Enter A New Chapter with New Leadership

We are excited to welcome a new director to the Urban Health Institute. After working with a steering committee made up of community and Hopkins leadership, Dr. Lisa Cooper, James F. Fries Professor of Medicine, and Bloomberg Distinguished Professor in the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health, was selected to lead us into a new chapter.

The Urban Health Institute has spent the past several months working on a new vision for our future, which now focuses on improving health and health equity across Baltimore. We couldn’t be more excited to have Dr. Cooper, a champion for public health and a pioneer for health equity, at the helm as we expand our work for a healthier Baltimore.

“I am delighted by this opportunity. It is an honor to have my work addressing health disparities validated in such a significant way. My appointment to this position affirms for me the importance that we are collectively placing on the pursuit of health equity in the city of Baltimore.”

Under Dr. Cooper’s leadership our work will now drive a new mission to better serve the Baltimore community. Historically, our mission was to strengthen and enhance community-university partnerships and serve as a bridge between East Baltimore and Johns Hopkins. We are excited to be broadening this mission to advancing health and health equity in Baltimore through the following three goals:

1. Facilitating collaborations between communities, universities, and healthcare delivery systems to build collective capacity for achieving health equity in Baltimore.

2. Mobilizing resources in support of promising strategies to achieve substantial gains in the health and well-being of Baltimore residents.

3. Advancing understanding and dialogue by including community voices to build trust and enhance pathways to health, well-being, and social justice in Baltimore.

We look forward to this new chapter at the UHI with Dr. Cooper leading us and are grateful for her willingness to join the UHI family. You can learn more about Dr. Cooper and the new direction of the UHI in the Johns Hopkins HUB article here.
Meet Our New Associate Directors

We are excited to expand our team and welcome five new associate directors! With ties to various schools and departments across Johns Hopkins, including the School of Nursing, School of Medicine, and Bloomberg School of Public Health, our new additions to the UHI family have diverse clinical, educational, and research expertise in addressing health equity across the lifespan, implementing patient-centered and community-engaged interventions, and translating research into practice and policy. Along with the new additions, we are excited to expand the role of our current team member, Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer, and add her to our amazing roster of associate directors as well. For the past 4 years Mrs. Atnafou-Boyer has led the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program and we are excited that she will continue to lead this program in our next season under the title of associate director. As we enter this chapter with new leadership and a new mission, we are excited about the collaborative opportunities that are available, including working with the center for health equity around training and community engagement and with other centers and institutes across the university with missions that are aligned with ours.

We look forward to the work our associate directors will carry out to help us advance health and health equity in Baltimore. You can learn a little more about them at bit.ly/associatedirectors20

14 Years of Leadership and Service

Fourteen years ago, Amy Gawad joined the Urban Health Institute (UHI) team and was tasked with developing new initiatives and overseeing all programs, events, and activities.

During her time with UHI, Amy oversaw the implementation of numerous programs and funding opportunities, including the Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award, successfully helped plan and execute conferences and symposiums, such as our annual Social Determinants of Health Symposium, and ensured our day to day efforts helped to advance our mission and vision.

After over a decade of leadership and service, Amy has stepped down as executive director to pursue an innovative opportunity here at Johns Hopkins involving COVID-19 plasma research. The UHI has been grateful to have Amy as a dedicated leader for 14 years and she is missed greatly by our entire team and our network of friends. We are grateful she will still be a part of the Johns Hopkins
family and we look forward to witnessing the amazing work she will do in her new role.

As we continue in this chapter of transition, we are excited for all of the great things to come! You can read Amy’s official statement at bit.ly/AmyStatement and catch a glimpse of her time with the Urban Health Institute over at bit.ly/AmyJourney.

Nancy Edwards Molello has been appointed Program Director of the UHI and you can learn more about her below.

New to the Team!

Meet our new Program Director, Nancy Molello Edwards, MSB. Nancy, who is also the program director for the Center for Health Equity, has spent 18 years at Hopkins in various roles of leadership and management before joining the Urban Health Institute team. With a background in developing local and global partnerships, creating and evaluating projects, teaching grants administration, and finance, Nancy brings fresh perspectives and ideas to the UHI and we are so excited to have her as a part of our team. You can learn more about Nancy on our website.

Get to know Nancy Molello Edwards, MSB

Where are you from?
I grew up in Boston, Mass, and I am still a Red Sox fan, but don’t hate me!

Hopes for the future at UHI?
UHI has great leaders at the helm who are committed to building a healthier Baltimore by developing partnership across the university, and empowering the community. UHI’s community leadership program is making a difference in the lives of people in Baltimore, and I am excited to be a part of the team.

