



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences

Women's Health Awareness 2024

Transforming Communities by
Enhancing Women's Health

Saturday, April 13, 2024



Celebrating **10** Years

Distinguished WHA Faculty Biographies

Distinguished WHA Faculty



Kareemah Abdusamad
Certified Master Gardener

Kareemah Abdusamad has shared her gardening skills in various states where she has lived and in several African countries. In Senegal, she successfully taught villagers to garden on small government-provided plots to increase the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables in their diets. She has also shared her skills with E.K. Powe Elementary and Eastway Elementary school students. She has worked at SEEDS, a local nonprofit organization that educates urban youths about all aspects of gardening, and consults with families and individuals interested in starting gardens.

Certified as a Master Gardener by the Durham County Department of Agriculture Extension Service, she continues to garden with a focus on medicinal herbs and vegetables. She currently lives in Stoneham, Mass., where she is a part of the Stoneham Gardening Club.



Bolu Abe-Lathan, PA-C
Duke Smoking Cessation

Bolu Abe-Lathan, PA-C, is a physician associate at the Duke Smoking and Tobacco Cessation Program. She works with patients who are looking to quit smoking and chewing tobacco by offering highly effective, individualized treatment for tobacco cessation. She sees people who are looking to either stop using tobacco or even cutting down on their journey with successes and setbacks, working with patients at their pace and supporting their goals.



Terry Alston-Jones, MPA
Health Promotion and Wellness Supervisor, Granville Vance Health Department

Terry Alston-Jones, MPA, serves as health promotion and wellness supervisor with Granville Vance Health District in Granville and Vance counties in North Carolina. In this role, she leads the health education team in improving the health and well-being of county residents, including three identified health priorities: mental health and substance use disorder, engaging youth for community health and safety, and health care access. Over the past two decades, Alston-Jones has worked in health education focusing on women's and preconception health, in higher education as an adjunct instructor and first-year advisor, and in the nonprofit sector, creating informational material and delivering programs all within northeastern North Carolina. She is the founder of The Living and Learning Youth Center, a nonprofit organization designed to aid youth, their families, and the community finding resources helpful in day-to-day living and thriving. Jones is a graduate of North Carolina Central University in Durham, N.C., receiving both her bachelor's in English and Master of Public Administration degrees. She is a certified anger management specialist with the National Anger Management Association, and the author of "A Summer with No Ice Cream and The Parent Push, Helping Your Child Succeed Through High School and Beyond." Alston-Jones is a native and current resident of Warrenton, N.C., and is the third generation living on their family farm.

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Rani Bansal, M.D.

Breast Medical Oncologist, Department of Medicine, Duke Cancer Institute

Rani Bansal, M.D., is a medical oncologist at Duke Cancer Institute and assistant professor of medicine in the School of Medicine. She completed her medical degree and residency in internal medicine at the Boston University School of Medicine, and her clinical and research interests are in the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. She is interested in clinical trial development and investigation of novel or new treatment options for patients with breast cancer. She is also interested in improving access to clinical trials to diverse patient populations.



Sharunda Buchanan, Ph.D., M.S.

Director, Office of Priority Projects, Innovation, and Environmental Justice, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Interim Director, Office of Environmental Justice, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Department of Health and Human Services

Sharunda Buchanan, Ph.D., M.S., currently serves as director of the Office of Priority Projects, Innovation, and Environmental Justice at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry where she provides leadership and management of large-scale, priority environmental health initiatives, promotes innovation and "big idea" projects and prototypes, and coordinates environmental justice work.

Concurrently, Buchanan serves as interim director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Environmental Justice within the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) where she 1) leads initiatives that integrate environmental justice into the HHS mission to improve health in communities across the nation; 2) advises senior leadership at OASH and HHS on environmental justice and health issues; 3) provides leadership and subject matter expertise to develop and implement an HHS-wide strategy on environmental justice, including the Justice40 Initiative; and 4) represents OASH and HHS at agency and interagency settings.

For the past eight years, Buchanan has served as co-chair of the Lead Subcommittee of the Present's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks for Children. She holds a Ph.D., M.S., and B.S. in chemistry/biochemistry from Texas Southern University and Clark-Atlanta University, respectively. She is committed to advancing health equity, attaining environmental justice, and improving environmental public health across the country.

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Ann Bullock, M.D.
Retired, Indian Health Service

Ann Bullock, M.D., is a board-certified family physician who worked for the Indian Health Service (IHS) from 1990 until retiring in 2021. She began her career with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Cherokee, N.C., serving first as a clinical physician and then becoming the medical director for the Tribe's Health and Medical Division in 2000. In 2009, she joined the IHS Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention (DDTP) as its clinical consultant. DDTP is responsible for IHS' national diabetes programs, including the congressionally authorized Special Diabetes Program for Indians. Starting in 2012, she served as the acting director of DDTP and then became its permanent director in 2015. In addition to her work with DDTP, she served as the IHS chief clinical consultant for family medicine from 2008 until she retired. Bullock was the recipient of the IHS Director's Award three times and also received the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service in 2019.

Bullock is an author on a number of journal articles, most related to diabetes and American Indian/Alaska Native health. She served on the congressionally mandated National Clinical Care Commission (NCCC), which was charged with providing recommendations regarding federal programs related to diabetes — the NCCC's report was submitted to Congress in January 2022. Bullock's interests include the connection of chronic disease risk with stress, food insecurity, and early-life adverse experiences. She is an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.



Robin Callahan, RD, LDN, MHS
Program Director, Cherokee Choices and EBCI Nurse Family Partnership

Robin Callahan, RD, LDN, MHS, is honored to serve as the program director for the Nurse Family Partnership Program and Cherokee Choices, a chronic disease prevention program for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. She is a registered dietitian, with a Master of Health Sciences from Western Carolina University and teaches yoga for the EBCI communities with more than 500 hours of yoga teacher training. She has served with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians for 22 years focusing on chronic disease prevention. Callahan believes in the power of prevention and has seen the positive impact it can make on the community. She lives the beautiful Smoky Mountains in Franklin, N.C., with her husband, son, daughter, and two adorable yet mischievous labs.



Cassandra Campbell
Executive Director, Robeson County Disaster Recovery Coalition Inc.

