



CENTER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL ISSUES

GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Five Year Report

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A. Statement of Purpose

The Center for Health and Social Issues (CHSI) is an established entity within the College of Health Sciences (COHS) at Georgia College and State University. The CHSI engages with stakeholders and community partners to address the health and social issues of all residents of the immediate Baldwin County and Central Georgia.

B. Fulfilling the mission and values of GCSU

The mission of the Center for Health and Social Issues is to work collaboratively with campus and community partners to improve the health of Central Georgia residents through research and education concerning contemporary health problems and social issues. The overall vision of the Center is that all residents of Central Georgia have access to resources they need to attain optimal health. The Center's strategic goals include: reducing health and social disparities; promoting evidence-informed decision making in health and social policy; creating and maintaining healthy communities; enhance university and community partnerships.

Many communities in Baldwin County exist in food deserts, a geographic area with limited access to healthy nutritious food. The CHSI has been conducting research on food establishments throughout the County to provide baseline data on the healthy food assessment index. The aim of this work is to advocate for policy related to food and the food environment that would promote greater access to healthy foods among residents. Alongside the research, the Center supports monthly food distributions in the local community and facilitates dialogue among stakeholders involved in food pantries across the County.

Additionally, the CHSI participates in a variety of events, offering free health screenings on a regular basis. These clinics provide opportunities for identification and management of chronic non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and hypercholesterolemia. Through work with community collaboratives across middle Georgia, the CHSI continues to build partnerships that support community growth and assets. Regular collaborative meetings facilitate community dialogue, problem solving, and advocacy with local government. The Center will continue working with state and local agencies to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and data analysis to address health disparities.

The activities, services, and community outreach of the Center directly align with the values of Georgia College and State University, which are rooted in liberal arts and provide the foundation for a lifetime of learning, growth, and academic excellence. GCSU strives to pursue knowledge and truth for the public good and instill the transformative effect of service, leadership and collaborative engagement learning experiences both in and beyond the classroom. The University fulfills its mission statement through a commitment to an expansive educational experience, highly intentional engagement, diversity and inclusive excellence, and preparation for leadership. Likewise, the CHSI collaborates with community partners to identify needs and involve students in addressing them. Because the University and the surrounding community are home diverse people groups, GCSU and the CHSI foster a sense of belonging both on and off-campus for students and residents alike to advance excellence through diversity.

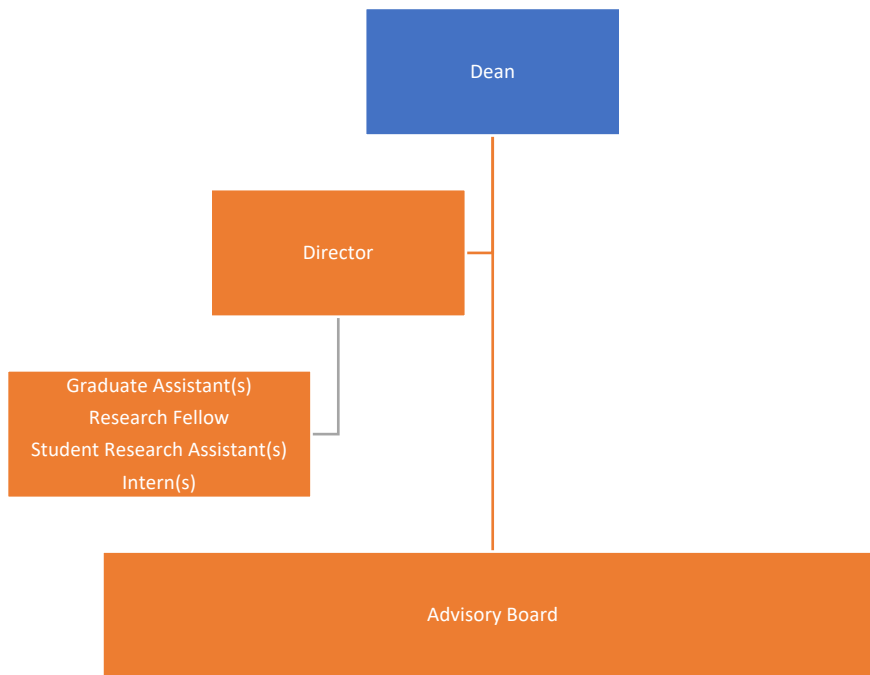
C. Organizational Structure

a. Leadership

- i. The CHSI Director is appointed by the Dean of the College of Health Sciences. The CHSI has an advisory board made up of faculty from the College of Health Sciences and at least one community partner. The advisory board does not exceed seven (7) members.