When not working, where can we find you?
I love the water, and it soothes my soul. You can find me anywhere near the water, preferably on a sailboat.

Favorite Book?
Multipliers by Liz Wiseman – a wonderful book for all leaders

What is an interesting fact about yourself?
I have been to 16 countries, 5 of them in Africa
Thank You to Our Associate Directors: Terri and Richard

Associate directors play a vital role in the work that we do every day. We are excited about welcoming a new leadership team to carry out our mission of advancing health and health equity in Baltimore. At the same time, we truly appreciate the work our associate directors, Dr. Terri Powell and Dr. Richard Lofton, have done to carry out our previous mission of strengthening and supporting university-community collaborations to improve the health and well-being of Baltimore city residents. We will truly miss their involvement in the daily work of UHI, but we look forward to opportunities for future collaboration with them as we move into this new chapter. You can learn a little bit more about Terri and Richard below.

Terri Powell has been a part of the Urban Health Institute team since 2014. During her time with the Urban Health Institute, Terri coordinated our Baltimore Researcher Dinners, quarterly dinners focused on a variety of research topics and focused on how to use those research findings to enhance the health and well-being of Baltimore communities. Terri led 12 researcher dinners, bringing together in total 253 faculty, students, and researchers from colleges and universities across Baltimore.

Her primary responsibility was leading the Baltimore Researcher Dinners; however, Terri also contributed ideas, expertise, connections, and time to many of our other initiatives, programs, and events, including our annual Social Determinants of Health Symposium, our small grants program, and our re-visioning efforts. When she is not working with the UHI, Terri is an associate professor in the Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health. She brought her expertise in adolescent sexual health research and qualitative methodology and community-engaged approaches to inform our work. Terri not only has been an asset to UHI, but to the entire Johns Hopkins and Baltimore community. She has been recognized for her contributions through numerous awards including, the 2016-2017 Faculty Appreciation Award and from 2015-2019 was recognized for Teaching Excellence at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. Currently, Terri is leading the Better Together Project, a research study to better understand the experiences of young people in Baltimore who have been affected by drug abuse.

Richard Lofton joined the Urban Health Institute in 2018 and took the lead on our Small Grants Program. During Richard’s time with the UHI we received 77 Small Grant applicants and awarded 32 grants. Richard also represented the UHI well in his community-engaged activities, such as the recent symposium he planned in conjunction with Mayor's Office of Civil Rights, “Terror in the Schoolyard: Race, Place and Systemic Inequalities”.

Richard is an assistant professor at the Center for Social Organization of Schools in the School of Education. He is the co-principal investigator for the national evaluation of the Student Success Mentor Initiative, which aims to reduce chronic absenteeism, develop caring relationships within schools, and increase successful outcomes for students. His research examines the impact of concentrated poverty on homes, schools, and communities, as well as the importance of uncovering systematic inequalities and developing meaningful relationships with students and their parents for academic success.

We have been honored to have Terri and Richard as a part of our UHI family over the years. We have a deep appreciation for all of the contributions they made, and we hope to continue to engage them in our work. Please join us in thanking them and wishing them much success in the next chapters of their careers! To see some highlights of Terri and Richard in action here at UHI visit bit.ly/TerriandRichard
COVID-19 Pandemic

In January of this year many around the globe began to catch wind of a new virus and by March the virus had spread across the world impacting thousands of people.

All of us, regardless of race, socio-economic status, nationality, or religion, have been introduced to a new normal ever since. With executive orders quickly taking effect to keep us at a safe social distance, many have been impacted financially, physically, mentally, and emotionally. The glimmer of hope has been seeing this amazing city we call home come together to provide support to those who need it most during these uncertain times.

For nearly 20 years our priority has always been to respond to community needs as quickly and efficiently as possible. We were able to respond through the following efforts:

1. **Creating a COVID-19 HUB** of resources, updates, and information.
2. Increased our communication from once a week to twice a week so that you, our friends, could receive resources as they became available
3. Launched the COVID-19 Small Grant for Research, Program Development, and Program Expansion. We are pleased to share 6 community-university partnerships have received funding as a result.
4. And lastly, UHI has had representation on 4 university-wide COVID-19 committees, including the East Baltimore Food Initiative, which you can learn about below.

