



*Working across boundaries to reduce poverty and health inequalities in Latin America*

## **UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America 2013 Year-in-Review**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

During its short history, the UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America has made substantial strides in building its programming and profile to contribute to the important work of eliminating health disparities in Latin America. December is a particularly meaningful month for me, as it was a year ago this month that I was appointed founding director of the UCLA Blum Center.

So much of what I had envisioned for the Center during my first month has already started to take shape. We held the Center's Inaugural Spring Symposium, the first of what-will-be an annual event that showcases cutting-edge policy and research on the social determinants of health Latin America. Our undergraduate course, Poverty and Health in Latin America, is gaining ground as a popular course for freshman at UCLA. And, last summer, we initiated the UCLA Blum Center Summer Scholars program to provide support for students from a range of disciplines to pursue summer fieldwork experience.

We hope you will enjoy reading our end-of-year progress brief and that you will share in our excitement for all that lies ahead for the UCLA Blum Center.

We look forward to the ways that we will continue to grow and collaborate in 2014 and we wish you a happy and healthy new year from the UCLA Blum Center!

Para la salud y la prosperidad,  
*Michael Rodriguez, MD, MPH*  
*Director*

*UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America*

## Inaugural Spring Symposium, May 1, 2013



Our Inaugural Spring Symposium “Informing Responses to Reduce Poverty and Improve Health in Latin America” successfully put the UCLA Blum Center on the map by introducing the Center to the UCLA campus, the Los Angeles community, and institutions throughout Latin America.

The symposium covered a range of topics fundamental to the work of the UCLA Blum Center, including commentary and forecasts on health in Latin America, discussion on how migration and urbanization are changing the landscape for Latin American health services, and thoughtful insights on policies needed to address the social determinants of health in Latin America.

Approximately 200 people attended our day-long symposium to hear panels and presentations from faculty across many disciplines at UCLA and participate in discussions on the social determinants of health in Latin America. Students from the Poverty and Health in Latin America Freshman Cluster Course played a critical role in the success of the event by volunteering and participating in the sessions. One of the symposium’s most popular components was the lunchtime poster session featuring selected research from students. After the symposium, these posters were displayed in Powell Library as a main exhibit and were well-received by other UCLA students.



Media coverage included: [NBC Latino](#), [Saludify](#), and [UCLA Today](#).

Many thanks to all of our partners and supporters who made the UCLA Blum Center Inaugural Symposium a success!

## UCLA Blum Center Summer Scholars

The UCLA Blum Center launched its Summer Scholars program in summer 2013 when it placed graduate and undergraduate students in field programs and internships designed to give students real-world exposure and experience working on initiatives to improve health and social conditions of the most vulnerable populations in both Latin America and Los Angeles.

### UCLA Blum Center Summer Scholars – Graduate Program

The UCLA Blum Center supported two graduate students to participate in an eight-week program to work and live abroad in Latin America.



Claire Bristow, an MPH student from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health (FSPH), spent the summer in Lima, Peru participating in a research project to evaluate provider/patient acceptability of HIV/syphilis rapid tests and laboratory-based comparison of rapid tests with normal test protocols.



Rebecca Foelber, also an MPH student from the UCLA FSPH, worked on a study in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that collected and analyzed official data on food-borne disease incidences that have been compiled by national epidemiological centers in Latin America and the Caribbean during the last 13 years.

### UCLA Blum Center Summer Scholars – Undergraduate Program

The UCLA Blum Center selected five exceptional students from the Poverty and Health in Latin America 2012-2013 Cluster Course for internship placements in Los Angeles. Aldana Garcia, Abram Cerda, and Jessica Cubias worked with the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) serving Latin American immigrant communities, and Erin Standen and Elizabeth Padilla worked with Saint John's Well Child and Family Health Center serving the needs of low-income populations.



*Left to right): Dr. Michael Rodriguez (UCLA Blum Center Director), Aldana Garcia, Erin Standen, Abram Cerda, Jessica Cubias, Elizabeth Padilla, Lesley Harris (graduate student coordinator), Dr. Kathy O'Byrne (Director, UCLA Center for Community Learning)*

## Year 2: Freshman Cluster Course on Poverty and Health in Latin America

In fall 2013, the Center again offered the GE Cluster Course “Poverty and Health in Latin America.” The course, designed for first year students at UCLA, offers an exploration and enhanced understanding of how the conditions in which people in Latin America are born, grow, live, work and age influence their health and access to health care.