b. Personnel

- i. Director: Dr. Damian Francis
- ii. Advisory Board: Dr. Damian Francis, Dr. Talecia Warren, Dr. Ernie Kaninjing, Dr. Kelley Massey, Dr. Sheryl Winn
- iii. Research Fellow
- iv. Student Research Assistant(s)/Graduate Assistants
- v. Intern(s)



D. Stakeholders

Fall 2020 Stakeholders		
Event/Activity	Organizations Involved	Individuals Involved
2020 Breast Cancer Walk	GCSU Undergrad Students:	Kaitlyn Gauthier Allie Doyle Skylar Culpepper Anna Eakes
	GCSU Graduate Student:	Cat Woodall

	GCSU Sorority	Zeta Tau Alpha
	North Central Health District	
Pink Out Parade	North Central Health District	Regina King
	GCSU Undergrad Students:	Allie Doyle Skylar Culpepper Anna Eakes
Harrisburg Food Drive	Harrisburg Collaborative	Tommy French James Finney
Health Disparities Forum	Georgia Department of Public Health	Karen Ebey-Tessendorf
	University of Maryland School of Medicine	Dr. Claudia Baquet
	Harrisburg Collaborative	Tommy French
	GCSU Rural Studies Institute	Dr. Veronica Womack
Mobile Flu Vaccination and Diabetes Clinic-Sparta	Hancock County Health Department	
	Community Health Care Systems (CHCS)	
	GCSU Students and Faculty	Dr. Francis Anna Eakes Kaitlyn Gauthier Skylar Culpepper Allie Doyle Cat Woodall Briana Roach
Translating Community Engagement and Outreach	Mayor of Montevallo, Alabama, and University of Montevallo professor	Dr. Hollie Cost
	Harrisburg Collaborative	Tommy French
	GCSU Student and Faculty	Cat Woodall Dr. Sheri Noviello Dr. Damian Francis
Spring 2021 Stakeholders		
Event/Activity	Organizations Involved	Individuals Involved
Community Needs Assessments	CHSI	Dr. Francis
	Coopers Collaborative	Coopers residents
	Oconee Heights Collaborative	Oconee Heights residents
Harrisburg Mobile Food Pantry	Harrisburg Collaborative	Tommy French James Finney Harrisburg residents Community volunteers

	Northridge Christian Church	Ali Nelson and Amy Raburn
	GMC	Celes Mason
	Georgia Power	
	Health Empowers	
	North Central Health District	
	Missionaries for the Poor	
	CHCS	
	Middle Georgia Food Bank	
"Stronger Together" Autism Awareness event	Life Enrichment Center (LEC)	Barbara Coleman LEC Clients
	CHSI	Kaitlyn Gauthier Cat Woodall Dr. Francis
Pop-up Mobile Health Clinic	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Dr. Fowler Many nursing students
	HealthMPowers	Kristina Hyland (GCSU alumnae)
	Baldwin County Health Dept	Deja Lester (GCSU alumnae)
	CHSI	Kaitlyn Gauthier
Blight and Community Asset Mapping	GCSU students and CHSI intern	Kaitlyn Gauthier Cat Woodall Elias Torres MaryElle Michaels Christina Taylor
	GCSU Faculty	Dr. Francis Dr. Oetter (Dept of Geography)
	Board of Baldwin County Commissioners	
	Milledgeville City Council	
Fall 2022 Stakeholders		
Event/Activity	Organizations Involved	Individuals Involved
Rocking with Mental Health	GCSU Undergrad Students:	Maddy Meiser (lead) Elizabeth Czerick (helper) GCSU students participated
	GCSU Graduate Student:	Tanner Cobb
	GCSU Wellness and Rec Center	Rachel Pope
Breast Cancer Awareness Walk	CHSI	Kari Smith (lead)
	Zeta Tau Alpha	