**East Baltimore Food Initiative**

Under Alicia Wilson’s, vice president for economic development for Johns Hopkins University and Health System, leadership Hopkins partnered with local organizations at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide meals to adults in East Baltimore not eligible for programs that provide families with resources and food. The effort has helped more than 7,000 Baltimore residents and served more than 1.5 million meals. “It was a wonderful experience to be part of a JHU team who was committed to our Baltimore communities that were struggling with food security during Covid19. Under Alicia’s leadership, we were able to partner with the community to help in whatever ways they needed, and to make sure the community was served.” says UHI program director, Nancy Molello Edwards. You can learn more about the initiative at [https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/04/24/food-access-initiative-covid-19/](https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/04/24/food-access-initiative-covid-19/)

While we know there is more work ahead and the lasting impact of this pandemic is yet to be seen, we take comfort in knowing that we are all in this together and with collective effort we will get through these uncertain times as a community.

If there is anything the Urban Health Institute can do in support of you or someone you know, if there are additional resources you think might be worth sharing, or if you have questions about the novel coronavirus please email us at urbanhealth@jhu.edu.
A few of our colleagues and friends were kind enough to share what their new normal looks like and how they’ve adjusted during this pandemic. You can read some of their experiences below.

What does your new normal look like since COVID-19?

**Our Associate Director Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer shared:** Many zoom meetings, trainings, and mentoring.

**Our Communications and Marketing Associate Imani West shared:** Since the pandemic my new normal has become working from home, wearing workout and lounge clothes more often, only interacting with the same five people in person for the past two to three months, and only going to the store once a week to avoid extra exposure, having to wear a mask longer than I want to, and standing in long lines that are standing 6 feet a part.

Since the pandemic, what is something you’ve been able to do that you didn’t have time to do before?

**Our Associate Director Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer shared:** Exercise more.

**Our Communications and Marketing Associate Imani West shared:** Cook more, decorate my new home, and chat with people I normally tell myself I don’t have time to catch up with. I really have been enjoying cooking more though. It is one of my favorite things to do.

How has work changed for you since COVID-19?

**Our Associate Director Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer shared:** Increased reliance on technology.

**Our Communications and Marketing Associate Imani West shared:** Meetings and workload has increased since COVID-19. Working in the public health field has required us to be more tapped in and engaged with what is happening with the pandemic so that we can be responsive to rising community needs. The positive to all of this is working with such a supportive team. Though we are going through major transitions and adjustments we are doing our best to stay encouraged and be understanding of one another. I also notice that when I do have work zoom meetings, I linger a little bit longer on the call to take advantage of the opportunity for human interaction since I am home alone all day every day. I don’t have many people to physically interact with so it’s nice to chat with colleagues whether its work related, or non-work related.

What life lesson(s) have you learned during this pandemic?

**Our Associate Director Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer shared:** Never take “normal” things for granted—eating out, socializing, getting hair done, traveling.

**Our Communications and Marketing Associate Imani West shared:** I have to be more protective of my health. Seeing how easy and quickly this virus spread reminds me how easy and quickly germs and other viruses can spread as well.
"RACISM, A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS": A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

The Urban Health Institute stands against those who carry out acts of bigotry and with those who face them. We look forward to working with leaders across Johns Hopkins and communities across Baltimore to combat racism and advance health and health equity for all. Below is a snippet about where we stand and our hopes for the future in a statement from our director, Dr. Lisa A. Cooper, and Dean of the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Ellen J. MacKenzie that was sent out to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health on June 1st.

Dear Friends,

I am writing you to express my solidarity with you during this difficult time across our nation. Here at the Urban Health Institute, we share in your grief over the violence and injustice inflicted upon communities of color, and we are here to support and encourage you. The Urban Health Institute is committed to working in partnership with all of you to overcome the divides that separate us, find shared priorities that bind us, and make true progress towards ending racism, advancing health equity and achieving social justice. I also wanted to share the message below from Ellen MacKenzie, the Dean of the Bloomberg School of Public Health and me. I look forward to working with all of you to illuminate the path forward.

The video of the horrific and senseless killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, last week has already been viewed many millions of times around the nation and the world. Every replay exposes the lethal racism and the searing injustice represented by his words, “I can’t breathe.”

George Floyd’s tragic death brings to mind the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, which did not lead to criminal charges for months, until a recording had been made public. It comes several months after Louisville police killed a 27-year-old emergency medical technician, Breonna Taylor, after bursting into her own apartment, and less than a year after a Fort Worth police officer killed Atatiana Jefferson as she played video games at home. It comes just a few weeks after the five-year anniversary of the homicide of Freddie Gray in the custody of Baltimore police.

