

HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH INITIATIVE

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

FALL 2017

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UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
Urban@UW

CROSSING DISCIPLINES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION 03

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR 04

RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

 SUBSTANCE USE & TREATMENT 05
 Seema Clifasefi / Susan Collins (HaRRT), Andrew Saxon

 SOCIAL JUSTICE & HEALTH IMPACTS 06
 Josephine Ensign, Christine Stevens

 POLICY & GOVERNANCE 07
 Lisa Kelly, Anaid Yerena

 POVERTY & COLLABORATION 08
 Sarah Elwood / Victoria Lawson (RPN), Shannon Harper / Jennifer Romich (WCPC)

 CROSS-CUTTING PERSPECTIVES 09
 Amy Hagopian, Lynne Manzo, Amoshaun Toft

URBAN@UW HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH INITIATIVE PROJECTS 10

CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM DIRECTOR OF URBAN@UW 11

PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS 12

OVER 70 FACULTY FROM FOURTEEN DISCIPLINES ACROSS ALL THREE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON CAMPUSES ARE ENGAGED IN HOMELESSNESS-RELATED RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND SERVICE.

THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH PROJECTS EXEMPLIFY THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY SCHOLARSHIP FOCUSED ON THE CHALLENGES OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE PUGET SOUND REGION.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

The crisis of homelessness is uniquely urban. At the intersection of housing markets, poverty, economic growth, population health, and other urban challenges, the issue of homelessness is both deeply complex and depressingly simple. Many share the value that **every person deserves a place to call home**, yet the path to ending homelessness is unclear and contested. With a growing number of people in our region experiencing homelessness, University of Washington faculty, students, and staff are working to have a positive impact.

The Urban@UW Homelessness Research Initiative unites faculty efforts from across the University of Washington **to address homelessness through a research lens**. UW faculty have a long history of engagement with homelessness-related research—expertise that spans many disciplines and all three campuses. The Faculty Highlights Report showcases a sample of this research portfolio.



Faculty convene for an Urban@UW retreat. (Photo Credit: Tim Thomas)

MESSAGE FROM INITIATIVE FACULTY CHAIR



Rachel Fyall, PhD, researches the involvement of nonprofits in public policy, primarily in the areas of homelessness and low-income housing. She is finalizing a study on the implementation of rapid re-housing and is leading the qualitative component of a HUD-funded research project comparing the implementation of Housing First policy through single-site and scattered-site settings. She is also a co-lead on the Homelessness Research Initiative project investigating housing and food insecurity among University of Washington students.

Homelessness and housing costs have reached unprecedented levels in the Puget Sound region. As a world-class institution, the University of Washington is well positioned to tackle these urban challenges through thoughtful, rigorous, and impactful research. The Urban@UW Homelessness Research Initiative serves as a nexus for researchers and practitioners to exchange discoveries, experiences, and ideas. By connecting the efforts of faculty from across disciplines and campuses, **the Initiative serves to amplify research findings and translate them to a broader community** of state and local governments, nonprofit providers, philanthropies, and others dedicated to improving the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

The Homelessness Research Initiative is also a catalyst for new research. We seek to leverage collective knowledge bases and to collaborate across intellectual traditions, methodologies, and ways of understanding with the goal of making real world impact. By **ethically and openly engaging across fields, sectors, and perspectives**, we aim to better understand and work towards ending homelessness in an era of rapid urban change.

Less than a year since our first gathering of interested faculty members, three new cross-disciplinary projects are underway. With support from the Washington State Legislature, the Doorway Project is piloting an innovative service model for local youth experiencing homelessness. The faculty and staff engaged with the Critical Narratives of Homelessness are exploring mechanisms to inspire more thoughtful public discourse around homelessness. Together with a team of faculty and partnerships across the UW administration, we are working to gather actionable, tri-campus data about the housing and food vulnerabilities of our own student body.

The research strength of our faculty is a unique asset to our region. We invite you to join us as we direct that expertise towards one of our region's most pressing issues.

