

**Strategic Vision Statement**  
**Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research**  
**Rutgers University Biomedical and Health Sciences**

October 2016

The Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research (Institute/IFH) is rightly proud of its storied legacy. Founded by eminent sociologist David Mechanic in 1985, it has counted among its faculty many of the most distinguished social scientists and policy researchers in the country, developed and nurtured a portfolio of influential Centers addressing critical issues in health, health care policy and aging, and created highly successful training programs at the pre-doctoral, post-doctoral and undergraduate levels.

The Institute's core values – faculty excellence, outstanding research, particularly in research-based solutions to problems in health and health care, and training the next generation of scholars, researchers, and professionals – have accounted for its extraordinary success in its first quarter of a century. Building on its history of excellence, this Strategic Vision statement was prepared to guide the next phase of the Institute's development and leadership at Rutgers and in society at large. This statement was crafted by a committee of Institute members, enumerated below, and ratified by the core Institute membership in September 2016.

**Background**

From the beginning, the Institute's core principles contributed to its stellar reputation and influence on research and practice. First, the excellence of its faculty: In addition to David Mechanic, founding members of the Institute included sociologist Allan Horwitz and the late historian of medicine Gerald Grob. In collaboration with the departments of Psychology and Economics and the School of Social Work, the Institute also recruited the eminent health psychologist Howard Leventhal, economist Louise Russell, a distinguished scholar of the economics of prevention, and the multi-faceted health services researcher Stephen Crystal, whose highly influential work on aging made him an excellent choice to direct the Institute's program on aging research. Crystal subsequently developed robust research programs within the Institute in health services research on pharmacotherapy, chronic disease management, and outcomes.

Within two years of its creation the Institute had thirteen core faculty members. By the early 21st century, IFH faculty constituted five of the seven Rutgers faculty who were members of the Institute of Medicine. At the beginning of the last academic year, the Institute still had four of the ten IOM members from Rutgers, which, given the very small size of the IFH in the

larger consolidated university, remains an impressive record. Also included among the Institute faculty today are three Board of Governors Professors, nine Distinguished Professors, and two Fellows of the American Academy of Nursing. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and under the direction of David Mechanic, the Institute hosted the Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research, a national program of excellence in the field across the country.

Second, the development of a portfolio of Centers addressing the Institute's main priorities of health, mental health, aging, health care policy, and delivery of services: In its first decade, the Institute competed successfully for National Centers, including an NIMH Center on the Organization and Financing of Care for the Severely Mentally Ill, an NIH Mind-Body Center on the Study of Health Beliefs and Behavior, and an NIA Center on Promoting Health in Elderly Black Americans, the latter two led by Howard Leventhal. These centers were funded generously by federal and foundation grants for many years. In 1999, with a grant of \$11 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Institute created the Center for State Health Policy, which has distinguished itself as a leader in policy analysis, research, and consultation on a range of state health policy issues, including insurance access and coverage, health system performance, and population health. It is directed by Joel Cantor. Since 2001, the Institute has also been the home of New Jersey Health Initiatives, which facilitates funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to innovative health projects in the state.

Third, the Institute has hosted extremely successful training programs. Its NIMH post-doctoral fellowship program, which ran from 1979 to 2015, produced a set of outstanding health scholars, some of whom became Rutgers faculty members while many others went on to distinguished careers elsewhere. University-funded pre-doctoral fellowships provided graduate students with outstanding research opportunities. These fellowships both enhanced their dissertation work and offered important collaborations with Institute faculty. The students strengthened their data analysis skills and their preparation of manuscripts and grant proposals. Rutgers Graduate School funds are no longer available for pre-doctoral support. Project L/Earn, a research training program for undergraduates from under-represented groups, has turned out nearly two hundred highly trained undergraduates, many of whom have gone on to successful academic and professional careers. Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the program has been funded by NIMH and RWJF before its current funding through the National Science Foundation.