	Guest Speaker Community	GCSU students, staff/faculty, and Milledgeville community members participated
Dunk for Diabetes	GCSU Undergrad Students:	Hope Davis (lead) GCSU students participated
	GCSU Graduate Student:	Tanner Cobb
	GCSU Faculty	Helen Dupree Dr. Moore Dr. Francis
Coopers Fall Festival	Coopers Collaborative	Danny Register
	GCSU Undergrad Students:	Paige Scheipe (lead) Carley Ramsey
	GCSU Graduate Student:	Tanner Cobb
Allison Everett 5K	CHSI	Service-Learning Students
	Wellness and Rec Center	
Sparta Flu Clinic	CHSI	Service-Learning Students
	North Central Health District	
Heirs Property Seminar	CHSI	Dr. Francis Research Fellow
	GCSU Rural Studies Institute	Dr. Veronica Womack
	GCSU Foundation Board of Trustees	Max Crook (retired Financial Advisor)
	McClendon Law and Consulting	Veronica McClendon (Attorney)
	Baldwin County representatives	Kendrick Butts (commissioner) Carlos Tobar (County Manager)
	Community	Residents/community members attended and asked questions
World AIDS Day	Houston County Health Department	
	CHSI	Service-Learning Students Research Fellow
Spring 2023 Stakeholders		
Heart Healthy Meal Demonstration	Taste and See Plant Based Eatery	Harry Watkins Lamecca Artiaga Rya Whitt

	CHSI	Hope Davis-Intern (lead) Dr. Francis
	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Nursing students
	Community and testimonial	Kevin Noviello gave a testimonial of how healthy eating significantly improved his health after a health scare, he experienced Community members came out to learn about healthy eating and how to prepare meals using healthy ingredients
Heart Healthy Exercise Challenge	CHSI	Hope Davis
	GCSU students	Students on campus participated in different exercise challenges
Milledgeville Mall exercise challenge and screening event	CHSI	Dr. Francis Hope Davis
	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Nursing students
	Community	Community members participated in exercise games and received blood pressure and HbA1c screenings
Diabetes screening at Café Central	CHSI	Hope Davis
	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Nursing students
Harrisburg Mobile Food Drives	CHSI	Dr. Francis Ivey Whitworth Hope Davis
	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Dr. Norris-Taylor Nursing students
	Harrisburg Collaborative	Tommy French James Finney Harrisburg residents Community volunteers
	Northridge Christian Church	Amy Raburn Church volunteers
	Life Enrichment Center	Clients and staff of the LEC

St. Patrick’s Day Festival – Dublin	CHSI	Dr. Francis
	Community members	Community and church volunteers
Art Healthy Festival	CHSI	Hope Davis Ivey Whitworth
	GCSU nursing students and faculty	Dr. Warren Dr. Norris-Taylor Nursing students
Senior Center Garden Bed Project	Public Health Student Organization	Dr. Francis Maddy Meiser
	CHSI	Dr. Francis Hope Davis

In addition to working with external partners/stakeholders, the CHSI plans, implements, and/or participates in many outreach events with GCSU students to engage the community. Every fall, the CHSI hosts Service-Learning Students who are responsible for developing and executing program plans that address CHSI focus areas of prevention including mental health, diabetes, cancer, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and healthcare access. The Center also employs Student Research Assistants who aid with contract deliverables, communications (website, social media presence, health education, etc.), blight and food insecurity research, among other responsibilities. The CHSI has internship opportunities for students as well. The interns are actively involved with internal and external partners, utilizing knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to obtain hands-on experience and achieve the goals of the Center. The CHSI also takes on student volunteers whenever they express interest. Regardless of major, the CHSI encourages and facilitates student involvement. To incentivize participation, the CHSI offers a Community Service Medallion to recognize the invaluable contribution of the students. The medallion is awarded to graduating seniors meeting the following eligibility criteria: full time undergraduate student at GCSU; complete a minimum of 45 hours community outreach with the Center between junior and senior years; maintain an overall GPA of at least 2.7 during junior and senior years; submit a 100-word reflection on a CHSI community outreach event; complete 1 or more training in QPR, CPR, BLS, ACLS, AED, First Aid; academic reference.