Cassandra Campbell is executive director of the Robeson County Disaster Recovery Coalition Inc. (RCDRC) in Lumberton, N.C., which provides disaster case management services, volunteer coordination, and unmet needs resources locally and through strategic partnerships. Campbell was born and raised in Evergreen, N.C. She is one of nine siblings and has three children. She is also an ordained minister. Campbell received her B.S. in human services management from the University of Phoenix, and went on to obtain her M.A. in human services counseling with a concentration in crisis and trauma response from Liberty University. She also has a graduate certificate in autism spectrum disorders. She has served as a volunteer with the American

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Red Cross and as an early response team member with UMCOR. She was deployed as a disaster responder for Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and the 2017 Louisiana tornadoes in New Orleans where she led teams performing disaster assessments of damaged homes. During Campbell's tenure as executive director of RCDRC, she has been instrumental in providing disaster recovery services at home and abroad. Under her leadership, she has helped individuals and families recover from two major hurricanes (Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence), Hurricane Michael, local flooding incidents, and the current COVID-19 pandemic in Robeson and surrounding counties in N.C. She has led disaster projects throughout the Carolinas by providing disaster case management services, food programs, home repair and rebuilding, disaster unmet needs assistance, mold remediation, life skills education and training workshops, and disaster tool lending services. Now in her sixth year as executive director of RCDRC, she continues to share her personal experience and knowledge of long-term disaster recovery, coordination, and collaboration of community stakeholders. Campbell has successfully built a network of strategic partnerships within and outside the continental United States, and is a strong advocate for racial equity and social and economic justice for underserved populations.



Trinitia Cannon, M.D.

Director, Head and Neck Surgical Oncology, Duke Raleigh Hospital

Trinitia Cannon, M.D., is a native of Warren, Ohio. She worked as a registered nurse. She received her undergraduate degree from LeMoyne College in Syracuse, N.Y. She attended medical school at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in Rochester, N.Y., where she was elected into the Alpha Omega Alpha National Honor Society. She completed a seven-year research residency at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in otolaryngology, head, and neck surgery. During the time, she studied and developed a mouse model to study cancer cachexia. This was followed by a fellowship in head and neck surgical oncology and microvascular reconstructive surgery at the Medical University of South Carolina. Cannon currently works as an associate professor in the department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery at the Duke University Health System and for the Duke Cancer Institute. She serves as the director for Head and Neck Surgical Oncology at Duke Raleigh Hospital. She is the chief of the Head and Neck Division and serves as the department's associate vice chair of diversity, equity, and inclusion. She serves on several national committees and as a peer reviewer for several journals. In addition, she is a senior examiner with the American Board of Otolaryngology and has been appointed to the Advanced Training Council for the American Head and Neck Society. She has honored with many awards, but she is most proud of her induction into the African American Hall of Fame awarded by her home county in Warren, Ohio, her induction into the Warren High School Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame, and her teaching award given by the residents. She has a son who served in the Navy, and he has gifted her with a grandson.



Crystal Cavalier, Ed.D., MPA

Founder, 7 Directions of Service

Crystal Cavalier, Ed.D., MPA, is a citizen of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation and she has dedicated the past 5+ years to defending her homelands against the Mountain Valley Pipeline/Southgate Extension. She is leading a campaign to bring Rights of Nature laws to N.C. in order to protect the waterways and communities in the path of the pipeline. Cavalier is the co-founder of 7 Directions of Service with her husband. She completed her doctorate

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at the University of Dayton, focusing on the social justice crisis of Missing Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) tied to gas/oil pipelines. This led her to launch the Missing Murdered Indigenous Women Coalition of NC. Cavalier was the recipient of the 2022 FracTracker Community Sentinel Award for Environmental Stewardship. She co-authored N.C. House Bill 795, the Rights of Nature/Rights of the Haw River, prioritizing environmentally impacted communities around the watershed. She serves on the boards of Movement Rights and the Haw River Assembly. Cavalier was born in Burlington, N.C. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2001, and a graduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in 2011.



Emily Chang, M.D.

Assistant Professor, Medicine, Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, UNC School of Medicine

Emily Chang, M.D.'s primary clinical work involves care for patients with chronic kidney disease, including lifestyle, diet, and medication management, as well as the management of options as kidney failure approaches. She is the co-director of the Kidney Palliative Care Clinic, which provides specialized palliative care services for patients with kidney disease. Her research focuses on applications of ultrasound in all aspects of care for patients with kidney disease, including contrast-enhanced ultrasound and point-of-care ultrasound.



Lisa Criscione-Schreiber, M.D., M.Ed.

Professor of Medicine, Vice Chair for Education, Duke Department of Medicine; Co-Founder, Duke Lupus Clinic

Lisa Criscione-Schreiber, M.D., M.Ed., is a professor of Medicine in the Division of Rheumatology and Immunology at Duke University, where she serves as vice chair for education in the Duke Department of Medicine. She completed all of her medical training at Duke University. She is a previous recipient of the Rheumatology Research Foundation Clinician Scholar Educator career development award, and completed a Master of Education degree from the University of Cincinnati. She is a mentor and co-founder of the Duke Department of Medicine Faculty Development Academy for Education Scholars. She was the Duke rheumatology training program director from 2008-2022, during which time she oversaw the training of more than 40 rheumatologists and co-developed Duke's NP/PA rheumatology fellowship training program. She previously chaired the American College of Rheumatology curriculum subcommittee. She received the American College of Rheumatology Distinguished Program Director Award in 2022. Her career has focused on educating physicians through involvement with students, residents, fellows, and faculty members. She has a particular interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and helped create the Civility Champions Program in the Duke Department of Medicine, and with colleagues she brought Stepping in For Respect training to the Duke Department of Medicine from the University of Virginia. Her primary rheumatology research activities focus on improving the health outcomes for individuals with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and patient and provider education regarding family planning for individuals with rheumatic diseases. Her clinical practice focuses on SLE and inflammatory myopathies.

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Tamara de Souza, MDPGCME, B.Sc., B.MedSci., MBBS

Diplomate ABIM Fellow, Division of Endocrinology, Department of Medicine, Duke University School of Medicine

Tamara de Souza, MDPGCME, B.Sc., B.MedSci., MBBS, is currently a clinical fellow within the Department of Endocrinology at Duke University. Her career aspiration is to effect meaningful change in delay/lack of access to standard of care measures in the detection and treatment of endocrinopathies for marginalized groups of persons worldwide. This includes examination of ancestry, ethnicity, the social construct of race, cultural, economic, and structural (geographic, health system delivery) barriers to timely care for high prevalence/low acuity conditions that have the potential for gross personal, social, and economic loss when left untreated. She comes from humble origins and was fortunate to attain a full academic scholarship funding her undergraduate education at Howard University. Exposure to that HBCU curriculum focused about the historically essential role of marginalized populations in serving their own, even while driving systemic change to achieve equity indelibly impacted my core traits. She was inspired to return home to the University of the West Indies for her medical education to learn first-hand how she could best serve a multiethnic population in limited-resource settings.