Rachel Fyall
Faculty Chair of Homelessness Research Initiative, Urban@UW
Assistant Professor, Evans School of Public Policy and Governance

SEEMA CLIFASEFI // SUSAN COLLINS

CO-DIRECTORS, THE HARM REDUCTION RESEARCH AND TREATMENT CENTER
PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



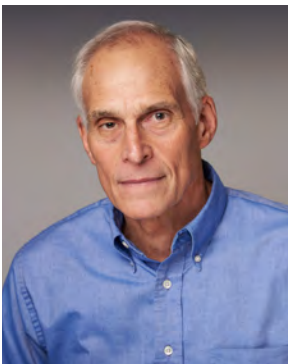
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Seema Clifasefi, MSW, PhD, has advanced degrees in cognitive and experimental psychology and social work. She is an associate professor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, HaRRT Center co-director, and affiliate faculty in the Center for the Study of Health and Risky Behavior.

Susan Collins, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist, associate professor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, adjunct faculty in Psychology, clinician in the Mental Health and Addiction Clinic at Harborview Medical Center, and co-director of the Harm Reduction Research and Treatment (HaRRT) Center.

The UW HaRRT Center works with homeless substance users and agencies that serve these users to develop, evaluate, and disseminate evidence-based programming and treatment that aim to reduce substance-related harm and improve quality of life without requiring abstinence or use reduction. The center also independently evaluates harm-reduction programs for homeless people, including DESC's Housing First model, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and the City of Seattle's Navigation Center.

In all their work, they center the voices of homeless and other marginalized substance users. Their goal is to help marginalized substance users create positive, transformative and lasting change for themselves and their communities on their own terms and timeline.



ANDREW SAXON

PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
DIRECTOR, CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT AND
EDUCATION, VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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Andrew Saxon, MD, researches the treatment of substance use disorders and psychiatric disorders, as well as the co-occurrence of substance dependence and post-traumatic stress disorder. He has over 25 years of experience as a clinical and research addiction psychiatrist. Since rates of homelessness are high among veterans with these disorders, he has worked to examine the impact of homelessness on treatment outcomes and study ways to end homelessness among veterans.

His current research work is supported by the VA, the Department of Defense, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. In a study of veterans entering treatment for substance abuse disorders, the team found a disparity in measures between homeless and non-homeless veterans. The results prompted the team to design an intervention—intensive addiction/housing case management—to address the disparity, and conducted a trial of this intervention compared to a drop-in housing support group.

These research outcomes and new intervention tools can inform future health care practices and the resources that are made available for homeless veterans who struggle with substance abuse and/or psychiatric disorders.

JOSEPHINE ENSIGN

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH, SCHOOL OF NURSING

Josephine Ensign, MSN, DrPH, engages in critiques of current social justice issues such as poverty, homelessness, trauma, resilience, and the wellbeing of marginalized populations. Her aim is to humanize health care practice and to cultivate empathy that leads to action.

She has worked as a family nurse practitioner for three decades, providing primary health care to homeless adolescents and adults in large urban areas. The focus of her career has been to increase an understanding of the lives of marginalized populations, and to develop ways to increase access to effective health care programs. She has published numerous journal articles and book chapters on homelessness, health, and human rights.

As a nurse and academic with the lived experience of homelessness, she uses writing and photography to creatively explore possible answers to complex ethical and existential questions. She published a medical memoir in 2016, *Catching Homelessness: A Nurse's story of Falling Through the Safety Net*. She is currently at work on two additional projects, *Soul Stories: Voices from the Margins*, and *Skid Road: The Intersection of Health and Homelessness*.



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CHRISTINE STEVENS

NURSING AND HEALTHCARE PROGRAMS, UW TACOMA
BOARD PRESIDENT, METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, TACOMA AND
PIERCE COUNTY

Christine Stevens, MPH, PhD, focuses research on social justice and how structural disadvantages affect health in low-income residents and adolescent populations. Her current research of housing and food insecurity among college students supported the need for a UW Tacoma food bank, which was started in 2015 in partnership with the UW Tacoma and Tacoma community. Her community work involves volunteering at a shelter for adolescent teens, at the Tacoma Healthcare for the Homeless clinic, and Board President of Metropolitan Development Council.

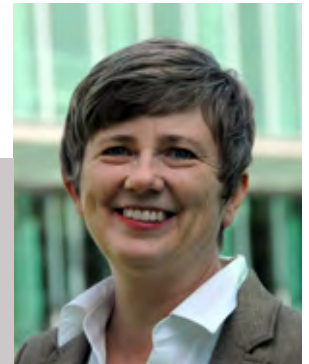
For the last 15 years, she has been the primary investigator on an interdisciplinary research team partnered with residents of a low-income HOPE VI project to explore how local and national housing policies affected the health and housing stability of a diverse population of residents. The partnership has resulted in residents developing their own local solutions.