Law enforcement violence is a public health issue. It is just one dimension of racism as a present and deadly force in our society. As shocking as these high profile examples are, they represent the tip of the iceberg of persistent racial inequities that constitute a crisis for public health.

African American babies die before their first birthday at more than twice the rate of white newborns.
African American women die at more than twice the rate of other women during pregnancy and childbirth.
African American adults suffer far higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, and other serious chronic illnesses.
The life expectancy of African Americans is 3.5 years shorter than for white Americans.

To read the full statement, please visit https://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/_PDFs/Racism-A-Public-Health-Crisis.pdf
As a part of our promise and commitment to addressing racial inequities and injustices, the Urban Health Institute joined President Ronald Daniels Roadmap to 2020 Taskforce committee, with our director Dr. Lisa Cooper serving as co-chair. Originally launched as the Roadmap on Diversity and Inclusion five years ago, this taskforce was formed and consists of key stakeholders from across the institution, including students, faculty, and staff, that are charged with reviewing and assessing the JHU Roadmap on Diversity and Inclusion and developing a set of recommendations for the next five years to address racial injustices, promote diversity, improve inclusion, and build on the success of these efforts. You can learn more about the taskforce, the updated progress reports, who sits on the committee, and more by visiting their website https://diversity.jhu.edu/2020-task-force/!

2020 HENRIETTA LACKS MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER: HEARTSMILES

Across the United States 6.8 million children under the age of 17 suffer from food insecurity and in Baltimore City around 25% of young people are food insecure.

This year’s Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award recipient the 100th year of Henrietta Lacks legacy and the 10th year we have awarded a community-university partnership with our $15,000 Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award and we couldn’t think of a better program to highlight than the Granny Project, a youth-led response to adolescent food insecurity that was created under a partnership between HeartSmiles and the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health.

“The HeartSmiles team is extremely grateful to receive the 2020 Henrietta Lacks award. We know that Ms. Lacks unknowingly made one of the biggest contributions this world will ever receive and as a
humble recipient of her award, we too aspire to make invaluable contributions that will live forever”, said HeartSmiles Founder, Joni Holifield on Saturday, October 24 during the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research’s annual Henrietta Lacks lecture, view video here.

The Granny Project takes on an intergenerational approach by pairing Grannies with young people across Baltimore to teach them how to make quick, healthy, and affordable meals. Youth who participate in the program also receive access to mentoring, fitness and health activities, and fellowship among their peers. Many youth that participate in the program love the connections they make and the platform they are given to use their voice to promote positive change in Baltimore City.

“Over the summer I had the honor to work on a project called the “Granny Project.” The project helps fight food insecurity throughout Baltimore City. This project is very important to me because it felt good to be a part of a project that could potentially save a city. Being a part of the Granny Project has also taught me how to become a leader and that anyone can be a leader. The project helped me understand that my VOICE MATTERS and the things I have to say are important. Because of this opportunity I am starting to become more vocal and involving myself in more things because I would like to see a positive change in Baltimore City”, says 15-year-old participant.

HeartSmiles and the Center for Adolescent Health share a common goal and mission to promote youth equity and create spaces and opportunities for young people to thrive emotionally, socially, and physically. Their efforts go towards providing youth with equitable access to supports and resources and empowering them to make successful transitions to healthy and productive adult lives.

With efforts led by youth, also known as the heartbeats, and supported by volunteer grannies and mentors, HeartSmiles founder Joni Holifield, and their Hopkins partners, Ms. Katrina Brooks, Dr. Tamar Mendelson, and Dr. Kristin Mmari, the Granny Project has hosted numerous events, including Lost Art, a youth art collective that staged youth music, dance, and art performances in order to raise funds for the Project, hosted a large block party-style cooking demonstration event in Fall 2019, which attracted over 400, to showcase the collaboration between the “grannies” and youth and demonstrate how to prepare a healthy recipe, switched to a virtual platform in response to COVID-19. In 2019, expanded its health programming to include virtual workouts, and increased its reach and impact by distributing food kits to Baltimore families.

The group plans to use the $15,000 award to support continued implementation of The Granny Project, including food kits, supplies, expansion of their health and wellness initiative (etc.).

To learn more about the Granny Project, visit our YouTube channel to watch the official 2020 Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award video. To catch up on the ICTR’s annual Henrietta Lacks lecture and hear from our director, Dr. Lisa Cooper, click here.

* The Urban Health Institute would also like to congratulate our runners up for the 2020 Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award. Each runner up will receive $5,000 each to support their continued efforts to eliminate health disparities and create healthier and more equitable communities in Baltimore. You can learn more about them below:

- **Power to Stop Diabetes and Power to Control Diabetes**, a collaboration between the Johns Hopkins Brancati Center, Zion Baptist Church, and Memorial Baptist Church which works to raise awareness about the risks of diabetes through diabetes prevention programs in East Baltimore.