Prior to completing her internal medicine residency at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial hospital, she held a faculty appointment at St. George's School of Medicine where she enjoyed teaching pharmacology to medical and nursing students. she is devoted to using her platform at Duke University to help optimize the health care outcomes of marginalized groups.



Kim Dunn, MSPH

Technical Training Director, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

Kim Dunn, MSPH, is an environmental professional who has worked in the field of construction and traditional industrial hygiene more than 39 years. She is the current technical training director at the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice in New Orleans, and has been employed with the organization since 2000. Dunn is responsible for worker environmental, health, and safety training; curriculum development and implementation; and works in low-income communities of color with individuals whose choices for career opportunities place them at an economic disadvantage. Due to her diverse work experience and educational background in industrial hygiene and toxicology, she can specifically address individuals' needs and develop appropriate training and educational materials aimed at reducing occupational health hazards in women and all workers.



Meria Epplein, Ph.D.

Professor, Population Health Sciences; Professor, Medicine; Member, Duke Cancer Institute

Meria Epplein, Ph.D., is an epidemiologist and professor of population health sciences at Duke University, and co-leader, with Katherine Garman, M.D., of the Cancer Risk, Detection, and Interception program at the Duke Cancer Institute. She studies cancer etiology, with a focus on modifiable risk factors and health disparities. Specifically, her research seeks to further our understanding of the diversity of the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori*, host response

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to infection, and the association with gastrointestinal cancers. She is also engaged in local initiatives to understand the prevalence of *H. pylori* in the community and to move toward precision prevention of gastric cancer through targeted *H. pylori* eradication therapy. In her free time, she loves travelling, hiking in the mountains, reading, and hanging out with her husband, kids, and world's best dog, Finn.



Katherine Garman, M.D., MHS

Associate Professor of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology, Duke University

Katherine Garman, M.D., MHS, is a gastroenterologist and a translational scientist at Duke University. She co-leads the Cancer Risk, Detection, and Interception program with Meria Epplein, Ph.D. Garman's research centers around finding better and more personalized ways to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal cancers. She leads the Duke Gastrointestinal Tissue Repository and is proud to partner with patients in clinical and translational research.

Engaging her curiosity and continuing to learn new things that will help patients are her favorite parts of working in research, and she particularly enjoys mentoring students in her lab. When she's not in the hospital or the lab, she loves spending time with her husband, kids, dog, cat, and five chickens.



Anisha Gerber, M.D.

Pediatric Nephrology Program Fellow, UNC School of Medicine

Anisha Gerber, M.D., is a pediatrician in her last year of a pediatric nephrology fellowship, and her long-term goal is to become an independent physician scientist. Her research focus is epidemiology and management of pediatric chronic kidney disease in resource-limited settings. During her time as a fellow at UNC, she has concentrated on pediatric populations in areas that are endemic for chronic kidney disease of unknown etiology (CKDu). CKDu is a tubulointerstitial kidney disease associated with significant morbidity and

mortality in certain geographic hotspots, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Her research centers on investigating when CKDu-related kidney injury begins, as there is growing evidence that the kidney injury begins before adulthood, and assessing screening tools for earlier CKDu diagnosis.



Lori Jones Gibbs, M.B.A.

President/CEO, LJG Consulting LLC

Lori Jones Gibbs, M.B.A., is a mortgage, credit, and financial coach, and author who uses her knowledge, wisdom, and humor to help others face facts, not fiction, about money matters to achieve spiritual, personal, and professional satisfaction. A retired banker, she served as senior vice president and community development banking market manager for the Carolinas at PNC Bank. In this capacity, she led a local team, to support wealth creation within historically underserved communities through financial education, access to home mortgages and credit, workforce development initiatives, and neighborhood revitalization.

She joined the DREF board of directors in 2022. Additionally, she currently serves on committees and boards that are at the forefront of advancing opportunities for all throughout the North Carolina Research Triangle

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area and the nation. Those affiliations include Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. - National Program Planning and Development Committee as co-chair of the Economic Development Subcommittee, National Institute of Minority Economic Development, North Carolina Community Action Association, Made in Durham, The Sisters Inspiring Sisters Inc., and the Financial Education Ministry of First Calvary Baptist Church, where is a member.

Past board appointments include StepUp Ministry-Durham, Carolina Small Business Development Fund, Passage Homes, Housing for New Hope, and the UNC Board of the Governors' North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. She is frequently engaged as a speaker and panelist, addressing such topics as economic development, loan programs, financial literacy, women in leadership, and DEI. Additionally, she is a published author and has written two books: "Yes, I Would Marry Him Again: Wives Salute Their African American Husbands," and "YES, You're Approved! The Real Deal About Getting a Mortgage and Buying a Home" (co-author). She is the recipient of numerous honors and awards: She holds the distinction of being the first African American woman to receive the Mortgage Bankers of America Diversity Champion Award, and is the recipient of the Triangle Business Journal's Leaders in Diversity Lifetime Achievement Award.

A member of Durham Alumnae Chapter of DST Sorority, she has received leadership awards from the South Atlantic and Eastern Regions of Delta. She earned a bachelor's in urban studies from the University of Connecticut and a master's in urban-suburban management from the University of Bridgeport. She resides in Durham, N.C., with her husband, Kenneth Gibbs Sr.



Melissa Godwin, LCSW

Clinical Associate Professor, Behavioral Health Springboard, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC Pregnancy and Opioid Exposure Project

Melissa Godwin, LCSW, is a clinical social worker who has a clinical associate professor appointment at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. She has provided women's gender responsive substance use disorder services training and technical assistance in North Carolina since 2004, under a contract with the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services.

Godwin obtained her bachelor's in university studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and her master's in clinical social work from Boston University.



Marvis Henderson-Daye, Ed.D., MPA

Owner, M.E. Henderson Inc.