Her integration of research, community engagement, and equitable partnerships is a model for addressing the greater complex social justice issue of people experiencing housing insecurity. The strategy of participatory research encourages long-term relationships with communities to develop lasting and locally relevant interventions.

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LISA KELLY

DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND YOUTH ADVOCACY CLINIC
SCHOOL OF LAW



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For the last 15 years Lisa Kelly, JD, has focused teaching, service and scholarship on issues related to marginalized youth; particularly those who are child-welfare-system-involved, experiencing homelessness, and/or undocumented. She engages Children and Youth Advocacy Clinic (CAYAC) students in learning about change modalities, including community engagement and legislative advocacy.

She is the lead co-author of the text, *Representing Youth: Telling Stories, Imagining Change*, published September 2017. This narrative, written with faculty colleague Kimberly Ambrose, brings together law and social science research to expose the impact of systems faced by youth who move between homelessness, child welfare, and detention.

Her current research explores the intersection between homelessness and the child welfare system, as well as how current laws serve as barriers to youth accessing housing. In service of these inquiries, CAYAC students recently have completed a survey of youth shelters and attorneys for youth.



ANAID YERENA

URBAN STUDIES, UW TACOMA

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Anaid Yerena, PhD, primarily researches the development of housing policy and housing location choice in the United States and Latin America. She studies community perceptions of narratives of homelessness, as well as the emerging field of e-government and its role in civic engagement. This research identifies and assesses modes of civic engagement and their effectiveness in achieving policy outcomes.

Her scholarship offers a robust understanding of urban governance around planning and policy. She seeks to reach community members, foster empathy among different groups, and articulate a clear charge for decision-makers on housing matters. Her studies explore how advocacy organizations promote policies at the local level to encourage the creation of affordable housing and reduce homelessness, and how government can cultivate citizen engagement to implement these policies and programs.

She seeks to position students as influential members of their communities through her teaching. Working with the UW Tacoma campus, Urban Studies academic program, and wider urban studies and planning fields, her service has focused on contributing to organizational governance, student recruitment and retention, and racial diversity issues. Beyond the university setting, her expertise contributes to efforts in reducing homelessness and fostering a civically engaged society.

RELATIONAL POVERTY NETWORK

SARAH ELWOOD // VICTORIA LAWSON
DIRECTORS AND CO-FOUNDERS
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY



The Relational Poverty Network convenes an international community of scholars and activists to challenge poverty and inequality.

Sarah Elwood, PhD, and Victoria Lawson, PhD, investigate cultural narratives that de-politicize poverty and blame people for their impoverishment; their work investigates the transformative potential of disruptive poverty politics that challenge 'common sense' about poverty.

These projects aim to reshape political dialogue around impoverishment and the lack of shelter. Their work focuses on understanding root causes of impoverishment, suggesting avenues for re-education by reframing notions of what causes poverty and homelessness and whose voices must be heard.

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WEST COAST POVERTY CENTER

SHANNON HARPER // JENNIFER ROMICH
RESEARCH DIRECTOR AND DIRECTOR
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Through the West Coast Poverty Center, Shannon Harper and Jennifer Romich, PhD, work to magnify the reach of research on the causes and consequences of poverty, train the next generation of policymakers, and connect researchers with practitioners and policymakers.

Their Housing Roundtable meetings have featured research presentations on tent cities, tiny homes, supportive housing, the criminalization of homelessness and the dynamics of encampment removal. They have also funded collaborative academic-practitioner projects such as foreclosure prevention among Latino families in Washington; implementation of a rapid re-housing program in Seattle; health care needs and utilization patterns of homeless individuals; and integration and analysis of housing authority data across geographic boundaries.

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AMY HAGOPIAN

HEALTH SERVICES AND GLOBAL HEALTH, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

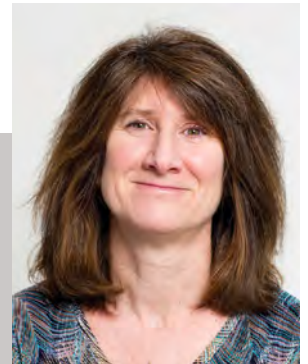
Amy Hagopian, PhD, has worked extensively in both rural USA and internationally (mostly Africa) on health workforce and health system strengthening issues. Her current research focuses on how the distribution of power undermines health, specifically through war, homelessness, poverty, inequality and incarceration.