This year, 92 students have enrolled in the course, demonstrating enthusiasm among incoming UCLA freshman for the subjects covered by the cluster. Inspired by our cluster course material, one group of students self-organized to start a new student organization focused on alleviating global poverty.

## Research

The December 2013 publication of the American Journal of Public Health featured an article on sexually transmitted disease experiments performed by the United States government in Guatemala beginning in 1946. The commentary, authored by UCLA Blum Center Director Michael Rodriguez, MD, MPH and Robert Garcia, JD, explores the backdrop for this unethical medical research and violation of human rights and calls for steps the United States should take to provide relief and compensation to Guatemala and its people.

The most recent Special PIMSA edition of the Mexican Journal of Public Health features an article by Dr. Rodriguez and UCLA Blum Center steering committee member Steven Wallace, PhD, along with other co-authors. The article, “Improving access to health care for undocumented immigrants in the United States”, reports on a study conducted with uninsured Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, CA. The study examined both the feasibility and desirability of policy options for increasing access to health care among undocumented Mexican immigrants, and points to the role that immigration reform can play in improving the range of health services available to undocumented immigrants.

## Collaboration

A cornerstone of the work at the UCLA Blum Center is the development of an intricate network of organizations, academic institutions and community programs and others dedicated to our mutual mission.

In November, the UCLA Blum Center co-sponsored two events with partner institutions. “Demand Solutions: Ideas for Improving Quality of Life”, co-sponsored with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), USAID, and the Blum Center for Developing Economies at UC Berkeley, was a two day event in Washington D.C. The conference brought together attendees from around the world to discuss and share innovative solutions for addressing development issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. At UCLA, the Center co-sponsored “Colegio de la Frontera Norte at UCLA” along with International Institute, the UCLA Program on International Migration, and the Center for Mexican Studies. This all day, bilingual conference featured presentations by faculty and doctoral students from partner university Colegio de La Frontera Norte, and focused on topics related to migration, immigrant integration, and the Mexico-U.S. borderlands.

Throughout 2013, the UCLA Blum Center has collaborated with and received support from a range of partners across campus:

**College of Letters and Science,  
Division of Humanities and the  
Division of Social Sciences**

**Fielding School of Public Health**

**David Geffen School of Medicine**

**School of Law**

**Luskin School of Public Affairs**

**Center for World Health**

**Center of Expertise on Migration  
and Health**

**Program on International Migration**

**Chicano Studies Research Center**

**Graduate School of Education  
& Information Studies**

**Anderson School of  
Management**

**School of Dentistry**

**School of Nursing**

**International Institute**

**Latin American Institute**

**Center of Expertise on  
Women’s Health and  
Empowerment**

**Department of Sociology**

## Looking Ahead to 2014

While the UCLA Blum Center has grown in 2013, we look forward to seeing our programming expand even more in the new year. A brief preview of our work in 2014 follows.

- **February.** Dr. Rodriguez will join a UCLA delegation on a trip to Nicaragua to meet with representatives from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN) to establish a partnership to address health infrastructure and emergency management needs in Nicaragua. Participating partners will be UNAN, the UCLA Blum Center and the UCLA Center for World Health.
- **March.** The Center will support several UCLA students who will participate in an initiative sponsored by UCLA and the Dr. Henri Gerard Desgranges (HGD) Foundation. The March 22-29 field work in Petit Goave, Haiti will be focused on helping to establish comprehensive diabetes testing, treatment and education at the local HGD Clinic.
- **May 6 and 7.** The UCLA Blum Center will host our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Symposium, which will build on the successes of last year's symposium. We will again assemble a multidisciplinary team of partners, speakers and participants focused on addressing health inequities among Latin American populations. This year's program will be expanded to a two-day format and will feature plenary sessions, working sessions, an evening dinner program, poster presentations, and more. Save the date now and watch for more information as the program develops and registration opens.
- **Summer.** The UCLA Blum Summer Scholars program will again send graduate students from a range of disciplines at UCLA to participate in field work in Latin America. Watch for our call for applicants in late January/early February.
- **Building Collaborations.** Continuing the conversations with potential collaborators to develop new research, training, and policy-focused initiatives, the UCLA Blum Center expects to enhance existing collaborations and confirm new ones in 2014, including the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank and their Salud Mesoamerica 2015 initiative, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and several universities across Latin America.