Marvis Henderson-Daye, Ed.D., MPA, is your chief fun officer! Have you stopped dreaming, or have you ever dreamed about the life you want? Well, life challenges had me struggling to survive, and I stopped dreaming. While I looked alright on the outside, I was a mess on the inside. I was not having fun! As my son prepared for college, I made some changes and moved! I changed my diet and became gluten-free. I moved to another city and discovered my passion for line dancing.

With a healthier lifestyle, my digestion and sleep improved. More importantly, I started dreaming again. I admit those life challenges caused a few dreams to be deferred. As I imagined the life that I wanted, I set goals. I am

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the CEO and chief fun officer of M.E. Henderson Inc. As the founder and vice-chairperson of Lift Every Voice Institute, a 501(c)(3) organization, we provide academic and social enrichment activities for students and their families to be responsible citizens. I am a publisher and published author. I am the proud mother of a college-educated African American son. At 59, I earned my doctorate, rode a camel, and went to the tallest building in the world! Now, I am living a life better than I imagined, and I invite you to join me. Together, we can live a fierce and limitless life!



Kennedy Holt, MSPH

Environmental Toxicologist, Public Health, Occupational, and Environmental Epidemiology, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services

Kennedy Holt is an environmental toxicologist for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Holt is responsible for responding to chemical incidents, determining potential health impacts related to exposures to contaminants, and communicating those health risks to communities across the state. During his career with DHHS, Holt has provided public health guidance to multiple communities impacted by environmental contamination, which include those impacted by coal ash and PFAS. During the responses to these events, Holt worked extensively to communicate the health risks, not only to local health departments and other stakeholders, but to have conversations and work directly with community members to address their concerns. Furthermore, Holt routinely works with private well owners to help them better understand how contaminants in their wells may impact well owners and their families, and also provides recommendations on mitigation and treatment techniques to address those concerns. To this end, Holt has led the efforts to develop North Carolina's first publicly available electronic tool for providing public health guidance for private well water analyses via the "Be Well Informed" platform. In addition to his primary roles, Holt co-leads the Health Equity workgroup for the Epidemiology Section within DHHS, and has contributed to efforts leading to North Carolina being chosen as an EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government grant recipient to address private well contamination in Sampson County.

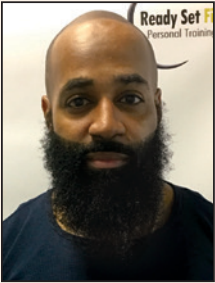


Monica Fuller Johnson, PS, TTS

Engagement Manager, Communications and Engagement, NC Medicaid

Monica Fuller Johnson, PS, TTS, is the engagement manager for NC Medicaid Communications and Engagement. Prior to the division, she worked in community relations with a managed care organization, providing prevention services focused on substance use, behavioral health, and disabilities for more than 15 years. She provided crisis intervention team training to first responders across five counties in the piedmont region. She is a certified professional coach, certified prevention specialist, tobacco treatment specialist, and integrated care manager. Her outreach and volunteerism includes grassroots community organizing, training development, voter education, and advocacy for equitable health care and education.

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Anthony Jones

Owner and Operator, Ready Set Fitness Personal Training Studio

Anthony Jones is an American Council on Exercise certified personal trainer, group fitness instructor, peer support specialist, and life and health coach with more than 15 years of experience working with kids, adults, and the disabled. Jones is most known for his great energy and ability to train, educate, and motivate individuals with fun, fitness, and dance. His specialty is working in a private one-on-one setting or with small groups to get the best results needed to assist individuals with creating a healthier lifestyle through nutrition, dance, and fitness. Jones is very passionate and dedicated to serving his community.



Randol Kennedy, M.D.

Fellow, Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, Duke University School of Medicine

Randol Kennedy, M.D., being originally from Barbados, the West Indies, did his medical training at the University of the West Indies where he graduated in 2012 with honors in his surgical practical exams. He worked in primary care in his home country before pursuing further training in the U.S. where he did his internal residency at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center from 2017-2020, where he also was a third-year chief resident. After residency, Kennedy worked with the internal medicine residency program at Cleveland Clinic Akron

General as a teaching attending for three years during which he became a fellow member of the American College of Physicians before deciding to pursue further specialty in endocrinology, where he is now a first-year at the Duke endocrinology fellowship program. His current subspecialty interests are thyroid medicine and thyroid cancer.



Jennifer Link, MSW

Aging Program Coordinator, Central Pines Area Agency on Aging

Jennifer Link, MSW, is an aging program coordinator for the Central Pines Area Agency on Aging. Her focus is the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Her passion for creating a better world for older people comes from being lucky to have close relationships with her grandparents, especially her Mimi, for whom she was family caregiver. Link began her career in aging services by working in a local adult day program, then moving to positions in long-term care and community aging services. Prior to her role as the NFCSP coordinator, Link had

been a long-term care ombudsman for 16 years with Central Pines Regional Council. She is enjoying the return to her true love, family caregivers, and improving services that support them.

She received her B.S. from North Carolina State University (Go Pack!) and her MSW from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is an N.C. native who lives in the Triangle with her dachshund, Otto.

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Bruce McClue

Technical Training Manager, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

Bruce McClue has been in the environmental field since 1986. He began his career working at Superfund sites as a health and safety officer where he performed duties as a supervisor for an environmental remediation company. McClue began his employment with the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice in 1999 as a technical trainer and is currently the organization's technical training manager. He has extensive experience working in communities of color, and through education and training addresses health disparities that impact women, workers, families, and employers.



Gerald McNair, M.P.H.

Team Leader, Community Outreach, Granville Vance Public Health

Gerald McNair, M.P.H., is the team leader of community outreach at Granville Vance Health Department. He has a passion for working with low-income and medically indigent population groups. In February 2024, he obtained a grant from the Kate B. Reynold's Charitable Trust Inc. to study the experience of Medicaid beneficiaries accessing health care services from prepaid health care plans, including Healthy Blue, WellCare, AmeriHealth Caritas, Complete Health Care, and United Healthcare. Many participants described positive experiences after Medicaid enrollment; however, many experienced difficulties accessing certain services, specifically with medication authorization and specialty referrals. In addition, many were assigned primary care providers who were outside the areas where they lived. McNair is a Yale School of Public Health graduate.