Beginning in 2013, the Institute became part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), the academic health center created in the restructuring of Rutgers and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (see <http://integration.rutgers.edu/about/history>). Rutgers restructuring creates new opportunities and challenges for the Institute, co-locating it for the first time with New Jersey's major health professions and healthcare delivery enterprise. In that year, Rutgers also joined the prestigious Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) (see <https://www.cic.net/about-cic>), a consortium of world-class research universities that work together to advance excellence in academic research and education.

These institutional changes are occurring in the context of rapid health systems change, ongoing advancement in the biomedical sciences, and continuing disparities in health and well-being among diverse populations. This history of the Institute – rooted in the social sciences and policy disciplines – positions it well to continue to be a national leader in generating and applying new knowledge to improve population health.

## **Vision**

Innovation and advancement in human health and well-being through multidisciplinary research bridging social scientific, biomedical, clinical, and policy perspectives.

## **Mission**

The Institute generates important new knowledge about human health and well-being by conducting rigorous, theory-driven research and translating its insights into policy and practice.

## **Principles**

Advancing knowledge requires the scholarly leadership, strong theoretical perspectives, and rigorous empirical methods in the social, behavioral, clinical, and policy disciplines that are characteristic of the Institute faculty.

The multi-disciplinary perspectives and methods of the Institute greatly strengthen our work and enhance the effectiveness of other RBHS units and Rutgers as a whole.

Achieving the potential of a large, comprehensive public research university to improve health and well-being requires the boundary-spanning research and educational activities that are a central function of the Institute.

Maintaining a robust capacity to conduct high-impact research requires the strong training programs and mentoring that have been the legacy of the Institute.

Supporting outstanding research requires the effective and efficient administrative and research technology infrastructure of the Institute.

## **Our Areas of Inquiry**

- Social, individual, and system determinants of health
- Equity in health and healthcare
- Mental health and well-being
- Health-related behavior
- Health system and practice improvement
- Health policy and health service delivery
- Pharmacoepidemiology
- Global health
- Bioethics

## Our Tools

- Social science theory
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Large administrative data set development and integration
- Survey research and analysis
- Health services research
- Epidemiologic methods
- Program and policy evaluation
- Comparative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness research
- Intervention development and testing
- Qualitative and mixed methods
- Statistical and econometric analysis and modeling
- Historical analysis
- Implementation, translation, and dissemination sciences
- Convening and facilitation
- Training, mentoring and professional development

## Goals for the Next Five Years

- Deepen and expand the Institute's portfolio of extramurally funded research by developing highly-competitive, largescale multidisciplinary research programs.
- Recruit diverse, highly productive new Institute core faculty in areas that complement our strengths and advance this Strategic Vision.
  - Expand the Institute's capacity to conduct high-impact scholarship using its extensive and secure data infrastructure.
- Lead the development and advancement of the RBHS Community Health and Health Systems emerging signature area.
- Advance multidisciplinary collaboration and discourse among Institute faculty, other Rutgers investigators, the CIC, and other leading institutions.
  - Develop research and educational collaborations with other Rutgers units, particularly those in RBHS.
  - Engage and support Rutgers faculty from disciplines outside of RBHS (e.g., sociology, psychology, history, statistics, social work, and others) to ensure their continuing contributions to the work of the Institute and RBHS more broadly.
- Bring the Institute's scientific perspective and expertise to RBHS clinical initiatives, including *Rutgers Health*.
  - Extend the Institute's "big data" analytic capacity and expertise to the Rutgers clinical enterprise.
  - Focus on translational research leading to improved population health, including research that addresses health disparities and social determinants of health.
- Establish and sustain advanced training programs.

- Re-establish and secure funding for pre- and/or post-doctoral fellowships that span social science, clinical and policy fields.
- Achieve sustainable funding for the Institute’s flagship under-graduate training initiative, Project L/Earn.

## **IFH Strategic Vision Committee Members**

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