

FIU-Health Disparities Initiative (FIU-HDI)

June 2016

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Last month, FIU received a prestigious endowment award from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) that will expand FIU's capacity to address pressing health problems in vulnerable populations. Specifically, the \$9.5 million grant will be used to create and support the Florida International University-Health Disparities Initiative (FIU-HDI), which will serve as the overarching infrastructure for community-based prevention, treatment, and outcome research focused on HIV, substance abuse, diabetes, obesity and other chronic illnesses that disproportionately impact African Americans, Hispanics, Haitians, and other underserved communities in South Florida and the Caribbean region.

NIMHD's endowment will also enable specialized research education and training in minority health issues for FIU's medical students. To maximize the potential impact of FIU-HDI, the project's investigators will meet regularly with other minority health experts and community stakeholders to explore additional ways in which the project may contribute to the well-being of residents of South Florida and the Caribbean. The long-term goal of FIU-HDI is to conduct research and support education and training that improves minority health, reduces health disparities, and advances NIMHD's vision of ensuring that all people have equal opportunities for long, healthy, productive lives.

To achieve this goal, the funds that NIMHD awarded to FIU-HDI will be invested to 1) increase the number of faculty conducting research in minority health and health disparities at FIU, 2) establish one of the nation's most robust doctoral training program in health disparities research, and 3) increase the number of medical students who pursue research careers targeting the elimination of health disparities. Preliminary plans are to hire approximately three faculty members to be dedicated to a doctoral program

concentration in the social and cultural determinants of health. Additional resources from the endowment will be committed to enhance the minority health-related content of the curriculum at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) and provide health disparities research training experiences for medical students. Graduating more doctoral and medical students interested in careers in minority health will broaden the pool of investigators and intensify research efforts to eliminate health disparities.



Principal Investigator Mario De La Rosa, Ph.D.

The endowment grant award reflects NIMHD's confidence in FIU's commitment to minority health and recognition of the expertise of FIU's research faculty. The remarkable success of FIU's NIMHD-funded P20 Exploratory Center of Excellence grant: C-SALUD (P.I.: Mario De La Rosa, PhD) and other academic departments at the university engaged in minority-health related research and training, including the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Stempel), Medical and Population Health Sciences Research (HWCOM), Psychology (CASE), and Biomedical Engineering (CEC), laid the foundation for FIU-HDI. With the additional resources afforded by the NIMHD endowment grant, FIU is poised to contribute to major advancements in the elimination of health disparities by preparing the next generation of researchers, increasing the number of investigators, and disseminating research findings.



**National Institute
on Minority Health
and Health Disparities**