Adrienne Michelle, LMFT

Speaker, Therapist, and Educator

Adrienne Michelle, LMFT, is a Black, queer, therapist, educator, and author who has dedicated her career to uplifting conversations for the QTBIPOC community. Her practice focuses on understanding mental health and well-being with individuals, couples, families, and communities. She received her master's from Thomas Jefferson University, and has been a speaker, educator, and therapist for more than 10 years. She finds herself working with many people to understand anxiety, process trauma, and live well in their everyday pursuit of happiness. She has been featured on podcasts, such as Therapy for Black Girls, as well as on the pages of the New York Times. You can also find her as a featured contributor, as well as a relationship expert, in Cosmopolitan magazine. She is delighted to explore opportunities to participate in, and create spaces of, healing, community, and indulgence in being the most authentic version of yourself.

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Deborah Holt Noel

Senior Producer, Black Issues Forum; Host and Feature Producer, North Carolina Weekend, PBS North Carolina

Deborah Holt Noel is a seasoned storyteller, engaging conversationalist, and strategic thinker serving the statewide public media network PBS North Carolina as executive producer of its long-running public affairs series Black Issues Forum, and host and contributing producer of its Emmy-nominated travel series North Carolina Weekend. On her path to becoming the executive producer of Black Issues Forum, she produced and hosted the series, executing every aspect of production, from crafting compelling topics to conducting meticulous research and orchestrating expert interviews. Beyond the studio, she navigated on-location shoots adeptly, leveraging visual storytelling to captivate audiences. She has also facilitated numerous townhall conversations addressing issues such as racism in public education, Confederate monuments, policing in Black communities, and traveling safely while Black. In her new leadership role, she drives the strategic vision of the series, collaborates with a talented team, and hosts special presentations.

As the trusted host and feature producer of the North Carolina Weekend, she guides viewers through the state's rich cultural landscape, exploring local culture, recreation, nature trails and recreational adventures, unique food destinations and flavorful cuisine, iconic attractions, and hidden treasures! Her on-air presence and knack for uncovering captivating stories have endeared her to audiences. With more than two decades at PBS-NC, her body of work reflects resilience, innovation, and a genuine commitment to public information, community engagement, and showcasing the rich tapestry of North Carolina's cultural treasures.



Nkiru Osude, M.D., M.S.

Duke Cardiovascular Disease Fellow, Duke Clinical Research Institute Research Fellow

Nkiru Osude, M.D., M.S., is a cardiovascular disease fellow at Duke University in Durham, N.C. She received her undergraduate and medical degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in a six-year B.A./M.D. program. She completed her internal medicine and chief residency at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill. In addition to being a cardiovascular disease fellow, she is currently researching cardiovascular disease population prevention strategies, health misinformation, health policy dissemination, and implementation at the Duke Clinical Research Institute. Misinformation is pervasive and has continued to affect the public before and beyond COVID-19; its presence has created iatrogenic disparities. The belief that public confidence in the accuracy of health information dissemination is a human right motivates her work and her vision for a better and healthier America.



Sasha Ottey, MHA, MT(ASCP)

Executive Director, PCOS Challenge: The National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association

Sasha Ottey, MHA, MT(ASCP), is the founder and executive director of PCOS Challenge: The National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association. PCOS Challenge is a nonprofit support and advocacy organization advancing the cause for PCOS patients globally. Ottey started the organization after she was diagnosed with PCOS and experienced great dissatisfaction with the availability of support resources for PCOS patients, and feeling dismissed by her

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health care team. Under her leadership, the PCOS Challenge has quickly grown to more than 55,000 members and has helped many PCOS patients with their challenges with infertility, anxiety, depression, and other PCOS comorbidities, and has built the PCOS legislative advocacy platform that focuses on research funding, innovation, and development of safe and effective treatments for PCOS. Ottey's work in the space continues to focus on patient-centered research into understudied areas of PCOS, and empowering PCOS patients and stakeholders to use their experiences to change policy to improve health care access and improved treatment options for PCOS patients.



Joan Pakenham, Ph.D.

Founder and Chair, Women's Health Awareness Program and Steering and Planning Committee; Director, Office of Human Research and Community Engagement, NIEHS, NIH

Joan Pakenham, Ph.D., is the director of the NIEHS Office of Human Research and Community Engagement in the Clinical Research Branch at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), National Institutes of Health (NIH). She is founder and chair of the Women's Health Awareness (WHA) Women's Wellness Conference, program director for the NIEHS Women's Environmental Health and Community Engagement

Initiative, and principal investigator of the Women's Health Awareness Community Resiliency, Environmental Action, and Collaborations for Health (REACH) Equity Clinical Study. Pakenham has an extensive scientific career in the Intramural and Extramural Divisions of NIEHS, with more than 20 years of experience in clinical research serving as a regulatory expert in human research protections and vice-chair for the NIEHS Institutional Review Board, a health scientist, and scientific lead on the NIH Disaster Research and Response team to improve national health resiliency. Her research interests focus on addressing environmental health disparities and environmental justice concerns in underserved populations of women. Pakenham has received numerous awards, including the AACR Women in Cancer Research Brigid G. Leventhal Scholar award; the National Women of Color STEM award for Career Achievement in Government; the NIH Director's Award for her leadership and work in disaster research and response; NIH Merit Award for her outstanding leadership for the NIEHS Women's Environmental Health and Community Engagement Initiative; the Durham Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Merrick-Fisher-Spaulding public service award; and the National Council of Negro Women, Excelling in Science for Humanity award.

Pakenham graduated magna cum laude from North Carolina Central University with a Bachelor of Science in biology and a minor in chemistry. She received her Ph.D. in experimental pathology with a concentration in molecular and cellular pathology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine. Pakenham is a native of Durham N.C., and is a member of the Durham Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., where she serves as chair of the Physical and Mental Health Committee.



LaQuana Palmer, MPA

Deputy Director, Communications and Engagement, Division of Health Benefits (NC Medicaid), N.C. Department of Health and Human Services

LaQuana Palmer, MPA, is a deputy director in the Division of Health Benefits (NC Medicaid) at the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) where she oversees strategy and daily operations of communications and engagement. She recently transitioned from

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her role as the program director of NCCARE360 at the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation (FHLI). Before serving at FHLI, Palmer served at NCDHHS in the Office of the Secretary with Healthy Opportunities, and in an earlier role as a public information officer and communications unit manager in the Division of Public Health – Public Health Preparedness and Response Branch.

Palmer earned a B.S. in public health education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a Master of Public Administration from North Carolina Central University, and was a Community Mobilization Fellow at the Black AIDS Institute – African American HIV University in Los Angeles, California.

