Office of the President. Please help us continue our important work by becoming a funding partner. Contact Ron Glass at rglass@ucsc.edu or 831-459-5188 for more information.
CCREC Governance Council

The CCREC Governance Council is comprised of University of California Academic Senate faculty members and researchers who are community-engaged scholars working at the intersection of the core areas of CCREC’s concerns: economy, education, employment, environment, health, housing, and nutrition.

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CCREC Mission

CCREC fosters a more equitable California by addressing the interconnected crises in the economy, education, employment, environment, health, housing, and nutrition.

CCREC links university researchers, community-based organizations, and policy-makers in collaborative projects to achieve creative solutions to the problems in our communities.

CCREC prepares a new generation of engaged scholars by coordinating and focusing University of California system-wide efforts to support collaborative research that makes a difference in our communities.

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