E. [Success in meeting goals/objectives](#)

The CHSI has presented epidemiologic data to government officials to show existing health disparities and suggestions to reduce them. Doing so has resulted in the development of a close relationship with the local government. Subsequently, local leaders and government officials have agreed to fund various efforts that improve health and social aspects of Baldwin County residents. One of the projects the county has contracted to sponsor is legal assistance for residents to go to probate court to address heirs' properties. This opportunity allows individuals to afford assistance and fees regarding titles and deeds of inherited property. This is important because many

individuals in the community were not eligible for federal assistance: Community Home Investment Program (CHIP). The CHIP grant is a federally- funded program designed to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing in Georgia by granting funds to city and county governments, public housing authorities, and nonprofits to 1.) rehabilitate owner-occupied homes, and 2.) build and renovate affordable single-family homes for sale to eligible homebuyers. Because homes had to be owner-occupied, individuals living on the estate of a family member, or heirs' properties, were not eligible for this housing assistance.

The local government has also donated a plot of land to the Oconee Heights community for the CHSI to work to construct a park. Oconee Heights does not have many community assets, and there is no safe space for children to play, or adults to get exercise at a green space. The construction of this park will encourage physical activity and social cohesion in the neighborhood.

Additional successes:

- 1) We have shared a roadmap for building community networks from previously successful programs (evidence-based programs).
- 2) We have assisted with assessing community needs for infrastructure and provided manpower to construct those identified as priority (e.g., community gardens, walking trails, parks, etc.).
- 3) We use the Institute of Medicine (IOM) framework that focuses on understanding the contribution of social-behavioral and genetic factors to health disparities.
- 4) Partner with/host events for global health awareness days/months including Breast Cancer, intellectual disabilities, diabetes prevention/management, mental health, heart health awareness, etc.).
- 5) Disseminate health resources via community meetings, social media, & flyers.
- 6) Partnered with Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) to provide residents with COVID-19 vaccinations and Community Health Care Systems (CHCS) to provide flu vaccinations to uninsured/underinsured.
- 7) Promote land bank/charter to provide Baldwin County blight issue with a sustainable program that can tackle existing disparities and revitalize existing neighborhoods

F. Goals, accomplishments, and plans for the future

Goal 1: Reducing health and social disparities

- Continued support of three established communities within Baldwin County
- Supported grant application to meet community needs.
 - Community Home Improvement Program grant \$400,000 for rehabilitation of 3 homes in Census Tract 9706 Block Group 1 or 4, or Census Tract 9707.01 Block Group 2 or 3.
 - Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RIASE), Discretionary Grant program \$4.9 million for Oconee heights streetscape project as part of blight remediation.

- Development of an Heirs Property Working Group with \$25,000 seed funding to CHSI from Baldwin County Board of Commissioners to assist with deeds for 'heir' properties in Census Tract 9706 or Census Tract 9707.01.
- Community improvement and master planning for blight remediation with grant funding \$33,000 from Georgia Healthcare Foundation.

Goal 2: Promoting evidence-informed decision making in health and social policy

- Technical assistance contract with the Georgia Department of public health to strengthen capacity and conduct program evaluation for nutrition and physical activity programs across the State. Funding \$65,000.
- Technical assistance contract with the Southwest Health District to conduct tobacco community needs assessment. Funding \$77,280.

Goal 3: Creating and maintaining healthy communities

Health Promotion

- CHSI conducted over 20 health education and screening clinics in FY23 partnering with entities such as CORE, Community Health Systems, North Central Health District, CREATE, Lions Club Milledgeville, and several local businesses.
 - Over 400 residents received blood pressure and or HbA1c screening
 - 50 flu and or COVID-19 vaccines with our partners from CORE and Community Health Care Systems.
 - Successful annual health awareness events: Breast Cancer, Diabetes, and Heart Health.
 - Co-sponsor Harrisburg monthly mobile food distribution to reduce food insecurity.
 - Funded and implemented three (3) raised garden beds at the Baldwin County Senior Center.

Goal 4: Enhance University and community partnerships

- Hosted the inaugural Milledgeville Baldwin County Juneteenth Festival.
- Attendance to key stakeholder meetings such as City Council, Board of Commissioners.
- Partner on the Baldwin County Community Home Investment Program team.
- Co-convener of the Coopers, Harrisburg, and Oconee Heights Collaboratives.