In addition to the in-depth knowledge of health and human referral technology, social determinants of health implementation strategies, program and grant management, and communication administration, Palmer has a long career in local public health and public service, including more than 10 years with Wake County Health and Human Services. When she is not serving as a trailblazing leader across the state of North Carolina, she serves as an active member of the Knightdale Wake Forest Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.



Kendra Parrish, D.O., FACS

Breast Surgical Oncologist, Department of Surgery, Duke University School of Medicine

Kendra Parrish, DO, FACS, is a breast surgical oncologist and medical instructor in the Division of Surgical Oncology at Duke University. She completed her medical degree at Kansas City University and general surgery residency training at Hospital Saint Raphael, Yale University. After 10 years of general surgery practice in rural Maine and North Carolina, she pursued a breast surgical oncology fellowship at Duke. After completion of the fellowship, she joined Duke's faculty. Her research interests include investigating breast cancer in the

Native American population, as well as implementation of methods to deliver improved breast health care to rural populations.



Marlena Parsons, PMHNP-BC

Duke Smoking Cessation

Marlena Parsons, PMHNP-BC, is a board-certified nurse practitioner specializing in family behavioral health and tobacco treatment. For the past 20 years, she has demonstrated success in assessing and managing clients at all levels of care, including emergency medical, crisis stabilization, and outpatient settings.

After graduating with honors from the University of Maryland with degrees in clinical nurse leadership, mental health clinical nurse specialist, and family psychiatric nurse practitioner, she relocated to North Carolina. On a usual day serving as a tobacco treatment specialist at the Duke Center for Smoking Cessation, she conducts detailed diagnostic interviews, collaborates carefully on treatment plans, and helps each client discover their personal motivation and vision toward achieving independence from nicotine. In her free time, she enjoys baking bread and playing Frisbee with her dog, Sunny.

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Benita Perkins, M.B.A.

Director, Benniegirl Healthy Lifestyle Branding and Communication Inc.; Certified Fitness and Personal Training Instructor, Athletic and Fitness Association of America

Benita Perkins, M.B.A., is an authority in health and wellness branding, with a dedicated focus on addressing the unique wellness needs of women of color and the demands they must overcome to step into a lifetime of healthy living. With a passion for empowering women to embark on lifelong journeys of vitality, Perkins orchestrates engaging lifestyle events that blend education with enjoyment. Over the span of two decades, her company, Benniegirl Healthy Lifestyle Branding Events, has collaborated with diverse businesses and organizations, strategically aligning their brands with the ethos of healthy living.

Through meticulous event curation and interactive initiatives, her team helps organizations convey their commitment to promoting well-being while leaving a positive impact on lives. A standout among her endeavors is the Healthy Heritage Lifestyle Sisters' Day of Wellness, a hallmark event aimed at disseminating vital health information within communities of women of color, thereby combatting health disparities.

Perkins' expertise extends to digital wellness programming, where she has delivered impactful initiatives for a myriad of esteemed partners including AARP, American Diabetes Association, and Johnson & Johnson, among others. Her certifications from the Aerobics Fitness Association of America and the National Association of Sports Medicine underscore her commitment to professional excellence. A graduate of Wellesley College and the Stern School of Business at NYU, she blends academic acumen with real-world insight to drive transformative change in the realm of health and wellness branding.



Jennifer Platts

Communications Specialist, Communications and Engagement, Division of Health Benefits (NC Medicaid), N.C. Department of Health and Human Services

Jennifer Platts is a Medicaid communications specialist at the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, bringing more than a decade of dedicated service to the NC Medicaid program. Platts' journey within the Medicaid program began in various capacities at the Medicaid Contact Center, where she honed her skills and knowledge. Serving as a DSS support specialist, she works directly with county case workers on corrections. Her commitment to excellence led her to take on roles as a trainer and quality assurance specialist, contributing to the professional development of her colleagues and the continuous improvement of service quality.

In her current position, Platts utilizes her experience to facilitate seamless communication between the Department of Health and Human Services and the broader community. Her role involves disseminating vital information about Medicaid programs, policies, and updates, ensuring that stakeholders stay informed and connected, and ensuring that materials are available in Spanish.

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Mariah Prince-Allen, DNP, FNP-BC

Telehealth for HER

Mariah Prince-Allen, DNP, FNP-BC, is a board-certified family nurse practitioner. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Florida and pursued her advanced education at the Duke University School of Nursing, where she earned both her master's and doctorate degrees. Driven by an unwavering passion for enhancing women's health and empowerment, she founded Telehealth for HER, a women's wellness clinic that redefines women's health care, specializing in hormone optimization, metabolic and gut health, and sexual wellness. Our guiding principles at HER: to heal, empower, and restore. Apart from her clinical practice, she holds the role of a clinical associate at the Duke School of Nursing and is acknowledged as a published author in peer-reviewed nursing journals.



Melanie Fontes Rainer, J.D.

Director, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Melanie Fontes Rainer, J.D., serves as the director of the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services where she leads the department's enforcement of federal civil rights and privacy laws and directs related policy and strategic initiatives. Previously, she served as counselor to Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, providing strategy guidance to the secretary on issues pertaining to civil rights, patient privacy, reproductive health, the Affordable Care Act, competition in health care, equity, and the private insurance market. In this role, she led the implementation of the bipartisan No Surprises Act, helping to increase transparency in medical billing and save consumers money. She also served as the secretary's designee on the White House Competition Council leading cross-cutting department work and a whole-of-government approach on price transparency, costs, and competition to benefit American consumers. Before joining the Biden-Harris administration, she served as the special assistant to the attorney general and chief health care advisor at the California Department of Justice, where she led a national team to save the Affordable Care Act and protect health care coverage for more than 133 million Americans. She has a J.D. from the University of Arizona, MSME from the City University of New York, Brooklyn College, and a BSBA from the University of Arizona.



