UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

HOUSTON-AREA OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT TRAINING IN OBESITY & NUTRITION ACADEMY

Current Research Opportunities

Hurricane Assessment, Recovery, & Virtual Evaluation on Youth (HARVEY) Study

Prior to Hurricane Harvey, our research group assessed ~250 adolescents' weight, height, food security, diet, and physical activity habits. Although the intervention for which these baseline measures were originally taken is no longer able to be completed, having this data puts us in a unique position to be able to investigate the impact the hurricane had on adolescents' food security, weight, diet, and physical activity habits. Due to the unpredictability of natural disasters, it is extremely rare to have such pre-measures, and little is known about the impact natural disasters have on adolescents' weight status. Information learned from this study has the potential to inform future disaster relief policies.

We are inviting HOUSTON Academy students the opportunity to participate in this exciting and important study. There are 6 remaining data collection points for this study (October, December, January, March, May, and August). At each one, 6-8 students are needed to assist in the distribution of surveys and measurement of height and weight. Data collection will take place at a YES Prep Schools Campus and each shift will last about 4 hours. From their participation, HOUSTON Academy volunteers will learn how to assess weight and body composition using bioelectrical impedance and will gain an understanding of the process of pediatric data collection in a school setting.

Upcoming Research Opportunities

Can Food Scholarships Reduce Inequality by Improving College Persistence Among Community College Students?

Funded by the Kresge Foundation

Educational performance among schoolchildren is inhibited among food insecurity—the lack of availability or access to healthful food due to insufficient money or other resources. There is growing evidence that food insecurity also affects undergraduate students, partly due to the rising price of college, but there are few programs or policies to address it. Burgeoning inequality in college completion rates despite increases in college enrollment among the poor make close examination of students' basic needs imperative. In an effort to boost college attainment via reducing food insecurity, the Houston Food Bank created the Food Scholarship Program. Through the Food Scholarship Program students receive an explicit commitment of biweekly access to groceries, as long as they remain in school. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact of the Food Scholarship Program on community college students' academic and mental health well-being.

HOUSTON Academy volunteers will gain experience of conducting research in community-based settings. Students will gain hands-on exposure to food distribution management and data entry.

Students that participate in projects listed above may be eligible to apply for HOUSTON Academy scholarships, in addition to applying for research scholarships, PURS and SURF.

Upcoming Research Opportunities (cont.)

Biological stress responses of US-born Latino children of undocumented parents

Funded by the University of Houston's HEALTH Research Institute

Despite their citizenship, over 3.2 million US-born Latino children of undocumented parents (i.e., those in "mixed-status families") experience chronic stress associated with potential or actual forced deportation of their parents. Relative to US-born Latino children in documented-status families, US-born Latino children in mixed-status families are exposed to additional acute and chronic stressors placing them at elevated risk for substance use, anxiety and depression. The absence of research using direct assessment of family documentation status impedes the ability to determine the burden of stress exposure and its health consequences. Further, chronic stress, such as the burden of deportation stress within immigrant families, is not easily captured through standardized survey measures. The use of biological markers to capture chronic stress within the family environment has been recommended. The goal of this study is to determine the potential mental and behavioral health vulnerabilities of US-born Latino adolescents with undocumented parents through the use of surveys and biological markers.

HOUSTON Academy volunteers will gain experience of conducting research in community-based settings. Students will gain hands-on exposure to data collection preparation, administrating surveys, and data management. **Bilingual students (English and Spanish) are needed**.

Mexican immigrants' biological and behavioral cancer risk based on stress

Pilot project under the U-HAND (University of Houston/MD Anderson) Program to Reduce Cancer Disparities, Award Number P20CA221697

Despite the 11.4 million Mexican immigrants living in the U.S., the biological and behavioral determinants that contribute to cancer disparities among them are vastly understudied. While research has indicated that adverse childhood experiences (ACE) influence cancer in adulthood, this association has not been investigated among Mexican immigrants. In addition, exposure to minority stress is associated with poor physical adult health outcomes. This association is particularly important for Mexican immigrants, as they are exposed to a disproportionate number of stressors associated with their minority status that are stigmatizing and discriminatory. The goal of this study is to evaluate the association of ACE, minority stress and their combination with cancer risk factors among Mexican immigrants through surveys and biological markers.

HOUSTON Academy volunteers will gain experience of conducting research in community-based settings. Students will gain hands-on exposure to data collection preparation, administrating surveys, and data management. They will learn how to assess weight and body composition using bioelectrical impedance. **Bilingual students (English and Spanish) are needed**.

Students that participate in projects listed above may be eligible to apply for HOUSTON Academy scholarships, in addition to applying for research scholarships, PURS and SURF.