She directs a Community Oriented Public Health Practice, in which students engage with the core curriculum entirely through cases and problem-based experiential learning. A recent class evaluated the winter 2017 tent city stay at UW. With an upcoming class, she plans to facilitate an evaluation of the City's homeless encampment removal policy.

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LYNNE MANZO

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, COLLEGE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS



As an environmental psychologist, Lynne Manzo, PhD, focuses her work on place attachment, place meaning, identity and social justice. She is particularly concerned with how marginalized people such as those experiencing homelessness endeavor to create a sense of belonging and home for themselves as they face displacement and alienation.

Her research has examined the displacement among public housing residents through urban restructuring programs. Her work has also focused on the psychological aspects of how people "other-ize" or dehumanize those in poverty and who are experiencing homelessness.

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AMOSHAUN TOFT

SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCES, UW BOTHELL

Amoshaun Toft, PhD, centers research on the intersections of language, social organization, and political action. His dissertation engaged a critical analysis of public discourse on poverty and homelessness, focusing on the production and contestation of social deviance.

Part of his work aims to support regional homeless-led survival initiatives like tent cities through participant observation and collaboration. He argues that hosting a community of people experiencing homelessness creates a call to discourse for housed people living in the neighborhood, where they can confront their stereotypes and prejudices by engaging with each other across class lines and seeing their common humanity.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF URBAN@UW

The needs of homeless populations have traditionally been addressed by multiple professionals including social workers, public health officials, and police. Housing advocates, community organizations, and social service agencies have played essential roles.

Research has contributed in significant ways to increase knowledge that has in turn shaped how needs are met and how changes in homeless populations are understood.

Several examples of the impact of research in catalyzing change can be read about in these pages. But this is just a sample—there are over 70 faculty at UW who are working on issues related to meeting the needs of those experiencing homelessness. The leadership of students and staff alongside faculty such as Amy Hagopian, Wendy Barrington, and Vicky Lawson in hosting Tent City 3 has modeled alternative ways for us to have an impact as a public institution. There is the work of the Data Science for Social Good teams, hosted by the eScience Institute, led by scholars such as Ariel Rokem and Bryna Hazelton who merged and analyzed data on how individuals transition from homelessness to permanent housing. There is ongoing scholarship on the impact of low income housing programs as well as evictions on community members. These efforts have been deeply important to the growing body of knowledge around how we best support our community's homeless individuals and families.

However, we know that research and scholarship can contribute *more significantly*—with an emphasis on bridging research to practice for real and enduring impact.

Understanding the powerful role that universities play to catalyze new and alternative responses, we have invited scholars from across our campuses to share knowledge and, together, seek innovative interventions and inclusive solutions.

We began by gathering almost two dozen key faculty in sociology, public policy, social work, nursing, public health, education, law, and urban planning to generate questions together. In the fall of 2016, we hosted over 50 faculty at a full-day workshop to consider how academic research, teaching, and civic engagement can contribute to meeting the needs of homeless populations. This workshop led to the three Urban@UW supported faculty-led projects described in this report. Furthermore, these collective efforts have officially launched our Urban@UW Homelessness Research Initiative, a robust university engagement with one of the most pressing social issues of our time. We will continue to leverage UW's world-class research and teaching, locally and globally, to catalyze inclusive innovations for the improvement of cities and their communities around the world.

Thaïsa Way
Executive Director of Urban@UW

Thaïsa Way is an urban landscape historian in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington. She serves as the Executive Director of Urban@UW and as Chair of the UW Faculty Senate. She is a member of the UW Population Health Initiative, member of the Steering Committee for the eScience Institute and newly launched Earthlab in the College of the Environment. These roles build on her commitment to strengthening the role of inclusive and innovative research in the efforts to improve the lives of all populations around the world.



Beyond the University of Washington, many in our community are dedicated to improving the lives of those experiencing homelessness. (Photo Credit: Washington Low Income Housing Alliance)



Victoria Lawson with students and TC3 residents from Winter 2017 course, Engaging Homelessness. (Photo Credit: Victoria Lawson)



Tent City 3 at the University Congregational United Church of Christ in the University District. (Photo Credit: TC3)

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FIND OUT MORE about the Urban@UW Homelessness Research Initiative!

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