Ingrid Saddler-Walker, M.A., E-RYT 500/RCYT 95

Wytha Balance Yoga-Counseling LLC

Ingrid Saddler-Walker, M.A., E-RYT 500/RCYT 95, is a mother of two sons ages 32 and 30 years old. She began her yoga journey in 2009 with the intention of teaching yoga to adults and children. She is the owner of Wytha Balance Yoga-Counseling LLC. in Durham, N.C. She is a psychotherapeutics yoga instructor trained with Lipsyschool, Lifeologic and an E-RYT/500 Advanced Yoga Teacher in Mental Health trained with Mind Body Centering Yoga. She is trained in yoga for breast cancer survivors. Saddler-Walker is certified as a Reiki master-level practitioner and a yoga life coach. She is a Kundalini trained E-RYT/200 hours yoga instructor with a 95-hour RCYT specialty certification in children's yoga: Yoga 4 Classrooms, Yoga and Mindfulness for Children, Yoga for Teens, Mindful Schools Fundamentals, Mindful Schools K-12, Mindfulness for School-Age Children, Trauma

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Informed Yoga, and Mindfulness for Youth. She is a N.C. professional licensed school counselor with 24 years of experience with Durham Public Schools. She is the founder of the Annual Bull City Yoga Festival and the Bull City Yoga Teacher Collective in Durham. She is a native of Durham.



Skand Shekhar, M.D., M.H.Sc

Medical Director, Clinical Research Unit, NIEHS, NIH

Skand Shekhar, M.D., M.H.Sc., is a double board-certified endocrinologist and internist and a clinician investigator in endocrinology and reproduction with a special interest in studying the relationship between metabolism and reproductive disorders. Shekhar is the acting medical director of the Clinical Research Unit of NIEHS and conducts clinical research while caring for patients with metabolic and genetic disorders of reproductive function, menstrual disorders, and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). Shekhar has a keen interest in improving the diagnosis and treatment options for persons with such disorders. His recent work on the use of artificial intelligence in PCOS received national attention and he has been invited to speak on PCOS by the Endocrine Society and medical schools across the country. Shekhar is also the principal investigator of the OBSERVE study that aims to study the influence of the environment on reproductive endocrine disorders. Shekhar completed his clinical and research training in adult endocrinology at the National Institutes of Health, focusing on reproductive endocrinology, followed by a master's in health from Duke University. He is a fellow of the American College of Physicians.



Rushad Shroff, M.D., FACP

Practice Medical Director, Duke Primary Care Midtown, Raleigh, N.C.

Rushad Shroff, M.D., FACP, decided to join the medical profession to serve and make a difference in people's lives. His passion to serve patients drove him to pursue an education in internal medicine, geriatrics, and integrative medicine. He has more than 20 years of clinical experience. Shroff is committed to providing efficient, comprehensive, and individualized care to his patients. His approach is patient-centered, proactive, and holistic. While caring for patients, he explores safe, evidence-based conventional and alternative modalities. He feels honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve his patients. Shroff believes in determining and addressing the root cause of disease and also valuing the importance of creating and promoting good health. Over the years, he has, and continues to, present at events sponsored by Duke Health in the community. On a personal note, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children. In his free time, he likes to read, write, listen to music, and exercise.



Tara Owens Shuler, M.Ed., LCCE, CD(DONA)

Branch Head, Maternal Health Branch – Women, Infant, and Community Wellness Section, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health

Tara Owens Shuler, M.Ed., LCCE, CD(DONA), has 30 years of public health work experience, ranging from maternal and child health programming to health professions workforce development programs. Shuler currently is the Maternal Health Branch head in the

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Women, Infant, and Children Wellness Section in the N.C. Division of Public Health. As the Maternal Health Branch head, she works with a team of program managers who provide support and technical assistance to statewide maternal health programming. The Maternal Health Branch implements three federally funded grants to address maternal mortality and maternal morbidity, maternal mental health and substance use disorders, and maternal health innovation projects. She is also a Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator (LCCE), a DONA-certified birth doula, and co-directs the North Carolina Perinatal Association Lamaze Childbirth Educator Program. Shuler received an undergraduate degree in health education and health behavior from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1992, and a master's in community health from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 1997.



John Staley, Ph.D.

Deputy Director, N.C. Occupational Safety and Health Education and Research Center

John Staley, Ph.D., conducts research and teaching focusing on occupational safety and health hazards, particularly among vulnerable workers. His work includes disaster preparedness and response program development, infectious disease and environmental health/safety, and continuing education needs of OSH stakeholders. He has a strong background in outreach with frontline workers, particularly the first responder community (e.g., fire/EMS, law enforcement, the military, and underrepresented populations). He works with regional partners across the southeastern United States to foster regional collaboration to improve the health of the U.S. workforce, particularly with a Total Worker Health® approach. This includes the critical intersection of community engagement and workforce development with the public, health care, business, and other stakeholders. Currently, he is a co-investigator on a study titled “Advancing Equitable PPE Protection for Women Working in Hazardous Environments” to identify driving factors and barriers for equitable PPE protection for women in health care, construction, mining, and public safety.



Ebony Tate, MSN, CNM, CPHN

State Maternal Health Nurse Consultant, Maternal Health Branch – Women, Infant, and Community Wellness Section, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health

Ebony Tate, MSN, CNM, CPHN, is a certified nurse midwife working as the maternal health nurse consultant with N.C. DHHS Department of Public Health Maternal Health Branch. In this role, she provides technical assistance and consultation for maternal health services to local health departments. She also functions as the Women, Infant, and Community Wellness Section's nurse planner helping to create trainings and educational activities for clinic staff across the state. She has worked in maternal and reproductive health for 20 years, with the majority of those spent working in rural N.C. and local health departments. During her time in clinical practice, she helped start the Centering Pregnancy program within the local health department, which also incorporated access to a volunteer doula program for patients. She received a Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a Master of Science in nursing from the Medical University of South Carolina, and midwifery certification from the American Midwifery Certification Board.

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Chandra Taylor-Sawyer, ESQ

Senior Attorney and Leader, Environmental Justice Initiative, Southern Environmental Law Center

Chandra Taylor-Sawyer, ESQ, is a senior attorney in the Southern Environmental Law Center's (SELC) Chapel Hill office and leads the organization's Environmental Justice Initiative. Taylor-Sawyer began her career at SELC in 2006, after practicing as a consumer protection attorney. She also serves as an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina School of Law and on the boards of the UNC Institute for the Environment, Appalachian Voices, and the Greater Triangle Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Taylor-Sawyer has led work in North Carolina to force cleanups at contaminated industrial sites, reduce water pollution threatening North Carolina communities, and shape transit and landfill policies. In 2007, she helped overhaul North Carolina's Solid Waste Management Act to protect lower-wealth communities and communities of color, as well as natural resources, from being disproportionately harmed from landfill-siting.