- **Bridging the Gap**, a Hearing Care Equity Initiative by Access HEARS, Inc., who’ve have partnered with the Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health at Johns Hopkins to connect older adults to the hearing solutions they need to age well and reconnect individuals to their communities.

- **Accessible Primary Care for Uninsured Immigrants**, an initiative of the Esperanza Center of Associated Catholic Charities, Inc, who’ve worked closely with Johns Hopkins Medicine and Johns Hopkins Centro Sol to provide culturally-competent, patient-centered, free primary care to uninsured immigrant adults and children, as well as referrals to specialty care and non-medical services to address social determinants of health.
2020 BUNTING NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

*Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program was unable to convene as planned, so the 2020 Fellows will join the 2021 cohort.

This year we welcomed six new emerging leaders to the 2020 cohort of the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program! From uplifting and mentoring Baltimore’s youth to building homes around the City, this diverse and dynamic group of leaders each bring unique perspectives and experiences to this Fellowship. To learn more about the 2020 cohort visit bit.ly/2020BuntingFellows.

Perri Carroll is an advocate, provoking educator, public health professional, and an amateur cook who loves using the power of food to bring people together. She received her Master of Public Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. She is currently the senior wellness specialist and a project coordinator in the Growth and Nutrition Division at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

LaQuida Chancey is an experienced real estate investor, entrepreneur, IT manager, and owner of Xavier Estates, LLC, a full-service real estate company. In February of 2018, LaQuida started Smalltimore Homes, an affordable housing nonprofit and sustainable living initiative focusing on enhancing community living and improving existing neighborhoods for the benefit of the people already living there.

Alexis J. Covington is the project manager for B’more for Healthy Babies at Family League of Baltimore and a reproductive health advocate for women of color. Alexis holds a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology from Morgan State University. In her current role, she educates and empowers moms in need so they can expect healthier pregnancies, safer deliveries, healthier babies, and healthier futures.

Joni Holifield is a west Baltimore native who found greater purpose in life through the tragic death of Freddie Gray and the violent riots that followed. Joni founded the grassroots organization lovingly known as HeartSmiles. HeartSmiles is a well-known safe haven and community hub for youth all across the city looking to get more out of life.

Lamontre Randall is a well accomplished social construct visionary from Baltimore, Maryland. Randall graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Asian American Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. Currently, he is the Co-founder of The BeMore Group, a consulting firm that is focused on providing innovative solutions for nonprofits, for-profits, and government agencies in low-income communities.

Atiya Wells was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, and moved to Baltimore City to earn her nursing degree. She is currently a pediatric nurse and nature educator. During her free time to fostering nature connection in urban environments and creating equitable access to nature. She is the Founder/Executive Director of Backyard Basecamp, Inc., an organization geared toward connecting Baltimore's residents to wildlife in the city. She is also the driving force behind BLISS Meadows, an innovative social justice project creating equitable access to green space and fresh produce in her Frankford neighborhood.
**BUNTING FELLOWS SPOTLIGHT**

**A Gift From Baltimore Journal**

2019 Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Fellow and CEO of Vision to Life, Sarah Wallace, released an inspiration journal filled with quotes from Baltimore leaders, activists, organizers, and risk takers. Sarah encourages people to “use this journal to help you through a growth period, for gratitude, or to simply write out your thoughts”. Visit [www.visiontolife.net/products--workshops.html](http://www.visiontolife.net/products--workshops.html) to pre-order the journal and unlock wisdom, advice, and inspiration from some of Baltimore’s finest!

**Bridging the Equity Gap Through Free Community Wi-Fi**

Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Fellows, Jonathan Moore ’18 & Juan Nance ’19, teamed up to install a free Community Wifi Mesh Network around New Song Academy in Sandtown-Winchester to close the equity gap residents are facing amid COVID-19. Read about it in [Baltimore Business Journal](http://www.baltimorebusinessjournal.com)!

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The mission of the UHI is to advance health and health equity in Baltimore by:

1. Facilitating collaborations between communities, universities, and healthcare delivery systems to build collective capacity for achieving health equity in Baltimore.
2. Mobilizing resources in support of promising strategies to achieve substantial gains in the health and well-being of Baltimore residents.
3. Advancing understanding and dialogue by including community voices to build trust and enhance pathways to health, well-being, and social justice in Baltimore.

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