Needs/Next steps:

- Seek funding opportunity for mobile medical unit and supporting resources (\$600,000)
- Transportation/vehicle to support community outreach and research (received October 2023)
 - Flexibility/vision in University model to facilitate technical assistance work through State and Federal contracts.

G. Long-term goals:

The strategic goals form the basis of the CHSI functions:

Goal 1: Reducing health and social disparities

- i. Identify and effectively implement community-based interventions to achieve health equity on the basis of race or ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

- ii. Increase the capacity for scientific research within the COHS and include an equity lens in current research and publication at Georgia College.
- iii. Support the agenda for equal opportunity in education, employment, and other social issues. Foster a better understanding of the unique contributions of and embedded relationships among social, behavioral and genetic factors in health disparities.
- iv. Empower the community through support of actions that address social determinants of health and improve health-related infrastructure (e.g., community gardens, walking trails, etc.).

Goal 2: Promoting evidence-informed decision making in health and social policy

- i. Support evidence-informed decision through training in knowledge translation.
- ii. Promote reputable sources for evidence on health and social research.

Goal 3: Creating and maintaining healthy communities

- i. Identify and promote global health awareness days and events.
- ii. Increase community-based disease prevention efforts.
- iii. Secure and operate a mobile health unit to increase healthcare access to underserved communities in Baldwin County and beyond.
- iv. Address emerging community health needs, including public health emergencies, by supporting adaptable, innovative, outcome-focused, sustainable programs.

Goal 4: Enhance University and community partnerships

- i. Identify and assess internal and external partnerships to proactively align the CHSI with relevant partners and stakeholders.
- ii. Extend the reach of CHSI vision and programs through clear communication of priorities and desired outcomes to partner and stakeholder organizations.
- iii. Increase multidisciplinary student involvement in outreach activities.
 - i. Involvement of students in mobile health unit operations in the fields of public health, nursing, athletic training, etc.

H. Anticipated Obstacles

The Center faces an array of challenges reaching some of the aspirations. The main deterrent in accomplishing some of the activities is due to funding, or the lack thereof. Another obstacle to overcome is continuing to build trust with the surrounding community. The Center is involved in many community collaboratives, and sometimes it can be difficult for residents to trust the University and the CHSI because they expect to see changes, progress, and improvements to their neighborhoods and communities. Sometimes, the improvements we promise take a long time to deliver due to funding sources (local government and other agencies).

I. Anticipated Needs

The mobile health unit is one of the largest expenses the CHSI has sought. Seeking donations and grants remains an ongoing effort to achieve this unit. Having the mobile clinic would greatly improve access to preventative healthcare services due to the ability to widen screening to a much larger population using various disciplines within the College of Health Sciences.

The CHSI will always need equipment as well, including screening devices, test kits, and personnel to plan and implement events and programs. Maintaining partnerships within the COHS with faculty, staff, and students is important to ensure the successful operation of the mobile health unit in an array of disciplines to best serve the community. The goal is to provide experience to students in the fields of public health, athletic training, nursing, etc. Not only does this help students get clinical hours and hands-on learning experience, but it also widens the services the mobile unit offers to the target populations. Many residents are uninsured or underinsured, so providing these services would significantly improve health outcomes for those that otherwise could not afford it. Being a mobile health clinic also eliminates the issue of transportation, ensuring convenience for residents.

J. Financial – Dr. Francis

Does the Center have adequate financial resources for continued operation? How has the Center leveraged campus resources? How has the Center leveraged external funding sources?

The Center for Health and Social Issues maintains three accounts.

1. Foundation – Annual operational budget of \$20,000
2. State Appropriation – \$1,000
3. Sales and Service account salaries – \$51,500

Leveraging Campus Resources

The Center partners with faculty, centers, and institutes across campus to implement programs within the community. Specifically printing services, financial management, IRB, and grants and sponsored research all play a role in our fiscal and programmatic endeavors.

Leveraging External Funding Sources

Except for state appropriation, funding including salaries are externally obtained through grants, contracts, and philanthropic donations.

K. Institution

Suggestion: The CHSI would like to be able to develop and promote a course certificate in community-based engagement for campus, community, and external parties as interested.