As leader of SELC's Environmental Justice Initiative, she advises on environmental injustice issues across the southeast, and is involved in strategic policy and litigation matters to help reduce the disproportionate burden of environmental harm on communities of color and other underserved communities, as well as to increase access to environmental amenities.



Pattie Tucker, Dr.P.H., RN

Director, Office of Women's Health, Centers for Disease Control Office of Health Equity

Pattie Tucker, Dr.P.H., RN, is director of Office of Women's Health at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga. She is recognized as a subject matter expert in the implementation and evaluation of culturally appropriate interventions to address social and structural determinants of health in people who are at higher risk for communicable and non-communicable disease. Tucker's nursing experience ranges from delivering care to patients at a public hospital, providing care to community members seeking services at a county

health department to supervising a statewide network of nurses and social workers assisting older adults with navigating local public services and health delivery systems.

Tucker's international public health research and practice assignments include working with Namibia's Ministry of Health and Social Services National HIV Sentinel Survey of pregnant women, and providing infection prevention and control technical guidance to staff and leadership of health care systems in Sierra Leone and South Sudan during the Ebola outbreak.

Tucker has co-authored book chapters and published peer-reviewed articles focused on intervening on the social determinants of health and evaluation of interventions designed to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. She holds a Doctor of Public Health from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in maternal and child health epidemiology, a Master of Public Health in policy and management from Emory University, and a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Florida A&M University.

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Jackeline Noemi Vázquez Villafañe, LCMHC, LCAS-A, NCC

Director, The Counseling Center

Jackeline Noemi Vázquez Villafañe, LCMHC, LCAS-A, NCC, is originally from Humacao, Puerto Rico, and moved to the United States in 1985. She graduated from Liberty University in 2017 with a master's in professional counseling and has been working in private practice ever since. She specializes in trauma, addiction, and family/marital counseling. She enjoys helping immigrant populations navigate the varying systems that facilitate acculturative processes, from filling out FAFSA forms for children of immigrants to writing recommendation letters to the USCIS on behalf of immigrant applicants. Some of the presentations she has given in her community have to do with raising children in between different cultures, how cultural and socioeconomic differences impact family roles in the United States, and developing a sense of cultural identity that is “ni de acá ni de allá” (neither here nor there), with the ability to embrace both. She has had the opportunity to speak at schools, churches, and nonprofit organizations about different mental health and family topics such as the adolescent brain, generational trauma, marriage, adolescent and parental anxiety, and postpartum depression. She is married to Amaury Hernández and they share three kids: Davian, Edric, and Sofia.



Sarahn Wheeler, M.D., MHS

Associate Professor and Vice Chair, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Director, Duke Prematurity Prevention Program, Duke University School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine

Sarahn Wheeler, M.D., MHS, is an associate professor and vice chair for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Duke School of Medicine Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She is a fellowship-trained maternal fetal medicine subspecialist.

Wheeler graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University. She attended the University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Medicine and completed residency training in obstetrics and gynecology at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She came to Duke University School of Medicine for fellowship training in maternal fetal medicine and joined the faculty in 2016. Wheeler is an active clinician and serves as the director of the Duke Prematurity Prevention Program.

Wheeler is a funded researcher focused on racial disparities in obstetric outcomes. In 2022, she completed her Master of Health Sciences in clinical research. Her research is dedicated to developing evidence-based, patient-centered, community-engaged interventions that improve outcomes for all patients while reducing the disproportionate rate of adverse outcomes among Black birthing people. Wheeler has served as a research mentor to junior faculty, fellows, postdocs, residents, and medical students. She finds purpose in the pursuit of equity and fulfillment in creating positive change for marginalized communities in OB/GYN.

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Sherri White Williamson, J.D.

Director, Environmental Justice Strategy, NC Conservation Network

Sherri White-Williamson, J.D., is the director of environmental justice strategy at the North Carolina Conservation Network (NCCN) where she focuses on overall strategy to assure that consideration of environmental justice is incorporated in NCCN's policy and outreach efforts. White-Williamson retired from the EPA Office of Environmental Justice, where she served in many roles including manager of the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice established under Executive Order 12898 and designated federal officer to the National

Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

White-Williamson is a 2018 graduate of Vermont Law School (VLS) in South Royalton, Vt., where she earned dual degrees, her Juris Doctor and a master's in energy regulation and law. While at VLS, she co-chaired its first Environmental Justice Solutions Conference and co-founded the Environmental Justice Law Society. She has received two awards from Vermont Law for her environmental justice activism: the Marc Mihaly Environmental Leadership Award in recognition of her commitment to the environment and environmental justice in 2018, and the Social Justice Scholars Alumni Award in 2023.

She has remained active with students through teaching an environmental justice course at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment in the spring semester. She currently resides in Sampson County, N.C., where she co-founded the Environmental Justice Community Action Network, working closely with community members to identify the cumulative impacts of polluting sources on communities in Sampson County.



Eddie Wilson

Instructor and Executive Chef, Aramark Collegiate Hospitality

Eddie Wilson is accomplished executive chef with more than 20 years of culinary experience coupled with export sales management and product promotion. His career encompasses fine dining, banquet and restaurant management, high-volume on-site catering, facility operations administration, food service sales, and support. He is recognized for his leadership skills and accomplishing results through building and developing strong creative culinary teams. Wilson has demonstrated expertise in special events catering and logistics,

food service product promotions, culinary course instruction, and menu development.



Kelli Wood, M.S., RD, LDN

Regional Registered Dietitian, Aramark Collegiate Hospitality

Kelli Wood, M.S., RD, LDN, is the regional registered dietitian for Aramark Collegiate Hospitality, supporting D.C., Virginia, and North Carolina universities. She received her undergraduate degree at North Carolina State University and her Master of Science in nutrition sciences at Meredith College.

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Sylvia Zapata

Executive Director, Student Action With Farmworkers

Sylvia Zapata is a first-generation college graduate of Winston-Salem State University, who comes from a family with a history in agriculture in both Texas and Mexico. Zapata grew up between the Texas Rio Grande Valley and Washington's Yakima Valley as her parents migrated north to work in the fields to make ends meet. As a teenager, she worked in the fields in Georgia with her family. Although a native Texan, Zapata has been living in North Carolina, on and off, for the past 22 years. Her work has centered on working for local and state government in public health and social services. Now, she is the executive director of Student Action With Farmworkers, an organization of which she is an alum. Zapata is the mother to two teenagers and a Belgian Malinois.